

Meditation,
Concentration
& Contemplation
in Sadhana

Second Edition

A COMPILATION FROM THE WORKS OF
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla

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Sri Aurobindo and the Mother**



Sri Aurobindo Society

AUROPUBLICATIONS

POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Sadhana

Second Edition

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Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

"It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc."

(CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

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

one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost."

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

The eleventh book in the series of comprehensive compilations on virtues and qualities prescribed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as necessary for doing Yoga is *Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Sadhana*.

The Mother emphasizes that, if one wishes always to progress, one must understand more completely what one already knows.

“For those who want always to progress, there are three major ways of progressing:

- (1) To widen the field of one’s consciousness.
- (2) To understand ever better and more completely what one knows.
- (3) To find the Divine and surrender more and more to His Will.” (CWM 16: 435–436)

The purpose of this comprehensive compilation is to help the reader gain a complete understanding of the virtues of meditation, concentration and contemplation. The headings are intended to guide the reader towards a clearer and deeper understanding. However, it is important to read the quotations themselves, for the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are infused with a consciousness infinitely higher than our own. Therefore,

reading these quotations will also help the reader elevate their consciousness.

The quotations in this compilation are taken from the volumes of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition. Each quotation is followed by the title of the book, the volume number, and the page number from which it has been taken.

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to read the fuller text are advised to consult *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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I—Meditation Means

1.

“Whose work is it if it is not the Mother’s work? All that you do, you have to do as the Mother’s work. All the work done in the Asram is the Mother’s.

All those works, meditation, reading *Conversations*, studying English etc. are good. You can do any of them dedicating them to the Mother.

Meditation means opening yourself to the Mother, concentrating on aspiration and calling in her force to work and transform you.” (CWSA 32: 409)

2.

“This morning during the general meditation I felt some pressure. I hope it will not become a hindrance to my studies; in that case I think it would be better not to meditate.

I see no reason why meditation, properly done, should be a hindrance to study—quite the opposite. Only if what you call ‘meditation’ is not meditation at all, but a state of *inert passivity* and drowsiness, can it harm your studies; and as that state is thoroughly undesirable from every point of view, of course it is better not to indulge in it.

What is real meditation then?

It is an active and deliberate concentration on the Divine Presence and a sustained, alert contemplation of that Sublime Reality.” (CWM 17: 24)

3.

“Meditation is one means of the approach to the Divine and a great way, but it cannot be called a short cut—for most it is a long and difficult though very high ascent. It can by no means be short unless it brings a descent and even then it is only a foundation that is quickly laid—afterwards meditation has to build laboriously a big superstructure on that foundation. It is very indispensable, but there is nothing of the short cut about it.

Karma is a much simpler road—provided one’s mind is not fixed on the karma to the exclusion of the Divine. The aim must be the Divine and the work can only be a means.

...

Love, bhakti, surrender, the psychic opening are the only short cut to the Divine—or can be; for if the love and bhakti are too vital, then there is likely to be a seesaw between ecstatic expectation and *viraha*, *abhimāna*, despair, which will make it not a short cut but a long one, a zigzag, not a straight flight, a whirling round one’s own ego instead of a running towards the Divine.” (CWSA 35: 743)(CWSA 29: 212)

4.

"What do you call meditation? Shutting the eyes and concentrating? It is only one method for calling down the true consciousness. To join with the true consciousness or feel its descent is the only thing important and if it comes without the orthodox method, as it always did with me, so much the better. Meditation is only a means or device, the true movement is when even walking, working or speaking one is still in sadhana." (CWSA 35: 229)

5.

"What is the difference between meditation and concentration?"

Meditation is a purely mental activity, it interests only the mental being. One can concentrate while meditating but this is a mental concentration; one can get a silence but it is a purely mental silence, and the other parts of the being are kept immobile and inactive so as not to disturb the meditation. You may pass twenty hours of the day in meditation and for the remaining four hours you will be an altogether ordinary man because only the mind has been occupied—the rest of the being, the vital and the physical, is kept under pressure so that it may not disturb. In meditation nothing is directly done for the other parts of the being.

Certainly this indirect action can have an effect, but... I have known in my life people whose capacity for meditation was remarkable but who, when not in meditation, were quite ordinary men, even at times ill-natured people, who would become furious if their meditation was disturbed. For they had learnt to master only their mind, not the rest of their being. ...

If you have the capacity to concentrate, your meditation will be more interesting and easier. But one can meditate without concentrating. Many follow a chain of ideas in their meditation—it is meditation, not concentration.” (CWM 4: 7–8)

6.

“When one tries to meditate, there is a pressure to go inside, lose the waking consciousness and wake inside, in a deep inner consciousness. But at first the mind takes it for a pressure to go to sleep, since sleep is the only kind of inner consciousness to which it has been accustomed. In Yoga by meditation sleep is therefore often the first difficulty—but if one perseveres then gradually the sleep changes to an inner conscious state.”(CWSA 29: 319)

7.

“Meditation is a general term which can include many kinds of inner activity.” (CWM 3: 301) (CWSA 32: 610)

8.

"Sadhana is the practice of Yoga. Tapasya is the concentration of the will to get the results of sadhana and to conquer the lower nature. Aradhana is worship of the Divine, love, self surrender, aspiration to the Divine, calling the name, prayer. Dhyana is inner concentration of the consciousness, meditation, going inside in Samadhi. Dhyana, tapasya and aradhana are all parts of sadhana." (CWSA 29: 215)

9.

"Your questions cover the whole of a very wide field. It is therefore necessary to reply to them with some brevity, touching only on some principal points.

1. *What meditation exactly means.*

There are two words used in English to express the Indian idea of *Dhyana*, 'meditation' and 'contemplation'. Meditation means properly the concentration of the mind on a single train of ideas which work out a single subject. Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration. Both these things are forms of *dhyana*; for the principle of *dhyana* is mental concentration whether in thought, vision or knowledge.

There are other forms of *dhyana*. There is a passage in which Vivekananda advises you to stand back from your

thoughts, let them occur in your mind as they will and simply observe them & see what they are. This may be called concentration in self-observation.

This form leads to another, the emptying of all thought out of the mind so as to leave it a sort of pure vigilant blank on which the divine knowledge may come and imprint itself, undisturbed by the inferior thoughts of the ordinary human mind and with the clearness of a writing in white chalk on a blackboard. You will find that the Gita speaks of this rejection of all mental thought as one of the methods of Yoga and even the method it seems to prefer. This may be called the dhyana of liberation, as it frees the mind from slavery to the mechanical process of thinking and allows it to think or not think as it pleases and when it pleases, or to choose its own thoughts or else to go beyond thought to the pure perception of Truth called in our philosophy *Vijnana*.

Meditation is the easiest process for the human mind, but the narrowest in its results; contemplation more difficult, but greater; self-observation and liberation from the chains of Thought the most difficult of all, but the widest and greatest in its fruits. One can choose any of them according to one's bent and capacity. The perfect method is to use them all, each in its own place and for its own object; but this would need a fixed faith and firm patience and a great energy of Will in the self-application to the Yoga." (CWSA 36: 293–294)

10.

“Yoga is union with the Divine, sadhana is what you do in order to unite with the Divine. You have to get away from the ordinary human consciousness and get into touch with the divine Consciousness.

For that call always on the Mother, open yourself to her, aspire and pray for her Force to work in you so as to make you fit—reject desire, restlessness, disturbances of the mind and vital. Dhyana means to make the mind and vital quiet and concentrate in aspiration for the Mother’s Peace, the Mother’s Presence, her Light, Force and Ananda.” (CWSA 32: 135)

11.

“... meditation is when the inner mind is looking at things to get the right knowledge.” (CWSA 29: 297)

II—What Is Concentration

1.

“Concentration is a more active state [than meditation]. You may concentrate mentally, you may concentrate vitally, psychically, physically, and you may concentrate integrally. Concentration or the capacity to gather oneself at one point is more difficult than meditation. You may gather together one portion of your being or consciousness or you may gather together the whole of your consciousness or even fragments of it, that is, the concentration may be partial, total or integral, and in each case the result will be different.

If you have the capacity to concentrate, your meditation will be more interesting and easier. But one can meditate without concentrating. Many follow a chain of ideas in their meditation—it is meditation, not concentration.” (CWM 4: 8)

2.

“What is concentration? ...

Concentration means gathering of the consciousness into one centre and fixing it in one object or in one idea or in one condition.” (CWM 3: 301)

3.

“*What is concentration?*

II—What Is Concentration

It is to bring back all the scattered threads of consciousness to a single point, a single idea. Those who can attain perfect attention succeed in everything they undertake; they will always make a rapid progress. And this kind of concentration can be developed exactly like the muscles; one may follow different systems, different methods of training. Today we know that the most pitiful weakling, for example, can with discipline become as strong as anyone else. One should not have a will which flickers out like a candle.

The will, concentration must be cultivated; it is a question of method, of regular exercise. If you will, you can.

But the thought 'What's the use?' must not come in to weaken the will. The idea that one is born with a certain character and can do nothing about it is a stupidity." (CWM 4: 5)

4.

"Without concentration one can achieve nothing." (CWM 17: 159)

5.

"There is a greater power in silence than in words, however forceful. The greatest transformations have been achieved in the silence of concentration." (CWM 17: 366)

III—What Is Contemplation

1.

"Is there a relation, Sweet Mother, between concentration and contemplation?"

There can always be a relation between everything, but usually one means by contemplation a kind of opening upwards. It is rather a state of passive opening upwards. It is a fairly passive form of aspiration. One makes this movement rather like something opening, opening in an aspiration; but if the contemplation is sufficiently total, it becomes a concentration. Yet it is not necessarily a concentration.

When it is a concentration, then the part which concentrates...concentration is limited or rather...

A concentration is essentially a limiting. One can't concentrate on several points at once, it is no longer a concentration." (CWM 7: 273–274)

2.

"Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration." (CWSA 36: 293)

3.

"Sweet Mother, what is 'dynamic realisation'?"

It is the realisation which is expressed in action. There is a realisation in inaction like that of those who enter into contemplations from which they don't come out, and who don't move; and then there is a dynamic realisation which transforms all your action, all your movements, all your way of being, your character. In the first case one's outer being remains the same, nothing changes, and usually it destroys all possibility of action, one can no longer do anything, one remains seated... In the second case, it changes everything, your character, your way of being, your way of acting, all your actions and even your surroundings, and finally all your existence, your total being: this is dynamic realisation, with the transformation of the body as its culmination." (CWM 7: 201)

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

1.

“And since men are mental beings, thought, if not truly their best and highest, is at least their most constant, normal and effective means for enlightening their ignorance. Armed with its functions of gathering and reflection, meditation, fixed contemplation, the absorbed dwelling of the mind on its object, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana*, it stands at our tops as an indispensable aid to our realisation of that which we pursue, and it is not surprising that it should claim to be the leader of the journey and the only available guide or at least the direct and innermost door of the temple.” (CWSA 23: 289)

2.

“An Integral Yoga includes as a vital and indispensable element in its total and ultimate aim the conversion of the whole being into a higher spiritual consciousness and a larger divine existence. Our parts of will and action, our parts of knowledge, our thinking being, our emotional being, our being of life, all our self and nature must seek the Divine, enter into the Infinite, unite with the Eternal. But man’s present nature is limited, divided, unequal,—it is easiest for him to concentrate in the strongest part of his being and follow a definite line of progress proper to his

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

nature: only rare individuals have the strength to take a large immediate plunge straight into the sea of the Divine Infinity. Some therefore must choose as a starting point a concentration in thought or contemplation or the mind's one-pointedness to find the eternal reality of the Self in them; others can more easily withdraw into the heart to meet there the Divine, the Eternal: yet others are predominantly dynamic and active; for these it is best to centre themselves in the will and enlarge their being through works. United with the Self and source of all by their surrender of their will into its infinity, guided in their works by the secret Divinity within or surrendered to the Lord of the cosmic action as the master and mover of all their energies of thought, feeling, act, becoming by this enlargement of being selfless and universal, they can reach by works some first fullness of a spiritual status." (CWSA 23: 279)

3.

"I was very glad to get your letter and especially to know that you are more at peace. That is what is first needed, the settling down of a natural peace and quiet in the nature—the spiritual peace is a bigger thing that can come afterwards.

Then as to concentration. Ordinarily the consciousness is spread out everywhere, dispersed, running in this or that direction, after this subject and that

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

object in multitude. When anything has to be done of a sustained nature, the first thing one does is to draw back all this dispersed consciousness and concentrate. It is then, if one looks closely, found to be concentrated in one place and on one occupation, subject or object—as when you are composing a poem or a botanist is studying a flower. The place is usually somewhere in the brain, if it is the thought, in the heart if it is the feeling in which one is concentrated. The Yogic concentration is simply an extension and intensification of the same thing. It may be on an object as when one does *tratak* [a tantric method of meditation that involves staring at a single point such as a small object, black dot or candle flame] on a shining point—then one has to concentrate so that one sees only that point and has no other thought but that. It may be on an idea or a word or a name, the idea of the Divine, the word OM, the name Krishna, or a combination of idea and word or idea and name. But, farther, in Yoga one also concentrates in a particular place. There is the famous rule of concentrating between the eyebrows—the centre of the inner mind, of occult vision, of the will is there. What you do is to think firmly from there on whatever you make the object of your concentration or else try to see the image of it from there. If you succeed in this, then after a time you feel that your whole consciousness is centred there in that place—of course for the time being. After doing it for some time and often,

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

it becomes easy and normal.

I hope this is clear. Well, in this Yoga, you do the same, not necessarily at that particular spot between the eyebrows, but anywhere in the head or at the centre of the chest where the physiologists have fixed the cardiac centre. Instead of concentrating on an object, you concentrate in the head in a will, a call for the descent of the peace from above or, as some do, an opening of the unseen lid and an ascent of the consciousness above. In the heart-centre one concentrates in an aspiration, for an opening, for the presence or living image of the Divine there or whatever else is the object. There may be japa of a name but, if so, there must also be a concentration on it and the name must repeat itself there in the heart-centre.

It may be asked what becomes of the rest of the consciousness when there is this local concentration? Well, it either falls silent as in any concentration or, if it does not, then thoughts or other things may move about, as if outside, but the concentrated part does not attend to them or notice. That is when the concentration is reasonably successful.

One has not to fatigue oneself at first by long concentration if one is not accustomed, for then in a jaded mind it loses its power or value. One can 'relax' and meditate instead of concentrating. It is only as the concentration becomes normal that one can go on for a longer and longer time." (CWSA 29: 308–309)

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

4.

“The mind is a thing that dwells in diffusion, in succession; it can only concentrate on one thing at a time and when not concentrated runs from one thing to another very much at random. Therefore it has to concentrate on a single idea, a single subject of meditation, a single object of contemplation, a single object of will in order to possess or master it, and this it must do to at least the temporary exclusion of all others. But that which is beyond the mind and into which we seek to rise is superior to the running process of the thought, superior to the division of ideas. The Divine is centred in itself and when it throws out ideas and activities does not divide itself or imprison itself in them, but holds them and their movement in its infinity; undivided, its whole self is behind each Idea and each movement and at the same time behind all of them together. Held by it, each spontaneously works itself out, not through a separate act of will, but by the general force of consciousness behind it; if to us there seems to be a concentration of divine Will and Knowledge in each, it is a multiple and equal and not an exclusive concentration, and the reality of it is rather a free and spontaneous working in a self-gathered unity and infinity. The soul which has risen to the divine Samadhi participates in the measure of its attainment in this reversed condition of things,—the true condition, for that which is the reverse of our mentality is the truth. It is for this reason that, as is said in the ancient

IV—Why Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga Are Important

books, the man who has arrived at Self-possession attains spontaneously without the need of concentration in thought and effort the knowledge or the result which the Idea or the Will in him moves out to embrace.” (CWSA 23: 322)

5.

“But the very spirit of Yoga is this, to make the exceptional normal, and to turn that which is above us and greater than our normal selves into our own constant consciousness. Therefore we should not hesitate to open ourselves more steadily to whatever experience of the Infinite we have, to purify and intensify it, to make it our object of constant thought and contemplation, till it becomes the originating power that acts in us, the Godhead we adore and embrace, our whole being is put into tune with it and it is made the very self of our being.” (CWSA 24: 595)

V—Meditation or Contemplation Is One Means to Open the Consciousness to the Divine

1.

“The object of the sadhana is opening of the consciousness to the Divine and the change of the nature. Meditation or contemplation is one means to this but only one means; bhakti is another; work is another. Chittashuddhi was practised by the Yogis as a first means towards realisation and they got by it the saintliness of the saint and the quietude of the sage. But the transformation of the nature of which we speak is something more than that, and this transformation does not come by contemplation alone; works are necessary, Yoga in action is indispensable.” (CWSA 29: 208)

2.

“Work, bhakti and meditation are three supports of Yoga. One can do with all three, or two or one. There are people who can’t meditate in the set way that one calls meditation, but they progress through work or through bhakti or through the two together. By work and bhakti one can develop a consciousness in which eventually a natural meditation and realisation become possible.” (CWSA 29: 209)

V—Meditation or Contemplation Is One Means to Open the
Consciousness to the Divine

3.

"It is altogether unprofitable to enquire who or what class will arrive first or last at the goal. The spiritual path is not a field of competition or a race that this should matter. What matters is one's own aspiration for the Divine, one's own faith, surrender, selfless self-giving. Others can be left to the Divine who will lead each according to his nature. Meditation, work, bhakti are each means of preparative help towards fulfilment; all are included in this path."
(CWSA 29: 213)

4.

"Finally, why suppose that I am against meditation or bhakti? I have not the slightest objection to your taking either or both as the means of approach to the Divine."
(CWSA 29: 221)

VI—Meditation and Contemplation Are the Way of Knowledge

1.

"I was quite in earnest in speaking of the progress you had made by the psychic movement and the endeavour to detect and remove the ego. I had already written to you strongly approving of that way. It is in our Yoga the way to devotion and surrender—for it is the psychic movement that brings the constant and pure devotion and the removal of ego that makes it possible to surrender. The two things indeed go together.

The other way, which is the way to knowledge, is the meditation in the head by which there comes the opening above, the quietude or silence of the mind and the descent of peace etc. of the higher consciousness generally till it envelops the being and fills the body and begins to take up all the movements. But this involves a passage through silence, a certain emptiness of the ordinary activities—they being pushed out and done as a purely superficial action—and you strongly dislike silence and emptiness. ...

If there is any secret or key of my Yoga which you say you have not found, it lies in these methods—and, in reality, there is nothing so mysterious, impossible or even new about them in themselves. It is only the farther development at a later stage and the aim of the Yoga that are new. But that one need not concern oneself with in the

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earlier stages unless one wishes to do so as a matter of
mental knowledge.” (CWSA 29: 210–211)

2.

“Here we have a process of Yoga that brings in an element which seems quite other than the Yoga of works and other even than the pure Yoga of knowledge by discrimination and contemplation; it belongs in all its characteristic features to the system, introduces the psycho-physical askesis of Rajayoga.” (CWSA 19: 238)

3.

“It is natural from the point of view of the Yoga to divide into two categories the activities of the human mind in its pursuit of knowledge. There is the supreme supra-intellectual knowledge which concentrates itself on the discovery of the One and Infinite in its transcendence or tries to penetrate by intuition, contemplation, direct inner contact into the ultimate truths behind the appearances of Nature; there is the lower science which diffuses itself in an outward knowledge of phenomena, the disguises of the One and Infinite as it appears to us in or through the more exterior forms of the world-manifestation around us.” (CWSA 23: 139)

4.

“Meditation by the way is a process leading towards knowledge and through knowledge, it is a thing of the head and not of the heart; so if you want dhyana, you can’t have an aversion to knowledge. Concentration in the heart is not meditation, it is a call on the Divine, on the Beloved. This Yoga too is not a Yoga of knowledge alone—knowledge is one of its means, but its base being self-offering, surrender, bhakti, it is based on the heart and nothing can be eventually done without this base. There are plenty of people here who do or have done Japa and base themselves on bhakti, very few comparatively who have done the ‘head’ meditation; love and bhakti and works are usually the base—how many can proceed by knowledge? Only the few.”(CWSA 29: 226–227)

5.

“The question of mental austerity immediately brings to mind long meditations leading to control of thought and culminating in inner silence.” (CWM 12: 57)

6.

“But in the path of knowledge as it is practised in India concentration is used in a special and more limited sense. It means that removal of the thought from all distracting activities of the mind and that concentration of it on the idea of the One by which the soul rises out of the

phenomenal into the one Reality. It is by the thought that we dissipate ourselves in the phenomenal; it is by the gathering back of the thought into itself that we must draw ourselves back into the real. Concentration has three powers by which this aim can be effected. By concentration on anything whatsoever we are able to know that thing, to make it deliver up its concealed secrets; we must use this power to know not things, but the one Thing-in-itself. By concentration again the whole will can be gathered up for the acquisition of that which is still ungrasped, still beyond us; this power, if it is sufficiently trained, sufficiently single-minded, sufficiently sincere, sure of itself, faithful to itself alone, absolute in faith, we can use for the acquisition of any object whatsoever; but we ought to use it not for the acquisition of the many objects which the world offers to us, but to grasp spiritually that one object worthy of pursuit which is also the one subject worthy of knowledge. By concentration of our whole being on one status of itself, we can become whatever we choose; we can become, for instance, even if we were before a mass of weaknesses and fears, a mass instead of strength and courage, or we can become all a great purity, holiness and peace or a single universal soul of Love; but we ought, it is said, to use this power to become not even these things, high as they may be in comparison with what we now are, but rather to become that which is above all things and free from all action and attributes, the pure and absolute Being.

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All else, all other concentration can only be valuable for preparation, for previous steps, for a gradual training of the dissolute and self-dissipating thought, will and being towards their grand and unique object.” (CWSA 23: 318)

7.

“Contemplation of God in Nature, contemplation and service of God in man and in the life of man and of the world in its past, present and future, are equally elements of which the Yoga of knowledge can make use to complete the realisation of God in all things.” (CWSA 23: 517)

VII—Objective of Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation in Yoga

1.

“The object of meditation is to open to the Mother and grow through many progressive experiences into a higher consciousness in union with the Divine.” (CWSA 29: 300)

2.

“What exactly is meant by meditation in Yoga? And what should be its objects?”

The difficulty our correspondent finds is in an apparent conflict of authorities, as sometimes meditation is recommended in the form of a concentrated succession of thoughts on a single subject, sometimes in the exclusive concentration of the mind on a single image, word or idea, a fixed contemplation rather than meditation. The choice between these two methods and others, for there are others, depends on the object we have in view in Yoga.

The thinking mind is the one instrument we possess at present by which we can arrive at a conscious self-organisation of our internal existence. But in most men thought is a confused drift of ideas, sensations and impressions which arrange themselves as best they can under the stress of a succession of immediate interests and utilities. In accordance with the general method of Nature much is used as waste material and only a small portion

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selected for definite and abiding formations. And as in physical Nature, so here the whole process is governed by laws which we rather suffer than use or control.

The concentration of thought is used by the Rajayogins to gain freedom and control over the workings of mind, just as the processes of governed respiration and fixed posture are used by the Hathayogins to gain freedom and control over the workings of the body and the vital functions.

By meditation we correct the restless wandering of the mind and train it like an athlete to economise all its energies and fix them on the attainment of some desirable knowledge or self-discipline. This is done normally by men in ordinary life, but Yoga takes this higher working of Nature and carries it to its full possibilities. It takes note of the fact that by fixing the mind luminously on a single object of thought, we awaken a response in general Consciousness which proceeds to satisfy the mind by pouring into it knowledge about that object or even reveals to us its central or its essential truth. We awaken also a response of Power which gives us in various ways an increasing mastery over the workings of that on which we meditate or enables us to create it and make it active in ourselves. Thus by fixing the mind on the idea of Divine Love, we can come to the knowledge of that principle and its workings, put ourselves into communion with it, create

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it in ourselves and impose its law on the heart and the senses.

In Yoga concentration is used also for another object,—to retire from the waking state, which is a limited and superficial condition of our consciousness, into the depths of our being measured by various states of Samadhi. For this process contemplation of the single object, idea or name is more powerful than the succession of concentrated thoughts. The latter, however, is capable, by bringing us into indirect but waking communion with the deeper states of being, of preparing an integral Samadhi. Its characteristic utility, however, is the luminous activity of formative thought brought under the control of the Purusha by which the rest of the consciousness is governed, filled with higher and wider ideas, changed rapidly into the mould of those ideas and so perfected. Other and greater utilities lie beyond, but they belong to a later stage of self-development.

In the Yoga of Devotion, both processes are equally used to concentrate the whole being or to saturate the whole nature with thoughts of the object of devotion, its forms, its essence, its attributes and the joys of adoration and union. Thought is then made the servant of Love, a preparer of Beatitude. In the Yoga of Knowledge meditation is similarly used for discrimination of the True from the apparent, the Self from its forms, and

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Yoga

concentrated contemplation for communion and entry of the individual consciousness into the Brahman.

An integral Yoga would harmonise all these aims. It would have also at its disposal other processes for the utilisation of thought and the mastery of the mind.” (CWSA 13: 445– 447)

3.

“His aspiration may be satisfied if he makes himself fit. Let him continue to read the *Arya* and practise daily meditation. In the meditation he should concentrate first in an aspiration that the central truths of which he reads should be made real to him in conscious experience and his mind opened to the calm, wideness, strength, peace, light and Ananda of the spiritual consciousness. Let him write to you from time to time what experiences he gets or what are the difficulties that rise and prevent the experience.”

[This letter and many other letters in this section were written by Sri Aurobindo to one of his secretaries. The secretary would reply to the correspondent over his own signature, quoting Sri Aurobindo’s exact words or else paraphrasing or translating them.—] (CWSA 35: 539)

4.

“You can answer that the Asram is only a residence for a

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number of Sri Aurobindo's disciples to stay and practise Yoga. As the number has become very large, it was necessary to organise it as an Asram, but it still retains its original character. Outsiders are not usually allowed to reside, for there is no provision for that. There are no religious discourses nor any set course of instruction. All is done by meditation, work for the Divine and self-opening to receive knowledge and experience from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother." (CWSA 35: 598)

5.

"What is most important [*in meditation*] is the change of consciousness of which this feeling of oneness is a part. The going deep in meditation is only a means and it is not always necessary if the great experiences come easily without it." (CWSA 29: 300)

6.

"What should be the objects or ideas for meditation?"

Whatever is most consonant with your nature and highest aspirations. But if you ask me for an absolute answer, then I must say that Brahman is always the best object for meditation or contemplation, and the idea on which the mind should fix is that of God in all, all in God and all as God. It does not matter essentially whether it is the Impersonal or the Personal God or, subjectively, the

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One Self. But this is the idea I have found the best, because it is the highest and embraces all other truths, whether truths of this world or of the other worlds or beyond all phenomenal existence,—‘All this is the Brahman.’

In the third issue of Arya, at the end of the second instalment of the Analysis of the Isha Upanishad, you will find a description of this vision of the [Brahman] which may be of help to you in understanding the idea.” (CWSA 36: 294–295)

VIII—Postures for Concentration or Meditation

1.

“The sitting motionless posture is the natural posture for concentrated meditation—walking and standing are active conditions suited for the dispense of energy and the activity of the mind. It is only when one has gained the enduring rest and passivity of the consciousness that it is easy to concentrate and receive when walking or doing anything. A fundamental passive condition of the consciousness gathered into itself is the proper poise for concentration and a seated gathered immobility in the body is the best for that. It can be done also lying down, but that position is too passive, tending to be inert rather than gathered. This is the reason why Yogis always sit in an asana. One can accustom oneself to meditate walking, standing, lying, but sitting is the first natural position.”
(CWSA 29: 311)

2.

“One can meditate very well when walking.”(CWSA 29: 311)

3.

“... that was when I used to meditate while walking.”
(CWSA 35: 29)

4.

“Conditions internal and external that are most essential for meditation.

There are no *essential* external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of the body are helpful, sometimes almost necessary to the beginner. But one should not be bound by external conditions. Once the habit of meditation is formed, it should be made possible to do it in all circumstances, lying, sitting, walking, alone, in company, in silence or in the midst of noise etc.” (CWSA 36: 295)

5.

“It is as each finds convenient. Some meditate better walking, some sitting.”(CWSA 29: 312)

6.

“The rigidity [*of the body during meditation*] comes very often when there is the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.” (CWSA 29: 312)

7.

“Meditation? Yes, but your meditation has got into a wrong Asana, that of an eager and vehement wrestling followed by a bitter despair. It is no use getting on with it like that; it is better to drop it till you get anew Asana. (I am referring to the old Rishis who established an Asana, a place and a

fixed position, where they would sit till they got siddhi—but if the Asana got successfully disturbed by wrong forces (Asuras, Apsaras etc.), they left it and sought for a new one.) Moreover, your meditation is lacking in quietude, you meditate with a striving mind—but it is in the quiet mind that the experience comes, as all Yogis agree—the still water that reflects rightly the sun. Your vital besides is afraid of quietude and emptiness, and that is because, probably, the strife and effort in you make what comes of them something neutral or desert, while they should be a restful quietude and an emptiness giving the sense of peace, purity or release, the cup made empty so that the soma-rasa of the spirit may be poured in it. That is why I would like you to desist from these too strenuous efforts and go on quietly, praying and meditating if you like but tranquilly without strain and too vehement striving, letting the prayer and meditation (not too much of the latter) prepare the mind and heart till things begin to flow into them in a spontaneous current when all is ready.” (CWSA 31: 197–198)

8.

“You need not meditate at once [*after waking in the morning*]—but for a few minutes take a concentrated attitude calling the Mother’s presence for the day.” (CWSA 31: 451)

IX—To Prepare for Spiritual Life Do Meditation and Concentration

1.

“The spiritual consciousness and spiritual life are exceedingly difficult to attain; it needs a deep and strong call and the turning of all the energies towards the one object to arrive at any kind of full success (siddhi). Even those who have cut off all other ties, find it difficult not to live in a double consciousness, one inward and turned towards the spiritual change and the other which is still chained to the ordinary movements and pulls them down from their spiritual experience into the persistent and unchanged course of the lower nature. If you have not the entire and undivided call, it is better not to take the plunge, unless you are prepared for very bitter inner struggles, great difficulties and relapses and a hampered and doubtful progress. It is better in that case to prepare yourself by meditation and concentration while still living in the family and the usual human life, until the spiritual attraction is strong enough to overshadow and destroy all others” (CWSA 35: 728)

2.

“Work by itself is only a preparation [for spiritual life], so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing Yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as

IX—To Prepare for Spiritual Life Do Meditation and Concentration meditation is.

I have not said, I hope, that work *only* prepares. Meditation also prepares for the direct contact. If we are to do work only as a preparation and then become motionless meditative ascetics, then all my spiritual teaching is false and there is no use for supramental realisation or anything else that has not been done in the past." (CWSA 29: 221)

3.

"I offer myself at your feet. Accept me as your child and show me the divine path. Give me directions and inform me what will be the attitude in my sadhana.

Write to him that he can begin sadhana, if he feels truly the call. He need do nothing at first but sit in meditation for a short time every day and try to open himself to the Mother's power, aspiring for the opening, for a true change of consciousness, for peace, purity and strength to go through the sadhana, for her protection against all difficulties and errors and for an always increasing devotion. Let him see first if he can thus successfully open himself." (CWSA 32: 152)

4.

"If you are born for this, for the yoga, and this is the thing which dominates all your existence, that you feel,

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yes, before knowing anything, that you need to find something which is in you, then sometimes a word is enough, a conversation which simply orients you—it is enough. But for those who are seeking, who grope, who are not absolutely sure, who are pulled this way and that, have many interests in life, are not steady, stabilised in their will for realisation, it is very good to read, because it puts them in touch with the subject, it gives them some interest in the thing.

...

But there is a kind of reading which awakens in you an interest in the thing and can help you in the first seekings. Usually, even if one has had experiences one needs a contact of thought or idea with the thing so that the effort may be crystallized more consciously. But the more one knows, the more one must be absolutely sincere in his experience, that is, he must not use the formative power of his mind to imagine and so create the experience in himself. From the point of view of orientation it can be useful; but from the point of view of the experience, it takes away from it its dynamic value, it has not the intensity of an experience which comes because the moral and spiritual conditions necessary for it to occur have been fulfilled. There is the whole mental conditioning which is added and which takes away something of the spontaneity. All this is a matter of proportion. Each one must find the exact amount he needs, how much of reading, how much

IX—To Prepare for Spiritual Life Do Meditation and Concentration meditation, how much concentration, how much... It is different for each one.” (CWM 7: 211–212)

5.

“Tell him he can meditate and put himself into spiritual relation with us and if anything opens in him he can write.” (CWSA 35: 546)

6.

“You can also tell him that there are two stages in the Yoga, one of preparation and one of the actual intensive sadhana. It is the first that he can undertake. In this stage aspiration in the heart with prayer, bhakti, meditation, a will to offer the life to the Divine are the important things. Purification of the nature is the first aim to be achieved. There should be no over-eagerness for experiences but such as come should be observed and, if helpful to the right attitude and true development, accepted. All that flatters the ego or feeds it should be rejected. There should be no impatience if the progress is slow or difficulties many—all should be done in a calm patience—and full reliance on the Divine Mother. This period tests the capacity of the sadhak and the sincerity of his aspiration towards the Divine.” (CWSA 35: 551)

7.

“As to Sarojini it is out of the question that she should

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come here. Make it plain to her that the Yoga I am doing now is much too difficult for her. Her coming here would be a waste of time and money. If she is in earnest about Sadhana she must begin with something much more easy. The first thing for her is to study these things, understand, get her mind prepared and begin with turning herself Godward, elimination of egoistic movements and perhaps doing works in the spirit of Karma Yoga; a meditation active and not passive with these things as the object is all she can safely try at the beginning. I have of course no objection to her turning to Theosophy if she is drawn that way. But for her to come into the concentrated atmosphere here just now would not be good for her and it would be disturbing to us. Please stop her coming here by whatever means you can.” 31st January, 1923.(CWSA 36: 351)

X—For Intensive Sadhana Sit in Deep Meditation

1.

“A sannyasi who makes demands is not sincere. To be sincere a sannyasi must be perfectly satisfied with what is given to him and ask for nothing more. In all that happens to him, he must see the Divine’s Grace and be at once happy and grateful for it.

Moreover, he who wants to do ‘intensive sadhana’ must be able to isolate himself from his surroundings and, if necessary, to sit in deep meditation even on a battlefield in the midst of the roaring guns.” (CWM 14: 47)

2.

“It is incorrect to say that the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace has been taken away from you and you are left with none at all. The true key has been given to you in the right kind or condition of meditation—a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any unquiet interference. Now that condition is the beginning of the psychic opening; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. In

this condition there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude." (CWSA 31: 191)

3.

"It is better to make the deeper concentration when you are alone or quiet. Outward sounds ought not to disturb you." (CWSA 29: 312)

4.

A Buddhist Story

"... I am going to tell you a story. It is a Buddhist story which perhaps you know, it is modern but has the merit of being authentic. I heard it from Madame Z who, as you probably know, is a well-known Buddhist, especially as she was the first European woman to enter Lhasa. Her journey to Tibet was very perilous and thrilling and she narrated one of the incidents of this journey to me, which I am going to tell you this evening.

She was with a certain number of fellow travellers forming a sort of caravan, and as the approach to Tibet was relatively easier through Indo-China, they were going from that side. Indo-China is covered with large forests, and these forests are infested with tigers, some of which become man-eaters... and when that happens they are called: 'Mr. Tiger.'

Late one evening, when they were in the thick of the forest—a forest they had to cross in order to be able to camp safely—Madame Z realised that it was her meditation hour. Now, she used to meditate at fixed times, very regularly, without ever missing one and as it was time for her meditation she told her companions, 'Continue the journey, I shall sit here and do my meditation, and when I have finished I shall join you; meanwhile, go on to the next stage and prepare the camp.' One of the coolies told her, 'Oh! no, Madam, this is impossible, quite impossible'—he spoke in his own language, naturally, but I must tell you Madame Z knew Tibetan like a Tibetan—'it is quite impossible, Mr. Tiger is in the forest and now is just the time for him to come and look for his dinner. We can't leave you and you can't stop here!' She answered that it did not bother her at all, that the meditation was much more important than safety, that they could all withdraw and that she would stay there alone.

Very reluctantly they started off, for it was

impossible to reason with her—when she had decided to do something nothing could prevent her from doing it. They went away and she sat down comfortably at the foot of a tree and entered into meditation. After a while she felt a rather unpleasant presence. She opened her eyes to see what it was... and three or four steps away, right in front of her was Mr. Tiger!—with eyes full of greed. So, like a good Buddhist, she said, 'Well, if this is the way by which I shall attain Nirvana, very good. I have only to prepare to leave my body in a suitable way, in the proper spirit.' And without moving, without even the least quiver, she closed her eyes again and entered once more into meditation; a somewhat deeper, more intense meditation, detaching herself completely from the illusion of the world, ready to pass into Nirvana.... Five minutes went by, ten minutes, half an hour—nothing happened. Then as it was time for the meditation to be over, she opened her eyes... and there was no tiger! Undoubtedly, seeing such a motionless body it must have thought it was not fit for eating! For tigers, like all wild animals, except the hyena, do not attack and eat a dead body. Impressed probably by this immobility—I dare not say by the intensity of the meditation!—it had withdrawn and she found herself quite alone and out of danger. She calmly went her way and on reaching camp said, 'Here I am.'

That's my story. Now we are going to meditate like

X—For Intensive Sadhana Sit in Deep Meditation

her, not to prepare ourselves for Nirvana (*laughter*), but to heighten our consciousness!” (CWM 9:53–54)

XI—Different Kinds of Meditation and Concentration

1.

“The nature of the meditation depends on the part of the being in which one is centred at the time. In the body (rather the subtle body than the physical, but connected with the corresponding parts in the gross physical body also) there are centres proper to each level of the being. There is a centre at the top of the head and above it which is that of the above mind or higher consciousness; a centre in the forehead between the eyebrows which is that of the thinking mind, mental will, mental vision; a centre in the throat which is that of the expressive or externalising mind: these are the mental centres. Below comes the vital—the heart (emotional), the navel (the dynamic life-centre), another below the navel in the abdomen which is the lower or sensational vital centre. Finally, at the bottom of the spine is the Muladhara or physical centre. Behind the heart is the psychic centre. If one concentrates in the head as many do it is a mental-spiritual meditation one seeks for, if in the heart it is a psychic meditation; these are the usual places where one concentrates. But what rises up first or opens first may not be the mental or psychic, but the emotional or the vital; that depends on the nature—for whatever is easiest to open in it, is likely to open first. If it is in the vital, then the meditation tends to project the

consciousness into the vital plane and its experiences. But from that one can get to the psychic by drawing more and more inwards ,not getting absorbed into the vital experiences but separating oneself and looking at them with detachment as if one were deep inside and observing things outside oneself. Similarly one can get the mental experiences by concentrating in the thought and by it bringing a corresponding experience, e.g. the thought of all being the Brahman, or one can draw back from the thought also and observe one's own thoughts as outside things until one enters into the silence and the pure spiritual experience." (CWSA 29: 306–307)

2.

"One can in any of the three centres which is easiest to the sadhak or gives most result. The power of the concentration in the heart-centre is to open that centre and by the power of aspiration, love, bhakti, surrender remove the veil which covers and conceals the soul and bring forward the soul or psychic being to govern the mind, life and body and turn and open the mall—fully—to the Divine, removing all that is opposed to that turning and opening.

This is what is called in this Yoga the psychic transformation. The power of concentration above the head is to bring peace, silence, liberation from the body sense, the identification with mind and life and open the way for the lower (mental vital-physical) consciousness to

rise up to meet the higher Consciousness above and for the powers of the higher (spiritual or divine) Consciousness to descend into mind, life and body. This is what is called in this Yoga the spiritual transformation. If one begins with this movement, then the Power from above has in its descent to open all the centres (including the lowest centre) and to bring out the psychic being; for until that is done there is likely to be much difficulty and struggle of the lower consciousness obstructing, mixing with or even refusing the Divine Action from above. If the psychic being is once active this struggle and these difficulties can be greatly minimised.

The power of concentration in the eyebrows is to open the centre there, liberate the inner mind and vision and the inner or Yogic consciousness and its experiences and powers. From here also one can open upwards and act also in the lower centres; but the danger of this process is that one may get shut up in one's mental spiritual formations and not come out of them into the free and integral spiritual experience and knowledge and integral change of the being and nature." (CWSA 29: 307)

3.

"There is no harm in concentrating sometimes in the heart and sometimes above the head. But concentration in either place does not mean keeping the attention fixed on a particular spot; you have to take your station of

consciousness in either place and concentrate there not on the place, but on the Divine. This can be done with eyes shut or with eyes open, according as it best suits you.

You can concentrate on the sun, but to concentrate on the Divine is better than to concentrate on the sun.”
(CWSA 29: 309)

4.

“There are all kinds of meditations.... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result—this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea—simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one’s power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquillity. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns.

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and moreover you will not be sure of the result; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else—simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and especially of what may not, and above all without desiring that something may come—simply, the joy of an aspiration which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more and more in a constant concentration. And there I may assure you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is, it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realised when you do this. These possibilities may be very different according to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be silent, going behind appearances, calling a force which answers, waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living

consciously in this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time something will happen.” (CWM4: 104–105)

5.

“The difference between meditating and concentrating?

Yes, Mother, because when one meditates, isn't there a concentration of the consciousness?

Meditation!

There are all kinds of different meditations! What people usually call meditation is, for example, choosing a subject or an idea and following its development or trying to understand what it means. There is a concentration but not as complete a concentration as in concentration proper, where nothing should exist except the point on which one concentrates. Meditation is a more relaxed movement, less tense than concentration.

When one is trying to understand a problem which comes up, a psychological problem or a circumstantial one, and he sits down and looks at and sees all the possibilities, compares them, studies them, this is a form of meditation; and one does it spontaneously when the thing comes up. When one is facing a decision to be taken, for instance, and doesn't know which one to take, well, ordinarily one

reflects, consults his reason, compares all the possibilities and makes his choice... more or less. Well, this is a form of meditation.

Now, there is the form of meditation which consists in a concentration on an idea and concentrating one's attention upon it to the extent that that alone exists; then this is the equivalent of a concentration, but instead of being total it is only mental.

Total concentration implies a concentration also of all the movements of the vital and physical. The method of gazing at a point is a very well-known one. So it is even physical, you see, one's eyes are fixed on this point, and one does not move any more... nothing more... one sees nothing, doesn't move his sight from that point, and the result usually is that one ends up by becoming that point. And I knew someone who used to say that one had to pass beyond the point, become this point, to the extent of passing to the other side, crossing the point, and that then one opened to higher regions. But it is true that if one succeeds in concentrating totally on a point, there is a moment when the identification is absolute, and there is no more any separation between the one who is concentrating and the thing upon which he is concentrated. There is a complete identification. One can't distinguish between himself and the point. This is a total concentration, while meditation is a particular concentration of the thought, a partial one.

The opening, Sweet Mother, for not thinking at all!

Not thinking at all is not easy; but if one wants a perfect concentration it is essential that there are no thoughts anymore." (CWM 7: 272–273)

6.

"It [*concentration in the heart*] is the best to 'start with'—but as you have already started with success on the two higher centres, there is no reason why you should discontinue that. The other you may try from time to time when you find a sufficient quietude. Concentration there leads—or should lead—to the psychic opening." (CWSA 29:310–311)

7.

"Concentration in the heart is best aided if possible by the power and light descending from above the head." (CWSA 29: 311)

8.

"At the top of the head or above it is the right place for Yogic concentration in reading or thinking." (CWSA 29: 311)

9.

"You can concentrate the consciousness anywhere in any centre. You have only to think of yourself as centrally there and try to fix and keep that. A strain or any effort to do so is not necessary but a quiet and steady dwelling in the idea.

Most people associate consciousness with the brain or mind because that is the centre for intellectual thought and mental vision, but consciousness is not limited to that kind of thought or vision. It is everywhere in the system and there are several centres of it, e.g., the centre for inner concentration is not in the brain but in the heart,—the originating centre of vital desire is still lower down.

The two main places where one can centre the consciousness for Yoga are in the head and in the heart—the mind-centre and the soul-centre." (CWSA 29: 309–310)

10.

"Replace the *śrāddha* by a long meditation with X on the father praying that he may have all the rest and illumination that the departed can have." (CWSA 28: 414)

11.

"You need not have qualms about the time you give to action and creative work. Those who have an expansive creative vital or a vital made for action are usually at their best when the vital is not held back from its movement and

XI—Different Kinds of Meditation and Concentration

they can develop faster by it than by introspective meditation. All that is needed is that the action should be dedicated, so that they may grow by it more and more prepared to feel and follow the Divine Force when it moves them. It is a mistake to think that to live in introspective meditation all the time is invariably the best or the only way of Yoga.” (CWSA 29: 221–222)

XII—Right Spirit of Meditation

1.

“Even works or meditation cannot succeed unless they are done in the right spirit of consecration and spiritual aspiration gathering up the whole being and dominating all else. It is the lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here, that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and the Mother.” (CWSA 27: 712) (CWSA 31: 79)

2.

“A daily meditation of the kind would help you perhaps if you kept always the right attitude; but if you keep the right attitude, you will not need any such routine of outward means, the help the Mother is always giving you would be more than sufficient.” (CWSA 32: 514)

3.

“It does not matter if strenuous meditation leads to experiences or not. Remember what I told you that it is the psychic growth and not experiences that are the road for you just now. That means three things—1st, the drawing back from the vital ego and its perturbations to a quiet attitude of faith and surrender; 2nd, the growth of something within that sees what is to be changed in the

nature and gives the impulse to change it; 3rd, the psychic feeling in sadhana which presses towards the growth of bhakti, feels it a joy simply to think, feel, write, speak of, remember the Divine, grows full of a quiet self-upliftment towards the Divine and lives in that more than in outward things. When the consciousness is full of these things altogether, i.e. when there is the full psychic state or opening, then experiences begin to come of themselves. The first two at least had started of themselves in you—let them grow and the third should necessarily follow. The psychic opening first, the higher consciousness and its experiences afterwards.” (CWSA 30: 347–348)

4.

“The attitude of spiritual meditation is to concentrate so as to receive or attain the spiritual truth—what means one takes depends upon the way, the path, the person.” (CWSA 29: 301)

5.

“The cessation of thought is the one thing which the believer in intellect as the highest term of our evolution cannot contemplate with equanimity. To master the fleeting randomness of thought by regulating the intellectual powers and thinking consecutively and clearly is an ideal he can understand. But to still this higher development of thought seems to him the negation of

human activity, a reversion to the condition of the stone. Yet it is certain that it is only by the stilling of the lower that the higher gets full play. So long as the body and the vital desires are active the mind is necessarily distracted and it is only when the body is forgotten and the vital part consents to quietude that a man can concentrate himself in thought and follow undisturbed the consecutive development whether of a train of reasoning or a train of inspiration." (CWSA 12: 23)

6.

"I have never put any ban on bhakti. Also I am not conscious of having banned meditation either at any time. I have stressed both bhakti and knowledge in my Yoga as well as works, even if I have not given any of them an exclusive importance like Shankara or Chaitanya.

The difficulty you feel or any sadhak feels about sadhana is not really a question of meditation versus bhakti versus works. It is a difficulty of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you may like to call it." (CWSA 29: 214)

7.

"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)

8.

“But the action of the Mother in the meditation is at once collective and individual. She is trying to bring down the right consciousness in the atmosphere of the Asram—for the action of the minds and vital of the sadhaks does create a general atmosphere. She has taken this meditation in the evening as a brief period in which all is concentrated in the sole force of the descending Power. The sadhaks must feel that they are there only to concentrate, only to receive, only to be open to the Mother and nothing else matters.” November 1934(CWSA 32: 527–528)

9.

“I don’t think you understood very well what Mother was trying to tell you. First of all she did not say that prayers or meditation either were no good—how could she when both count for so much in Yoga? What she said was that the prayer must well up from the heart on a crest of emotion or aspiration, the Japa or meditation come in a live push carrying the joy or the light of the thing in it. If done mechanically and merely as a thing that ought to be done (stern grim duty!), it must tend towards want of interest and dryness and so be ineffective. It was what I meant

when I said I thought you were doing Japa too much as a means for bringing about a result—I meant too much as a device, a process laid down for getting the thing done. That again was why I wanted the psychological conditions in you to develop, the psychic, the mental—for when the psychic is forward, there is no lack of life and joy in the prayer, the aspiration, the seeking, no difficulty in having the constant stream of bhakti and when the mind is quiet and in turned and upturned there is no difficulty or want of interest in meditation.” (CWSA 29: 226–227)

10.

“To keep constantly a concentrated and in-gathered attitude is more important than having fixed hours of meditation.” (CWM 14: 53)

XIII—How to Meditate and Contemplate

A—The quieting of the mind and purification of the heart

B— Meditation from the heart

1.

“As for the way out of the impasse, I know only of the quieting of the mind which makes meditation effective, purification of the heart which brings the divine touch and in time the divine presence, humility before the Divine which liberates from egoism and the pride of the mind and of the vital, the pride that imposes its own reasonings on the ways of the spirit and the pride that refuses or is unable to surrender, sustained persistence in the call within and reliance on the Grace above. These things come by the inner discipline ... Meditation, japa, prayer or aspiration from the heart can all succeed, if they are attended by these or even some of these things. But I do not know that you can be promised what you always make the condition of any inner endeavour, an immediate or almost immediate realization or beginning of concrete realisation. I fully believe on the other hand that one who has the call in him cannot fail to arrive, if he follows patiently the way towards the Divine.” (CWSA 35: 619) (CWSA 29: 47–48)

2.

"... so long as there is not the complete silence of the mind and the automatic action in the silence. But the quiet mind is entirely necessary if you meditate with the Mother. Otherwise the mind goes on with its activities on its own lines and cannot be conscious of or receptive to the Mother's movement." (CWSA 32: 529–530)

3.

"It is not an undesirable thing for the mind to fall silent, to be free from thoughts and still—for it is oftenest when the mind falls silent that there is the full descent of a wide peace from above and in that wide tranquillity the realisation of the silent Self above the mind spread out in its vastnesses everywhere. Only, when there is the peace and the mental silence, the vital mind tries to rush in and occupy the place or else the mechanical mind tries to raise up for the same purpose its round of trivial habitual thoughts. What the sadhaka has to do is to be careful to reject and hush these outsiders, so that during the meditation at least the peace and quietude of the mind and vital may be complete. This can be done best if you keep a strong and silent will. That will is the will of the Purusha behind the mind; when the mind is at peace, when it is silent one can become aware of the Purusha, silent also, separate from the action of the nature." (CWSA 29: 160)

4.

"When one sits for meditation, one can sometimes succeed in establishing mental silence. But how can one fix this as a constant experience? Because the moment one throws oneself into activity, the mental disturbance begins again!"

One can have a quiet mind without being in a complete state of silence; one can carry on an activity without being disturbed. The ideal is to be able to act without coming out of the mental quietude.

One can do everything while keeping the mind quiet, and what one does is better done." (CWM 16: 344)

C—Stillness in the meditation

5.

"That is good progress. ...

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness." (CWSA 30: 489)

6.

"There are always difficulties and a hampered progress in the early stages and a delay in the opening of the inner doors until the being is ready. If you feel whenever you

meditate, the quiescence and the flashes of the inner Light and if the inward urge is growing so strong that the external hold is decreasing and the vital disturbances are losing their force, that is already a great progress. The road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures.” (CWSA 29: 110)

D—Aspiration in meditation

E— Rejection of all that disturbs

7.

“The first conditions of this Yoga are:

...

A fundamental calm, peace and purity in the mind, vital being and all the nature.

The hours of meditation should be devoted to the formation of these two conditions in you, by aspiration and by self observation and rejection of all that disturbs the nature or keeps it troubled, confused and impure. Aspiration if rightly done, quietly, earnestly and sincerely, brings the divine help from above to effect this object.” (CWSA 29: 43–44)

8.

“By meditation alone and trying to concentrate you will never succeed. There must be an aspiration from the heart and a giving up of all yourself to Krishna.

In your nature there are many obstacles, chiefly a great activity of the outward-going mind and a thick crust of the impure lower Prakriti that covers the heart and the vital being. Quieting of the mind and purification of the nature are what you must have before you can fulfil your aim. Aspire for these two things first; ask for them constantly from above. You will not be able to achieve them by your own unaided effort.” (CWSA 29: 47)

9.

“The other way is concentration; you concentrate your consciousness in the heart (some do it in the head or above the head) and meditate on the Mother in the heart and call her in there. One can do either and both at different times—whatever comes naturally to you or you are moved to do at the moment. Especially in the beginning the one great necessity is to get the mind quiet, reject at the time of meditation all thoughts and movements that are foreign to the sadhana. In the quiet mind there will be a progressive preparation for the experience. But you must not become impatient if all is not done at once; it takes time to bring entire quiet into the mind; you have to go on till the consciousness is ready.” (CWSA 29: 106)

10.

“But for the moment progress through concentration and inner experience is the first necessity for you.

This [stream of thoughts] is what we call the activity of the mind, which always comes in the way of the concentration and tries to create doubt and dispersion of the energies. It can be got rid of in two ways, by rejecting it and pushing it out, till it remains as an outside force only—by bringing down the higher peace and light into the physical mind.” (CWSA 29: 225)

11.

“How should I meditate?”

Fix your mind on the aspiration and dismiss everything else.

If thoughts come, what should I do?

Dismiss them.” (CWM 17: 14)

12.

“When useless thoughts interfere with my concentration, how am I to remember the Mother and lay them before her?”

Aspire at the time—they will of themselves be open to the Mother.” (CWSA 32: 526–527)

F—Open yourself to receive the Divine force

13.

"Sweet Mother,

Are You with us during the collective meditation at the Playground?

Certainly, I am always there.

To benefit from it, what should we meditate on? And how?

The method is always the same. Gather together the energies in you that are usually dispersed outside; concentrate your consciousness within, beneath the surface agitation, and establish, as far as possible, a perfect quietness in your heart and head; then formulate your aspiration, if you have one, and open yourself to receive the divine force from above." (CWM 17: 355)

14.

"When I try to meditate in the Mother's presence, my concentration breaks. There is a rush of thoughts, such as 'what is the Mother bringing down?' and 'what is the Mother's will?' Why does this happen?

It is simply a bad habit of the mind, a wrong activity. It is

not in the least useful for the mind to ask or try to determine what the Mother wills or is bringing—that only interferes. It has simply to remain quiet and concentrated and leave the Power to act.” (CWSA 32: 529)

G—Lift the consciousness as high as possible

H—Widen the receptivity

I—Bring down the Divine force into ourselves

15.

“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.” (CWM 4: 106)

J—Making time for meditation

16.

“I understand that you have arrived at a prolonged lull or period of emptiness in your sadhana. This often happens especially when one is thrown out into the physical and external consciousness. The nervous and physical parts then become prominent and seem to become the standard of the being with that disappearance of the Yoga consciousness and the sensitiveness to small and outward things which you describe. A stage like this however may very well be an interval before a fresh progress. What you have to do is to insist on making time for meditation—at any time of the day when you are least likely to be disturbed—and through the meditation getting back the touch. There may be some difficulty because the physical

consciousness is uppermost, but a persistent aspiration will bring it back. When once you again feel the connection re-established between the inner being and the outer, call down the peace and light and power into the latter so as to build up a basis for a constant consciousness in the most external mind and being which will accompany you in work and action as much as in meditation and solitude.” (CWSA 31: 368)

17.

“I could not decide whether to give up my present work or to change it. Then I thought I will leave the work in order to meditate. But I do not know what is good for me. You alone know everything.

It is a mistake to exercise the mind about these things and try to arrange them with the ordinary mind. It is by confidence in the Mother that the opening needed will come when your consciousness is ready. There is no harm in arranging your present work so that there will be time and energy for some meditation, but it is not by meditation alone that what is needed will come. It is by faith and openness to the Mother.” (CWSA 32: 156)

18.

“What Mother would like you to do is to come to the Meditation and Pranam putting aside all feelings of ego,

anger, quarrel with others, demand for this or that, thinking only of your sadhana and making yourself quiet to receive from her the only things that are really precious and needful.” (CWSA 32: 529)

19.

“A great store of light, Ananda, knowledge and power seems to be above the head about to descend into me. Ideas are coming to me that I have to continue my silence for some indefinite period, that I have not to mix or talk with any person and that I have not to go out of my room or the house except on the Darshan and the Pranam days.

Sri Aurobindo says that you must on no account omit your coming to meditation every evening. I entirely agree that this attendance is absolutely necessary.” (CWM 13: 179)

K—Call on the Mother

20.

“In meditation you must call on the Mother and concentrate on the call in your heart till you feel an opening to her or some inner contact with her.” (CWSA 32: 158–159)

21.

"My wife wishes to have explicit instructions from the Mother as to which of the following two procedures would be most conducive to her spiritual evolution:

(1) Should she meditate on the Lotus of the Heart and think of Mother as the Light of Lights situated therein, which is the real Bliss, Omnipresent and Omniscient, which supports everything in the universe and which sustains all by giving support and life to every variety of existence?

(2) Or should she think of Mother in her present form which she sees during Pranam, as separate from her physically and apart from her in her suite at the Ashram?

She has been brought up and moulded spiritually in the first way. She always cognises the Divine as Formless, Immanent and Omnipresent. But now if you advise it, she is willing to worship the Mother in her heart in a personal way.

To meditate on the Mother as the formless Divine is a good meditation and can be continued, but for the full effect in this Yoga it is not enough. To meditate on the personality of the Mother in the heart is also necessary—but whether she should do that now or not depends on the feeling in herself—whether she needs it or feels ready for it." (CWSA 32: 64–65)

22.

"What I want of you is not to love the Mother from a distance, but to become accustomed to feel her presence, her help, the working of her forces even when she is not physically present and this not only in your sleep or inward-drawn condition (which seems to be sufficiently easy for you) but in your waking consciousness whether in meditation or in ordinary hours. And this I want because it would give a great push to your Yoga. It would besides give a deeper meaning and power to your physical contact with her. I am sure that all this will come fully in time." (CWSA 32: 462)

23.

"When I sit down for meditation, I pray for Mother's Force to take over my meditation and make it deep, steady, concentrated and free from all attacks of troubling thoughts, vital restlessness, etc.

This is part of the sadhana." (CWSA 32: 317)

L—Repeat the name of the Mother

24.

"Sometimes when I sit in meditation, I say 'Ma—Ma—Ma.' Then everything becomes quiet and I feel great peace inside and outside me. Even in the atmosphere around me, I hear 'Ma—Ma—Ma.' Is this real or is it only echoes?

The atmosphere you carry around you is part of your consciousness as much as the rest that you feel inside you. When you repeat the name of the Mother, it begins to echo in all your consciousness, outside as well as inside you. What you experience therefore is quite true and it is a good experience.” (CWSA 32: 478–479)

25.

“What attitude should I take during my meditation with the Mother? Last time I could not properly receive the Mother’s Force or become conscious of her working.

To be conscious of the Force or working in a meditation with the Mother, the consciousness must be still and passive to her. If one is accustomed to be active and make one’s own formations, that stands in the way and must be suspended during the meditation.” (CWSA 32: 512–513)

26.

“Sri Aurobindo says in reply to your letter that you can meditate on the Mother in the heart and call on her—remember her and dedicate or offer to her all your life and thoughts and actions. If you like you can make a japa of her name. You can call to her to purify your being and change your nature.

Or you can concentrate to call down from above you (where it always is) first her calm and peace, then her

power and light and her ananda. It is always there above the head—but superconscient to the human mind—by aspiration and concentration it can become conscient to it and the adhar can open to it so that it descends and enters into mind, life and body.” (CWSA 32: 154–155)

M—In meditation receive from within

27.

“To try to receive within is always the true thing, whether through meditation or pranam.” (CWSA 32: 563)

N—Make yourself blank in meditation and unprejudiced

28.

“What are the forces that are in operation when one is in silent meditation?”

That depends upon the one who meditates.

But in silent meditation does he not make himself a complete blank? Then how can anything depend upon him?

Even if you make yourself an absolute blank, that does not change the nature of your aspiration or alter its domain. In some the aspiration moves on the mental level or in the

vital field; some have a spiritual aspiration. On the quality of the aspiration depends the force that answers and the work that it comes to do. To make yourself blank in meditation creates an inner silence; it does not mean that you have become nothing or have become a dead and inert mass. Making yourself an empty vessel, you invite that which shall fill it. It means that you release the stress of your inner consciousness towards realisation. The nature of the consciousness and the degree of its stress determine the forces that you bring into play and whether they shall help and fulfil or fail or even harm and hinder.

...

In your meditation the first imperative need is a state of perfect and absolute sincerity in all the consciousness. It is indispensable that you should not deceive yourself or deceive or be deceived by others. Often people have a wish, a mental preference or vital desire; they want the experience to happen in a particular way or to take a turn that satisfies their ideas or desires or preferences; they do not keep themselves blank and unprejudiced and simply and sincerely observe what happens. Then if you do not like what happens, it is easy to deceive yourself; you will see one thing, but give it a little twist and make it something else, or you will distort something simple and straightforward or magnify it into an extraordinary experience. When you sit in meditation you must be as candid and simple as a child, not interfering by your

external mind, expecting nothing, insisting on nothing. Once this condition is there, all the rest depends upon the aspiration deep within you. If you ask from within for peace, it will come; if for strength, for power, for knowledge, they too will come, but all in the measure of your capacity to receive it. And if you call upon the Divine, then too—always admitting that the Divine is open to your call, and that means your call is pure enough and strong enough to reach him,—you will have the answer.” (CWM 3: 97–99)

29.

“What does ‘the degree of its stress’ mean?”

Aspiration and will produce a stress in the being. But I say ‘degree’, for there is also the point upon which the stress works.

I say ‘to make yourself blank’ is to release the stress of your consciousness towards realisation, towards the goal you want to realise. The ‘stress’ is the pressure upon a point, what is concentrated upon a point and insists that it be done. Consciousness—the consciousness of the being, individual consciousness—puts a pressure upon a point, you see. We may take the example we were just speaking of: you have a chronic illness, a malformation of the body, a physical defect. Then your consciousness, in its

aspiration and will puts a more or less constant stress on the thing it wants to realise, what you want to cure.

Well, when you make yourself empty within in meditation (this is one form of meditation if you like), this means that you stop this concentration of will: your consciousness becomes neutral for the moment. Its stress is upon this point (it may be on other points, on things more or less concrete or abstract, but the stress is on one point) and when you make yourself empty you withdraw this pressure, this stress, and you remain like a blank page upon which nothing is written. This is what I call 'making yourself empty', not to have any active will concentrated upon one point or another. And so I say the moment you make yourself empty, the stress indeed stops, and yet in your silent aspiration you put yourself in contact with the forces attracted by this stress you usually have, the special point of stress you have normally. That is why I have emphasised the fact that all depends upon the person, because everything depends upon his habitual aspiration, the thing he usually wants to realise, for he is naturally in touch with the forces which will answer his aspiration. So, if for a certain time one stops the activity of this aspiration and remains silently receptive, passive, well, the effect of the habitual aspiration remains and will draw just those forces which ought to answer it." (CWM 4: 282–283)

O—Standing back from one's thought and observeing

30.

"To observe the thought, the first movement then is to step back and look at it, to separate yourself from your thoughts so that the movement of the consciousness and that of thought may not be confused. Thus when we say that one must observe one's thoughts, do not believe that it is so simple; it is the first step. I suggest that this evening in our meditation we take up this first exercise which consists in standing back from one's thought and looking at it." (CWM 3: 184)

31.

"If the difficulty in meditation is that thoughts of all kinds come in, that is not due to hostile forces but to the ordinary nature of the human mind. All sadhaks have this difficulty and with many it lasts for a very long time. There are several ways of getting rid of it. One of them is to look at the thoughts and observe what is the nature of the human mind as they show it but not to give any sanction and to let them run down till they come to a standstill—this is a way recommended by Vivekananda in his *Rajayoga*. Another is to look at the thoughts as not one's own, to stand back as the witness Purusha and refuse the sanction—the thoughts are regarded as things coming

from outside, from Prakriti, and they must be felt as if they were passers-by crossing the mind-space with whom one has no connection and in whom one takes no interest. In this way it usually happens that after a time the mind divides into two, a part which is the mental witness watching and perfectly undisturbed and quiet and a part which is the object of observation, the Prakriti part in which the thoughts cross or wander. Afterwards one can proceed to silence or quiet the Prakriti part also. There is a third, an active method by which one looks to see where the thoughts come from and finds they come not from oneself, but from outside the head as it were; if one can detect them coming, then, *before they enter*, they have to be thrown away altogether. This is perhaps the most difficult way and not all can do it, but if it can be done it is the shortest and most powerful road to silence.” (CWSA 29: 301–302)

P—Penetrate the subtler consciousness

32.

“Sweet Mother,

You told me to enter within, into the depths of my heart, to find You seated there. But, Mother, I cannot manage to enter into the heart. I feel during meditation that my consciousness is flying around an impenetrable

fortress. What should I do to succeed in what You have told me?

This happens because you are trying to enter with a superficial consciousness which does not have contact with the inner states of being. You have to go out of this external consciousness and penetrate into a subtler consciousness; then the fortress will no longer be impenetrable." (CWM 16: 330)

Q—In Each meditation something new happens

33.

"Each meditation ought to be a new revelation, for in each meditation something new happens." (CWM 14: 52)

R—Keep a steady will to meditate

34.

"It is not a fact that when there is obscurity or inertia, one cannot concentrate or meditate. If one has in the inner being the steady will to do it, it can be done." (CWSA 29: 317–318)

35.

"It is quite natural to want to meditate while reading Yogic literature—that is not the laziness.

The laziness of the mind consists in not meditating when the consciousness wants to do so.” (CWSA 29: 318)

36.

“Naturally one does not get tired if the meditation has become natural. But if the capacity is not there yet, then many cannot go on without a strain which brings fatigue.” (CWSA 29: 318)

S—Concentration in meditation

37.

“Concentration is very helpful and necessary—the more one concentrates(of course in the limits of the body’s capacity without straining it), the more the force of the Yoga grows. But you must be prepared for the meditation being sometimes not successful and not get upset by it—for that variability of the meditations happens to everybody. There are different causes for it. But it is mostly something physical that interferes, either the need of the body to take time to assimilate what has come or been done or sometimes inertia or dullness due to causes such as those you mention or others. The best thing is to remain quiet and not get nervous or dejected—till the force acts again.” (CWSA 29: 318)

T—Psychic opening

38.

“As for sadhana what is necessary is to arrive at a certain quiet of the inner mind which makes meditation fruitful or a quietude of the heart which creates the psychic opening. It is only by regular concentration, constant aspiration and a will to purify the mind and heart of the things that disquiet and agitate them that this can be done. When a certain basis has been established in these two centres the experiences come of themselves. Many, no doubt, get some kind of experiences such as visions etc. Before the basis is well laid by a sort of mental or vital aptitude for these things, but such experiences do not of themselves lead to transformation or realisation—it is by the quietude of the mind and the psychic opening that these greater things can come.” (CWSA 30: 44–45)

39.

“It was by your personal efforts without guidance that you got into difficulties and into a heated condition in which you could not meditate etc. I asked you to drop the effort and remain quiet and you did so. My intention was that by your remaining quiet, it would be possible for the Mother’s Force to work in you and establish a better starting-point and a course of initial experiences. It was what was beginning to come; but if your mind again becomes active

and tries to arrange the sadhana for itself, then disturbances are likely to come. The Divine Guidance works best when the psychic is open and in front (yours was beginning to open), but it can also work even when the sadhak is either not conscious of it or else knows it only by its results." (CWSA 29: 316) (CWSA 32: 297)

U—The mantra is one of these psycho-spiritual symbols that can be used in meditation

40.

"But the most direct spiritual use of the psychic consciousness is to make it an instrument of contact, communication and union with the Divine. A world of psycho-spiritual symbols is readily opened up, illuminating and potent and living forms and instruments, which can be made a revelation of spiritual significances, a support for our spiritual growth and the evolution of spiritual capacity and experience, a means towards spiritual power, knowledge or Ananda. The mantra is one of these psycho-spiritual means, at once a symbol, an instrument and a sound body for the divine manifestation, and of the same kind are the images of the Godhead and of its personalities or powers used in meditation or for adoration in Yoga. The great forms or bodies of the Divine are revealed through which he manifests his living presence to us and we can more easily by their means intimately know, adore and give

ourselves to him and enter into the different lokas, worlds of his habitation and presence, where we can live in the light of his being. His word, command, Adesha, presence, touch, guidance can come to us through our spiritualised psychic consciousness and, as a subtly concrete means of transmission from the spirit, it can give us a close communication and nearness to him through all our psychic senses. These and many more are the spiritual uses of the psychic consciousness and sense and, although capable of limitation and deformation,—for all secondary instruments can be also by our mental capacity of exclusive self-limitation means of a partial but at the same time hindrances to a more integral realisation,—they are of the greatest utility on the road to the spiritual perfection and afterwards, liberated from the limitation of our minds, transformed and supramentalised, an element of rich detail in the spiritual Ananda.” (CWSA 24: 879–880)

V—Live Quietly and Noiselessly and Allow Others to Meditate

41.

“The Ashram is meant for Yoga, not for musical entertainment or other social activities.

‘Those that live in the Ashram are requested to live quietly and noiselessly and if they are not capable themselves of meditation they must, at least, leave the others to meditate.” (CWM 13: 116)

XIV—Going into the Inner Consciousness in Meditation and Concentration

1.

“In any case, if he wants to go into the inner consciousness and move in the inner planes—which will inevitably happen if he shuts off the waking consciousness in his meditation—he must cast away fear. Probably he expected to get the silence or the touch of the divine consciousness by following out the suggestion of the Gita. But the silence or the touch of the divine consciousness can be equally and for some more easily got in the waking meditation through the Mother’s presence and the descent from above. The inward movement, however, is probably unavoidable and he should try to understand and, not shrinking or afraid, to go to it with the same confidence and faith in the Mother as he has in the waking meditation. His dreams are of course experiences on the inner (vital) plane.” (CWSA 30: 221)

2.

“There is an inner being and an inmost being which we call the psychic. When one meditates, one tries to go into the inner being. If one does it, then one feels very well that one has gone inside. What can be realised in meditation can also become the ordinary consciousness in which one lives. Then one feels what is now the ordinary

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consciousness to be something quite external and on the surface, not one's real self." (CWSA 30: 236)

3.

"It is quite natural that at first there should be the condition of calm and peace only when you sit for concentration. What is important is that there should be this condition whenever you sit and the pressure for it always there. But at other times the result is at first only a certain mental quiet and freedom from thoughts. Afterwards when the condition of peace is quite settled in the inner being—for it is the inner into which you enter whenever you concentrate—then it begins to come out and control the outer, so that the calm and peace remain even when working, mixing with others, talking or other occupations. For then whatever the outer consciousness is doing, one feels the inner being calm within—indeed one feels the inner being as one's real self while the outer is something superficial through which the inner acts on life." (CWSA 29: 313)

4.

"You must find the Divine first, whether in yourself by interiorisation and concentration, or in Sri Aurobindo and me through love and self-giving. Once you have found the Divine you will naturally see Him in all things and everywhere." (CWM 16: 160)

XV—Meditation or Concentration to Contact the Psychic Being

1.

“Some people are just intellectuals; for them everything is expressed by ideas and not by images. But if they were to go down into a more material domain, well, they risk not touching things in their concrete reality and remaining only in the domain of ideas, remaining in the mind and remaining there indefinitely. Then one thinks one is making progress, and mentally one has done so, though it is something altogether indefinite.

The mind’s progress may take thousands of years, for it is a very vast and very indefinite field, which is constantly renewed. But if one wants to progress in the vital and physical, well, this imaged representation becomes very useful for fixing the action, making it more concrete. Naturally it doesn’t happen completely at will; it depends on each one’s nature. But those who have the power of concentrating with images, well, they have one more facility.

To sit in meditation before a closed door, as though it were a heavy door of bronze—and one sits in front of it with the will that it may open—and to pass to the other side; and so the whole concentration, the whole aspiration is gathered into a beam and pushes, pushes, pushes against this door, and pushes more and more with an

increasing energy until all of a sudden it bursts open and one enters. It makes a very powerful impression. And so one is as though plunged into the light and then one has the full enjoyment of a sudden and radical change of consciousness, with an illumination that captures one entirely, and the feeling that one is becoming another person. And this is a very concrete and very powerful way of entering into contact with one's psychic being." (CWM 7: 268)

2.

"What does the liberation of the psychic being mean?"

Because one has the feeling—this is a feeling one very often has in the beginning of the sadhana—that the psychic being is as though shut up in a kind of hard shell, a prison, and that this is what prevents it from manifesting outwardly and entering into a conscious and constant relation with the outer consciousness, the outer being. One has altogether the feeling that it is as though enclosed in a box or in a prison with walls which must be broken or a door which must be forced in order to be able to enter. So naturally if one can break the walls, open the door, it liberates the psychic being which was shut in and which can now manifest externally. All these are images. But each person, naturally, has his own personal image, his personal method, with small modifications.

Some of these images are very common to all those who have had the experience. For example, when one goes down into the depths of one's being to find the psychic right at the bottom of one's consciousness, there is this image of descending into a deep well, going down deeper and deeper, descending, and it is as though one were truly sinking into a well.

Naturally all these are analogies; but they are associations with the experience of impressions which give a great deal of force and concrete reality to the experience.

As when one goes on the discovery of one's inner being, of all the different parts of one's being, one very often has the feeling that one is entering deep into a hall or room, and according to the colour, the atmosphere, the things it contains, one has a very clear perception of the part of the being one is visiting. And then, one can go from one room to another, open doors and go into deeper and deeper rooms each of which has its own character. And often, these inner visits can be made during the night. Then it takes a still more concrete form, like a dream, and one feels that he is entering a house, and that this house is very familiar to him. And according to the time, the periods, it is internally different, and sometimes it may be in a state of very great disorder, very great confusion, where everything is mixed up; sometimes there are even broken things; it is quite a chaos. At other times these things are organised, put in their place; it is as though one

had arranged the household, one cleans up, puts it in order, and it is always the same house. This house is the image, a kind of objective image, of your inner being. And in accordance with what you see there or do there, you have a symbolic representation of your psychological work." (CWM 7: 266–267)

3.

"The reason why she remembers nothing when she comes out of her meditation is that the experience is taking place in the inner being and the outer consciousness is not ready to receive it. Formerly her sadhana was mainly on the vital plane which is often the first to open and the connection of that plane with the body consciousness is easy to establish because they are nearer to each other. Even then however her body was suffering because of attacks from the hostile elements in the vital plane. Now the sadhana seems to have gone inward into the psychic being. This is a great advance and she need not mind the want of connection with the most external consciousness at present. The work goes on all the same and it is probably necessary that it should be so just now. Afterwards, if she keeps steadily to the right attitude, it will descend into the outer consciousness." (CWSA 30: 236–237)

4.

“It is by meditation, by concentration, by the constant turning or call [*that aspiration and openness may be cultivated*]*—secondly, by the keeping of the mind and vital still for the descent of the Presence, peace, light, Ananda and for the psychic being to emerge. When the psychic being is in front, the descent constant, then the constant feeling of the Divine in you and of yourself in the Divine becomes more easy to have.*” (CWSA 30: 387)

5.

“One has to open through concentration in the heart centre or above the head, in the former case to the psychic, in the latter to the higher Truth. But without the psychic preparation or at least a thorough purification of the being, the latter course is not safe.” (CWSA 29: 310)

6.

“It may be better to concentrate in the heart rather than in the mind, offer yourself from there and call the Mother into the heart leaving the thoughts to fall silent of themselves. Otherwise with the present method [concentration above the head] you have simply to persevere till the present brief and imperfect stillings of the mind become longer and deeper.” (CWSA 29: 310)

7.

“The concentration in the heart is what brings about the

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opening of the psychic which is your principal need. If the concentration has brought about a feeling which makes you judge clearly all the other movements and see their nature, then the psychic is already in action. For this is the psychic feeling which brings with it a clear insight into the nature of all movements that come and makes it easy to reject what has to be rejected and keep the right attitude and perception. It does not matter about the image of the Mother. It is her presence whether in form or not that has to be felt always and this the psychic opening will surely bring.” (CWSA 29: 310)

8.

“To enter into contact with the psychic consciousness, a patient concentration is indeed necessary.” (CWM 17: 95)

9.

“But how can I get this psychic consciousness?”

By aspiration, prayer and concentration.” (CWM 17: 102)

10.

“Sweet Mother,

You wrote to me that it is not easy to come in contact with the psychic being. Why do You consider it difficult? How should I begin?”

I said ‘not easy’ because the contact is not spontaneous—

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it is voluntary. The psychic being always has an influence on the thoughts and actions, but one is rarely conscious of it. To become conscious of the psychic being, one must want to do so, make one's mind as silent as possible, and enter deep into the heart of one's being, beyond sensations and thoughts. One must form the habit of silent concentration and descent into the depths of one's being.

The discovery of the psychic being is a definite and very concrete fact, as all who have had the experience know.

Blessings." (CWM 16: 399)

XVI—Methods to Get Rid of Thoughts

1.

“All thoughts really come from outside, but one is not conscious of their coming. You have become conscious of this movement. There are different ways of getting rid of them; one is to reject them one by one before they can come in; another is to look at them with detachment till they fade away.” (CWSA 29: 302)

2.

“It is of course because of the old habit of the mental consciousness that it goes on receiving the thoughts from outside in spite of its being a fatigue—not that it wants them, but that they are accustomed to come and the mind mechanically lets them in and attends to them by force of habit. This is always one of the chief difficulties in Yoga when the experiences have begun and the mind wants to be always either concentrated or quiet. Some do what you propose [*direct rejection of thoughts*] and after a time succeed in quieting the mind altogether or the silence comes down from above and does it. But often when one tries this, the thoughts become very active and resist the silencing process and that is very troublesome. Therefore many prefer to go on slowly letting the mind quiet down little by little, the quietness spreading and remaining for longer periods until the unwanted thoughts fall away or

recede and the mind is left free for knowledge from within and above.

What you might do is to try and see what results—if the thoughts attack too much and trouble, you could stop—if the mind quiets down quickly or more and more, then continue.” (CWSA 29: 302–303)

3.

“If you try to apply everything you read, there will be no end to your new beginnings. One can stop thinking by rejecting the thoughts and in the silence discover oneself. One can do it by letting the thoughts run down while one detaches oneself from them. There are a number of other ways. This one related in Brunton’s book seems to me the Adwaita-jnani method of separating oneself from body, vital, mind, by *viveka*, discrimination, ‘I am not the body, I am not the life, I am not the mind’ till he gets to the self, separate from mind, life and body. That also is one way of doing it. There is also the separation of Purusha from Prakriti till one becomes the witness only and feels separate from all the activities as the Witness Consciousness. There are other methods also.” (CWSA 29: 302)

4.

“The method of gathering of the mind is not an easy one. It is better to watch and separate oneself from the

thoughts till one becomes aware of a quiet space within into which they come from outside.” (CWSA 29: 302)

5.

“The mind is always in activity, but we do not observe fully what it is doing, but allow ourselves to be carried away in the stream of continual thinking. When we try to concentrate, this stream of self-moved mechanical thinking becomes prominent to our observation. It is the first normal obstacle (the other is sleep during meditation) to the effort towards Yoga.

The first thing to do is to realise that this thought-flow is not yourself, it is not you who are thinking, but thought that is going on in the mind. It is Prakriti with its thought-energy that is raising all this whirl of thought in you, imposing it on the Purusha. You as the Purusha must stand back as the witness observing the action, but refusing to identify yourself with it. The next thing is to exercise a control and reject the thoughts—though sometimes by the very act of detachment the thought habit falls away or diminishes during the meditation and there is a sufficient silence or at any rate a quietude which makes it easy to reject the thoughts that come and fix oneself on the object of meditation. If one becomes aware of the thoughts as coming from outside, from the universal Nature, then one can throw them away before they reach the mind; in that way the mind finally falls silent. If neither

of these things happens, a persistent practice of rejection becomes necessary—there should be no struggle or wrestling with the thoughts, but only a quiet self separation and refusal. Success does not come at first, but if consent is constantly withheld, the mechanical whirl eventually lessens and begins to die away and one can then have at will an inner quietude or silence.” (CWSA 29: 303–304)

6.

“For the buzz of the physical mind, reject it quietly, without getting disturbed, till it feels discouraged and retires shaking its head and saying, ‘This fellow is too calm and strong for me.’ There are always two things that can rise up and assail the silence,—vital suggestions, the physical mind’s mechanical recurrences. Calm rejection for both is the cure. There is a Purusha within who can dictate to the nature what it shall admit or exclude, but its will is a strong, quiet will; if one gets perturbed or agitated over the difficulties, then the will of the Purusha cannot act effectively as it would otherwise.” (CWSA 29: 304–305)

7.

“*Sweet Mother,*

How can one empty the mind of all thought? When one tries during meditation, the thought that one must not think of anything is always there.

It is not *during* meditation that one must learn to be silent, because the very fact of trying makes a noise.

One must learn to concentrate one's energies in the heart—then, when one succeeds in that, silence comes automatically." (CWM 16: 309)

8.

"That [*the constant recurrence of trivial thoughts*] is the nature of the mechanical mind—it is not due to any sensitiveness init. Only as the other parts of the mind are more silent and under control, this activity looks more prominent and takes more space. It usually wears itself out, if one goes on rejecting it." (CWSA 29: 314)

9.

"It was rather that the active mind became more quiet so that the movements of the mechanical mind became more evident—that is what often happens. What has to be done in that case is to detach oneself from these movements and concentrate without farther [further] attention to them. They are then likely to sink into quietude or fall away." (CWSA 29: 314)

10.

"To be able to detach oneself from the action of the mechanical mind is the first necessity so that it may be like a noise in the street which passes and which one can

ignore. It is easier then for the quiet and peace of the mind to remain undisturbed by this action even if it occurs.

If the peace and silence continue to come down, they usually become so intense as to seize the physical mind also after a time.” (CWSA 29: 314–315)

11.

“You are probably paying too much attention to them [*mechanical thoughts*]. It is quite possible to concentrate and let the mechanical activity pass unnoticed.”(CWSA 29: 315)

12.

“The more the psychic spreads in the outer being, the more all these things [*the mechanical activities of the subconscious mind*] fall quiet. That is the best way. Direct efforts to still the mind are a difficult method.”(CWSA 29: 315)

13.

“I don’t know how thoughts that are harmful to my consecration slip into my mind and upset me. I try my best to drive them away and to remain absorbed in contemplation of You, but very often they return. Why are they repeated, and where do they come from? Do they belong to the universal nature which is not yet purified,

and will they keep on returning until my entire human nature is transformed?

Yes, they belong to the unregenerate universal Nature. But to the extent that we ourselves are transformed, we can keep them at a distance and they no longer trouble us.”
(CWM 15: 235–236)

XVII—Wideness in Meditation

1.

“The lightness, the feeling of the disappearance of the head and that all is open is a sign of the wideness of the mental consciousness which is no longer limited by the brain and its body sense—no longer imprisoned but wide and free. This is felt in the meditation only at first or with closed eyes, but at a later stage it becomes established and one feels always oneself a wide consciousness not limited by any feeling of the body. You felt something of this wideness of your being in the second experience when the Mother’s foot pressed down your physical mind (head) till it went below and left room for this sense of an infinite Self. This wide consciousness not dependent on the body or limited by it is what is called in Yoga the Atman or Self. You are only having the first glimpses of it, but later on it becomes normal and one feels that one was always this Atman infinite and immortal.” (CWSA 30: 275)

2.

“If these were imaginations, you would be able to reproduce them exactly each time you thought of them. The idea that it is imagination comes from the physical mind which cannot believe in anything supraphysical.

This opening of the chest into the void (not really

the void, but the infinite Akash of the Chit universal and illimitable) is always the sign of an opening of the emotional being into the wideness of the Universal Divine. The image of the Akash is often seen by sadhaks in Dhyana. When the consciousness is liberated, whether in the mind or other part, there is always this sense of the wide infinite emptiness. From the top of the head to the throat is the mental plane of the being—a similar opening and emptiness or wideness here is the sign of the mind being freed into the Universal. From the throat to the stomach is the higher vital or emotional region. Below is the lower vital plane.” (CWSA 30: 276)

3.

“It is of course the inner wideness in which you were absorbed so that outward things went on of themselves without engaging the interest. In the meditation it was the same descent into the head—when it fills the head, there is often this feeling of there being no head, only that which is coming down or else a wideness in which that is acting. In the end one gets the feeling of being not something confined in the head and body, but a wide consciousness with the body only as something comparatively small inside it. The vision was a figure of this wider consciousness with the Mother’s inner presence always there.” (CWSA 30: 276–277)

4.

"There is no doubt that you will succeed in your endeavour—all that is needed is firm persistence till the success is complete.

What you saw in the vision was the wide and luminous infinite of what is called the universal Self or spirit. It is that which is one of the fundamental things into which one enters when one reaches the higher consciousness and goes above. The personal being naturally feels itself as something very small and insignificant in that Infinite. But in that Infinite there are higher and higher levels and it is to these levels that the Mother was leading you when she took you by the hand. This often happens in meditation or trance when one has once gone upward into the spiritual infinity. The reason why you did not see the Mother's form was not that the Mother hid herself, or anything in you came between, but that you were both moving in the formless Infinite as spiritual beings and so it was easier to feel the presence than to see any physical form. Not that the form cannot be there, but it is less insistent and therefore not so soon seen as on the physical plane.

The silence in the head and heart and the emptiness are both necessary and desirable. When they are there, the consciousness finds them natural and they give it the sense of lightness and release; that is why the thoughts or speech of the old kind are foreign to it and when they come

give fatigue. This silence and emptiness must grow, so that the higher consciousness with its knowledge, light, Ananda, peace can come down in it and progressively replace the old things.” (CWSA 30: 278)

5.

“In the perfect silence of the contemplation all widens to infinity, and in the perfect peace of that silence the Divine appears in the resplendent glory of His light.” (CWM 14: 142)

XVIII—Pressure Felt in Meditation

1.

“It [*a pressure felt in meditation*] is what we call the pressure of the Force (the Force of the higher spiritual or divine consciousness, the Mother’s Force); it comes in various forms, vibrations, currents, waves, a wide flow, a shower like rain etc. It passes to each centre in turn, the crown of the head, the forehead centre, throat, heart, navel centres down to the Muladhara and spreads too throughout the body.

The rotatory movement is the movement of the Force when it is working and forming something in the being.” (CWSA 30: 469)

2.

“When you began to meditate, you saw the Mother’s face; that is very good, it means that there is an inner connection established. The absence of the smile does not mean that she is displeased or that you have done anything against her will. At the same time the Mother’s force descended on you, it was the pressure of her Force that you felt on the head and breast—everybody feels in the beginning this pressure—and what you felt in the breast was the working of the Force. In the Yoga these are signs of the action of the Yoga and you must observe quietly what happens

without getting disturbed, remembering the Mother always and trusting in her action upon you.” (CWSA 32: 203)

3.

“The more important of the experiences you enumerate are those below.

(1) The feeling of calm and comparative absence of disturbing thoughts. This means the growth of quietude of mind which is necessary for a fully effective meditation.

(2) The pressure on the head and the movements within it. The pressure is that of the Force of the higher consciousness above the mind pressing on the mind (the mind centres are in the head and throat) and penetrating into it. Once it enters there it prepares the mind for opening to it more fully and the movements within the head are due to this working. Once the head centres and spaces are open one feels it descending freely as a current or otherwise. Afterwards it opens similarly the centres below in the body. The physical movement of the head must be due to the body not being accustomed to the pressure and penetration of the Force. When it is able to receive and assimilate, these movements no longer take place.

(3) The effect of the meditation in the heart extending itself to the head and creating movements there is normal—in whatever centre the concentration takes place the Yoga force generated extends to the

others and produces concentration or workings there.

(4) The sudden cessation of thought and all movements—this is very important, as it means the beginning of the capacity for the inner silence. It lasts only for a short while at the beginning of its manifestation but increases afterwards its hold and duration.

The direction of the sadhana is the right one and you have only to continue upon it.

We cannot say anything definitively about the outside affairs—I suppose in the circumstances you have to think about these things, but the sadhana has the greater importance.

We do not include Hathayoga practices in this sadhana. If you use only for health purposes, it must be as something separate from sadhana—on your own choice.”
(CWSA 30: 466–467)

XIX—Ascension of the Lower Consciousness and Descent of the Higher Consciousness

1.

“There is a higher consciousness above you, not in the body, so above the head, which we call the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness, or the Mother’s consciousness. When the being opens then all in you, the mind (head), emotional being (heart), vital, even something in the physical consciousness begin to ascend in order to join themselves to this greater higher consciousness. One has when one sits with eyes closed in meditation the sensation of going up which you describe. It is called the ascension of the lower consciousness. Afterwards things begin to descend from above, peace, joy, light, strength, knowledge etc. and a great change begins in the nature. This is what we call the descent of the higher (the Mother’s) consciousness.

The unease you felt was because of the unaccustomed nature of the movement. It is of no importance and quickly goes away.” (CWSA 30: 385)

2.

“It [*a feeling of rising above the head in meditation*] is not merely a sensation; it is an actual happening and a most important one. The consciousness is usually imprisoned in the body, centralized in the brain and heart and navel

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centres (mental, emotional, sensational); when you feel it or something of it go up and take its station above the head, that is the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness from the body-formula. It is the mental in you that goes up there, gets into touch with something higher than the ordinary mind and from there puts the higher mental will on the rest for transformation. The trembling and the heat come from a resistance, an absence of habituation in the body and the vital to this demand and to this liberation. When the mental consciousness can take its stand permanently or at will above like this, then this first liberation becomes accomplished (*siddha*). From there the mental being can open freely to higher planes or to the cosmic existence and its forces and can also act with greater liberty and power on the lower nature." (CWSA 30: 437–438)

3.

"The consciousness is always there above you. It is when one opens oneself and calls it that it descends and works—whether in meditation or in work." (CWSA 30: 442)

4.

"In your experience the ascent was into the regions of the calm and silent Self above; when you came down you went into the depths of the psychic being and found there the same calm and wideness. This experience is of great

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importance for it means that the way to both these is now open to you—and these two are the fundamental experiences of our Yoga—the unveiling of the psychic and the self-realisation. Pursue your meditations in the same poise.” (CWSA 30: 433–434)

5.

“Your description of the solid cool block of peace pressing on the body and making it immobile makes it certain that it is what we call in this Yoga the descent of the higher consciousness. A deep, intense or massive substance of peace and stillness is very commonly the first of its powers that descends and many experience it in that way. At first it comes and stays only during meditation or, without the sense of physical inertness or immobility, a little while longer and afterwards is lost; but if the sadhana follows its normal course, it comes more and more, lasting longer, and in the end an enduring deep peace and inner stillness and release becomes a normal character of the consciousness, the foundation indeed of a new consciousness, calm and liberated.” (CWSA 30: 465)

6.

“There is no harm in raising the aspiration from below to meet the power from above. All that you have to be careful about is not to raise up the difficulty from below before the descending Power is ready to remove it.

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There is no necessity of losing consciousness when you meditate. It is the widening and change of the consciousness that is essential. If you mean going inside, you can do that without losing consciousness." (CWM 29: 260)

7.

"You [Sri Aurobindo's secretary] can write conveying the permission to meditate with X and the others. You can also write briefly to her explaining the principle of this Yoga (its practice) which is to open oneself to the Divine Power which is always secretly there above, aspire and call down its peace, calm, purity, wideness into one's own consciousness and its working which will change the nature and fill it with a higher light and Ananda. One's own part is to so aspire and open oneself and to reject all that belongs to ego, desire and the lower nature." (CWSA 35: 818)

8.

"As an inner equality increases and with it the sense of the true vital being waiting for the greater direction it has to serve, as the psychic call too increases in all the members of our nature That to which the call is addressed begins to reveal itself, descends to take possession of the life and its energies and fills them with the height, intimacy, vastness of its presence and its purpose. In many, if not most, it manifests something of itself even before the equality and

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the open psychic urge or guidance are there. A call of the veiled psychic element oppressed by the mass of the outer ignorance and crying for deliverance, a stress of eager meditation and seeking for knowledge, a longing of the heart, a passionate will ignorant yet but sincere may break the lid that shuts off that Higher from this Lower Nature and open the floodgates. A little of the Divine Person may reveal itself for some Light, Power, Bliss, Love out of the Infinite. This maybe a momentary revelation, a flash or a brief-lived gleam that soon withdraws and waits for the preparation of the nature; but also it may repeat itself, grow, endure. A long and large and comprehensive working will then have begun, sometimes luminous or intense, sometimes slow and obscure.” (CWSA 23: 179–180)

9.

“It is wise to receive the descending Force in silence and concentration, but this silence and concentration should not come from the vital’s resentment at not being allowed to follow its whims.

This concentration and silence should not only be full of a *great peace* but also of a *very intense happiness*. Then one knows that the movement is true and unmixed.” (CWM 17: 54)

XX—The Peace of the Higher Consciousness Comes During Meditation

1.

“Some have this swaying of the body when the peace or the Force begins to descend upon it, as it facilitates for it the reception. The swaying ceases usually when the body is accustomed to assimilate the descent.

The peace comes fully at the meditation time because the Mother’s concentration at that time brings down the power of the higher consciousness and one can receive it if one is able to do so. Once it begins to come, it usually increases its force along with the receptivity of the sadhak until it can come at all times and under all conditions and stay longer and longer till it is stable. The sadhak on his side has to keep his consciousness as quiet and still as possible to receive it. The Peace, Power, Light, Ananda of the higher spiritual consciousness are there in all veiled above. A certain opening upwards is needed for it to descend—the quietude of the mind and a certain wide concentrated passivity to the descending Influence are the best conditions for the descent.” (CWSA 30: 481–482)

XXI—Meditation Needs Sufficient Psychic Preparation

1.

“What will bring towards the goal is the growth of the psychic being, the increase in bhakti, psychic clarity of vision with regard to one’s inner movements and the will to get rid of the vital ego, increase in pure self-giving. Meditation and the rest can bring only partial results or often no results until there has been a sufficient psychic preparation. Even with those who begin with a flood of experiences because of some mental or vital preparation in past lives whose results happen to be near the surface, these lead to nothing definite till the psychic preparation is made; they often have all their struggle still to go through and some sink with their bag of experiences on their head and a magnified ego on their back. It was this psychic growth that suddenly began in you. Don’t let it stop; for through that lies your way. Once that is done, you can meditate and do everything else that may be needful.” (CWSA 29: 211–212)

2.

“No doubt the true and strong aspiration is needed, but it is not a fact that the true thing is not there in you. If it had not been, the Force could not have worked in you. But this true thing was seated in the psychic and in the heart and

whenever these were active in the meditation it showed itself. But for the sake of completeness the working had to come down into the physical consciousness and establish the quietude and the openness there. The physical consciousness is always in everybody in its own nature a little inert and in it a constant strong aspiration is not natural, it has to be created. But first there must be the opening, a purification, a fixed quietude, otherwise the physical vital will turn the strong aspiration into over-eagerness and impatience or rather it will try to give it that turn. Do not therefore be troubled if the state of the nature seems to you to be too neutral and quiet, not enough aspiration and movement in it. This is a passage necessary for the progress and the rest will come.” (CWSA 29: 62)

3.

“Nowadays I often get psychic feelings and gratitude. Then the aspiration comes to concentrate above, as I was doing some days back. But from time to time I get the feeling that I should not change the form of my meditation and aspiration so frequently. Should I stick to one form of practice or should the form of practice be allowed to change naturally according to the Light that descends?”

To be in contact with the Mother’s Light and Force is the one important thing (fundamental) to which you must aspire. For this the psychic feeling is the indispensable

condition; for it is through the psychic that this contact becomes easy and natural. It gives the psychic basis. Once the basis is there firmly established the rest can be done according to need and it will be much better done, because then there will be the safety from hostile attack and the right guidance.” (CWSA 32: 136–137)

4.

“In the evening meditation, there was an intense movement of surrender from the heart. I had the feeling of Mother’s presence immediately in front of me and aspiration rose up from below. There was a willing and loving surrender from the heart, from the entire being, as if for fulfilment.

I suppose the psychic being came to the front. You had the psychic condition there and that means a coming of the influence of the psychic being to the front.” (CWSA 32: 188)

XXII—Purity Is the Condition in Which Concentration Becomes Entire

1.

“Along with purity and as a help to bring it about, concentration. Purity and concentration are indeed two aspects, feminine and masculine, passive and active, of the same status of being; purity is the condition in which concentration becomes entire, rightly effective, omnipotent; by concentration purity does its works and without it would only lead to a state of peaceful quiescence and eternal repose. Their opposites are also closely connected; for we have seen that impurity is a confusion of dharmas, a lax, mixed and mutually entangled action of the different parts of the being; and this confusion proceeds from an absence of right concentration of its knowledge on its energies in the embodied Soul. The fault of our nature is first an inert subjection to the impacts of things as they come in upon the mind pell-mell without order or control and then a haphazard imperfect concentration managed fitfully, irregularly with a more or less chance emphasis on this or on that object according as they happen to interest, not the higher soul or the judging and discerning intellect, but the restless, leaping, fickle, easily tired, easily distracted lower mind which is the chief enemy of our progress. In such a condition purity, the right working of the functions, the clear, unstained and

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Entire

luminous order of the being is an impossibility; the various workings, given over to the chances of the environment and external influences, must necessarily run into each other and clog, divert, distract, pervert. Equally, without purity the complete, equal, flexible concentration of the being in right thought, right will, right feeling or secure status of spiritual experience is not possible. Therefore the two must proceed together, each helping the victory of the other, until we arrive at that eternal calm from which may proceed some partial image in the human being of the eternal, omnipotent and omniscient activity. (CWSA 23: 317–318)

2.

“The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.” (CWSA 30: 489)

3.

“What you say [*about the need to purify oneself of ego*] is perfectly correct—I am glad you are becoming so lucid and clear sighted, the result surely of a psychic change. Ego is a very curious thing and in nothing more than in its way of hiding itself and pretending it is not the ego. It can always

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Entire

hide even behind an aspiration to serve the Mother. The only way of getting rid of it is to chase it out of all its veils and corners.

You are right also in thinking that this is really the most important part of your Yoga. The Rajayogis are right in putting purification in front of everything and a preliminary to successful meditation—as I was also right in putting it in front along with concentration in the *Synthesis*. You have only to look around you to see that experiences and even realisations cannot bring one to the goal if this is not done—at any moment they can fallowing to the vital still being impure and full of ego.” (CWSA 31: 232)

XXIII—Meditation First and Purification Can Start Afterwards

1.

"In an article Krishnaprem says that meditation can't be fruitful for those who have not achieved a high degree of inner development and purification.

I do not know what Krishnaprem said or in which article, I do not have it with me. But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation or realise anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it; it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result. I have seen many get important, even fundamental realisations by meditation who could not be said to have a great inner development. Are all Yogis who have meditated to effect and had great realisations in their inner consciousness perfect in their nature? It does not look like it to me. I am unable to believe in absolute generalizations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it no matter how long it takes or what are the difficulties or

XXIII—Meditation First and Purification Can Start Afterwards
impediments—because nothing else will satisfy the soul
within us.” (CWSA 35: 229–230)

2.

“It is quite true that a certain amount of purification is indispensable for going on, that the more complete the purification the better because then when the realisations begin they can continue without big difficulties or relapses and without any possibility of fall or failure. It is also true that with many purification is the first need,—certain things have to be got out of the way before one can begin any consecutive inner experience. But the main need is a certain preparation of the consciousness so that it may be able to respond more and more freely to the higher Force.” (CWSA 30: 40)

3.

“And if one looks attentively at oneself, one becomes aware that naturally, as one lives in the world as it is at present, one shares in its vulgarity, and that unless one observes oneself closely and constantly puts the light of one’s highest consciousness upon oneself, one risks making mistakes in taste, from the spiritual point of view, rather frequently.

There we are!

Now I am going to give you a meditation this

XXIII—Meditation First and Purification Can Start Afterwards evening, and I am going to see whether you are capable of taking a cerebral bath. Cleansing!

Mother, when we meditate here, on which centre should we concentrate?

Truly speaking, each time it ought to be different.

The first time I told you to meditate upon what we had read, didn't I? Well, if you like, today we could try to let a purifying consciousness enter into us, which will give us, as I just said jokingly, a brain bath, that is, a good little cleansing—a light which purifies and cleans." (CWM 7: 296)

XXIV—Progress by Regular Meditation

1.

"It is very good, and by regular meditation you are sure to make much progress. But I do not think to spend all the night in meditation would be good. The body needs sleep also. One hour meditation daily is already a very good result and it can be increased slowly to two." (CWSA 29: 298–299)

2.

"Certainly, if all one's life one did nothing but meditate, it would be a one-sided affair. But at times to give the first place or a lion's share to meditation may be necessary. It is especially when things are coming down and have to be fixed." (CWSA 29: 299)

3.

"Ramana Maharshi says that if 'you meditate for an hour or two every day, you can then carry on with your duties. If you meditate in the right manner ...'

A very important qualification.

'then the current of mind induced will continue to flow even in the midst of your work. It is as though there are two ways of expressing the same idea; the same line which you

take in meditation will be expressed in your activities.' [*The quotation is a paraphrase of Ramana Maharshi's words by Brunton.*]

If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that *can* go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation but to remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards and also to avoid things that relax or disperse or dissipate too much—precisely for this reason that so the effects of what she put on them might continue and the change of attitude the Maharshi speaks of will take place. But I am afraid most of the sadhaks have never understood or practised anything of the kind—they could not appreciate or understand her directions.” (CWSA 32: 214–215)

4.

“Mother,

I would like to know from you if it is good for me to devote more time to meditation than I am doing at present. I spend about two hours, morning and evening together. I am as yet not quite successful in meditation. My physical mind disturbs me a lot. I pray to you that it may become quiet and my psychic being may come out. It is so painful

to find the mind working like a mad machine and the heart sleeping like a stone. Mother, let me feel your presence within my heart always.

The increase of time given to meditation is not very useful unless the urge for meditation comes spontaneously from inside and not from any arbitrary decision of the mind.

My help, love and blessings are always with you.”
(CWM 14: 52–53)

5.

“It is an arbitrary decision of the mind, and being arbitrary and not in conformity with the truth of things, it naturally brings about these wrong reactions. This does not imply that no effort must ever be made but the effort also must be spontaneous. So too I told you once that for meditation to be effective, it must be a spontaneous meditation which takes hold of you rather than one you make an effort to have; well, effort, that kind of tension of the will in the being, must also be something spontaneous, and not the result of a more or less inopportune mental decision.”
(CWM 8: 371)

6.

“Sweet Mother, sometimes it happens that one was not ready for a meditation or concentration and then suddenly one is forced into something and obliged to be silent; even

if one wanted to get out then, one can't; one remains like that, sometimes for a long time, absolutely carried away by the torrent of things. Does this enter the category of meditation?

This simply means that one suddenly comes under the influence of a higher force of which one is not conscious; one is conscious only of the effect, but not of the cause. That's all. It's nothing more than that. If you were conscious you would know what makes you silent, what makes you meditate, what kind of force has entered into you or acts upon you or influences you and puts you in the silence. But as you are not conscious, you are aware only of the effect, the result, that is, the silence that comes into you.

But one can become conscious, Sweet Mother, can't one?

Fully! But for this one must work a little within oneself. One must withdraw from the surface.

Almost totally, everybody lives on the surface, all the time, all the time on the surface. And for them it's even the only thing which exists—the surface. And when something compels them to draw back from the surface, some people feel that they are falling into a hole. There are people who, if they are drawn back from the surface, suddenly feel that

they are crumbling down into an abyss, so unconscious they are!

They are conscious only of a kind of small thin crust which is all that they know of themselves and things and the world, and it is so thin a crust! Many! I have experienced, I don't know how often... I tried to interiorise some people and immediately they felt that they were falling into an abyss, and at times a black abyss. Now this is the absolute inconscience. (CWM 7: 277–279)

7.

“And all this, each thing having its own rhythm, well, it makes an extremely complicated criss-crossing of rhythms, which results in what we see: something which seems to have none—because it is too complicated, it is too complex.

How can we make use of it, Sweet Mother?

Well, if... let us say, you know... we are speaking of yoga... if you observe in yourself a certain repetition of conditions, for example, that at a particular hour, a certain time of day, in certain circumstances, it is easier for you to concentrate or meditate, well, you make use of that by doing it at that time.

Naturally, you must not become its slave; one can

use it but it must not become a necessity so that if the hour has gone by one can't meditate then. But if it is a good help, one uses the help; it's all a matter of observation." (CWM 7: 333)

8.

"Inspiration is always a very uncertain thing; it comes when it chooses, stops suddenly before it has finished its work, refuses to descend when it is called. This is a well-known affliction, perhaps of all artists, but certainly of poets. There are some who can command it at will; those who, I think, are more full of an abundant poetic energy than careful for perfection; others who oblige it to come whenever they put pen to paper but with these the inspiration is either not of a high order or quite unequal in its level. Again there are some who try to give it a habit of coming by always writing at the same time; Virgil with his nine lines first written, then perfected every morning, Milton with his fifty epic lines a day, are said to have succeeded in regularising their inspiration. It is, I suppose, the same principle which makes gurus in India prescribe for their disciples a meditation at the same fixed hour every day. It succeeds partially of course, for some entirely, but not for everybody. For myself, when the inspiration did not come with a rush or in a stream,—for then there is no difficulty,—I had only one way, to allow a certain kind of incubation in which a large form of the thing to be done

threw itself on the mind and then wait for the white heat in which the entire transcription could rapidly take place. But I think each poet has his own way of working and finds his own issue out of inspiration's incertitudes." (CWSA 27: 1011)

9.

"If it is possible to keep a fixed period for meditation and stick to it, it would certainly be desirable." (CWSA 29: 312)

10.

"To keep the consciousness awake you must set apart a certain time every day for concentration and remembering the Mother and keeping yourself in contact with us. What is gained is not lost by interruption, but it goes behind and may take time to come out again—so the thread should not be cut." (CWSA 29: 312)

XXV—Meditating on the Mother's Photograph

1.

"When I sit in meditation before the Mother's photographs or the painting of her feet, I get more Force than when I sit at a distance—on my easy chair, for example. I have noticed that this happens invariably and I suppose it is not subjective merely. But I want to know the real truth from you.

No, it is not subjective merely. By your meditating near them, you have been able to enter through them into communion with the Mother and something of her presence and power is there." (CWSA 32: 183)

2.

"There has never been any restriction on meditation or pranam before our photographs as such—external worship was never forbidden." (CWSA 32: 568)

3.

"When I get sleepy during meditation, I often just sit in a quietly concentrated wakefulness and look at the Mother's photo or your photo. Can I get the same amount of benefit simply by looking at Mother's photo or yours with all the concentration I can command?

Yes, very many do.

Sometimes in that state I pray; sometimes the inside is void—no thoughts or words at all, so I simply gaze. Am I pursuing the right line?

Yes." (CWSA 32: 597)

4.

"When the meditation is done with the photo, it is better done with open eyes." (CWSA 35: 517)

5.

"*Sweet Mother,*

Why does meditation in front of different photos of you give different experiences?

It is because each photo represents a different aspect, sometimes even a different personality of my being; and by concentrating on the photo, one enters into relation with that special aspect or different personality which the photo has captured and whose image it conveys.

The photo is a real and concrete presence, but fragmentary and limited." (CWM 16: 232)

6.

"*Sweet Mother, when we concentrate on one of your photos—there are many photos, each one with a different*

expression—does it make a difference for us, the one on which we concentrate?

If you do it purposely, yes, of course. If you choose this photo for a particular reason or that other one for another reason, surely. It has an effect. It is as though you were choosing to concentrate on one aspect of the Mother rather than another; for example, if you choose to concentrate on Mahakali or Mahalakshmi or on Maheshwari, the results will be different. That part of you which answers to these qualities will awaken and become receptive. So, it is the same thing. But somebody who has only one photo, whichever it may be, and concentrates, without choosing this one or that, because he has only one, then it is of no importance which one it is. For the fact of concentrating on the photograph puts one in contact with the Force, and that is what is necessary in the case of everyone who responds automatically.

It is only when the person who concentrates puts a special will, with a special relation, into his concentration that it has an effect. Otherwise the relation is more general, and it is always the expression of the need or the aspiration of the person who concentrates. If he is absolutely neutral, if he does not choose, does not aspire for any particular thing, if he comes like this, like a white page and absolutely neutral, then it is the forces and aspects he needs which will answer to the concentration

and perhaps even the person himself will not know what particular things he needs, because very few people are conscious of themselves. They live in a vague feeling, they have a vague aspiration and it is almost unseizable; it is not something organised, coordinated and willed, with a clear vision, for example, of the difficulties one wants to overcome or the capacities one wants to acquire; this, usually, is already the result of a fairly advanced discipline. One must have reflected much, observed much, studied much in order to be able to know exactly what he needs. Otherwise it is something hazy, this impression: one tries to catch it and it escapes... Isn't that so?" (CWM 7: 271–272)

7.

"I looked at your photograph in the Reception Room after meditation and clearly saw the portrait move its shoulders and as if breathing.

There was a movement in the vital plane and you opened to an inner vision of it." (CWSA 35: 517)

XXVI—How to Meditate for a Longer Time with Intensity

1.

"It [question] is from someone who is trying to prepare himself to receive the Supermind, and in this preparation, among other things come prayer and meditation. And then there is this reflection which is very frank and which very few would have the courage to make. Here it is:

'I begin to meditate and pray ardently and fervently, my aspiration is intense and my prayer full of devotion; and then, after a certain length of time—sometimes short, sometimes long—the aspiration becomes mechanical and the prayer purely verbal. What should I do?'

This is not an individual case, it is extremely common. I have already said this a number of times, but still it was in passing—that people who claim to meditate for hours every day and spend their whole day praying, to me it seems that three-fourths of the time it must be absolutely mechanical; that is to say, it loses all its sincerity. For human nature is not made for that and the human mind is not built that way.

In order to concentrate and meditate one must do an exercise which I could call the 'mental muscle-building' of

concentration. One must really make an effort—as one makes a muscular effort, for instance, to lift a weight—if you want the concentration to be sincere and not artificial.

The same thing for the urge of prayer: suddenly a flame is lit, you feel an enthusiastic *élan*, a great fervour, and express it in words which, to be true, must be spontaneous. This must come from the heart, directly, with ardour, without passing through the head. That is a prayer. If there are just words jostling in your head, it is no longer a prayer. Well, if you don't throw more fuel into the flame, after a time it dies out. If you do not give your muscles time to relax, if you don't slacken the movement, your muscles lose the capacity of taking strains. So it is quite natural, and even indispensable, for the intensity of the movement to cease after a certain time. Naturally, someone who is accustomed to lifting weights can do it much longer than one who has never done it before. It is the same thing; someone who is accustomed to concentration can concentrate much longer than one who is not in the habit. But for everybody there comes a time when one must let go, relax, in order to begin again. Therefore, whether immediately or after a few minutes or a few hours, if the movement becomes mechanical, it means that you have relaxed and that you need no longer pretend that you are meditating. It is better to do something useful.

If you cannot manage to do a little exercise, for instance, in order to neutralise the effect of the mental tension, you may read or try to note down what happened to you, you may express things. Then that produces a relaxation, the necessary relaxation. But the duration of the meditation is only relatively important; its length simply shows how far you are accustomed to this activity.

Of course, this may increase a great deal, but there is always a limit; and when the limit is reached one must stop, that's all. It is not an insincerity, it is an incapacity. What becomes insincere is if you pretend to meditate when you are no longer meditating or you say prayers like many people who go to the temple or to church, perform ceremonies and repeat their prayers as one repeats a more or less well-learned lesson. Then it is no longer either prayer or meditation, it is simply a profession. It is not interesting." (CWM 8: 227–228)

XXVII—Self-Dynamising Meditation

1.

“Next, the practice of this Yoga demands a constant inward remembrance of the one central liberating knowledge, and a constant active externalising of it in works comes in too to intensify the remembrance. In all is the one Self, the one Divine is all; all are in the Divine, all are the Divine and there is nothing else in the universe,—this thought or this faith is the whole background until it becomes the whole substance of the consciousness of the worker. A memory, a self-dynamising meditation of this kind, must and does in its end turn into a profound and uninterrupted vision and a vivid and all-embracing consciousness of that which we so powerfully remember or on which we so constantly meditate. For it compels a constant reference at each moment to the Origin of all being and will and action and there is at once an embracing and exceeding of all particular forms and appearances in That which is their cause and upholder.” (CWSA 23: 112–113)

2.

“*Sweet Mother,*

I sit down every day to meditate, but I am afraid that this ten minutes’ meditation has become merely mechanical. I want a dynamic meditation, but how to have it?

Become *sincere*." (CWM 16: 281)

3.

"Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by 'a self-dynamising meditation?'

It is a meditation that has the power of transforming your being. It is a meditation which makes you progress, as opposed to static meditation which is immobile and relatively inert, and which changes nothing in your consciousness or in your way of being. A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation.

Generally, people don't have a dynamic meditation. When they enter into meditation—or at least what they call meditation—they enter into a kind of immobility where nothing stirs, and they come out of it exactly as they went in, without any change either in their being or in their consciousness. And the more motionless it is, the happier they are. They could meditate in this way for eternities, it would never change anything either in the universe or in themselves. That is why Sri Aurobindo speaks of a dynamic meditation which is exactly the very opposite. It is a transforming meditation.

How is it done? Is it done in a different way?

I think it is the aspiration that should be different, the

attitude should be different. 'Different way'—what do you mean by 'way'—(*laughing*) the way of sitting?... Not that? The inner way?

Yes.

But for each one it is different.

I think the most important thing is to know why one meditates; this is what gives the quality of the meditation and make sit of one order or another.

You may meditate to open yourself to the divine Force, you may meditate to reject the ordinary consciousness, you may meditate to enter the depths of your being, you may meditate to learn how to give yourself integrally; you may meditate for all kinds of things. You may meditate to enter into peace and calm and silence—this is what people generally do, but without much success. But you may also meditate to receive the Force of transformation, to discover the points to be transformed, to trace out the line of progress. And then you may also meditate for very practical reasons: when you have a difficulty to clear up, a solution to find, when you want help in some action or other. You may meditate for that too.

I think everyone has his own mode of meditation. But if one wants the meditation to be dynamic, one must have an aspiration for progress and the meditation must be done to help and fulfil this aspiration for progress. Then it becomes dynamic." (CWM 8: 88–89)

XXVIII—Real Progress in Meditation

1.

"To run away from difficulties in order to conquer them is not a solution. It is very attractive. In those who seek the spiritual life, there is something which says, 'Oh! to sit down under a tree, all alone, to remain in meditation, not to have the temptation to speak or act, how fine it must be!' It is because there is a very strong formation in this direction, but it is very illusory.

The best meditations are those that one has all of a sudden, because they take possession of you as an imperative necessity. You have no choice but to concentrate, to meditate, to look beyond the appearances. And it is not necessarily in the solitude of the forest that it seizes you, it happens when something in you is ready, when the time has come, when the true need is there, when the Grace is with you.

It seems to me that humanity has made some progress and the true victory must be won in life itself.

You must know how to live alone with the Eternal and Infinite in the midst of all circumstances. You must know how to be free, with the Supreme as your companion, in the midst of all occupations. That is indeed the true victory." (CWM 3: 276)

2.

"Is not an increasing effort of meditation needed and is it

not true that the more hours you meditate the greater progress you make?

The number of hours spent in meditation is no proof of spiritual progress. It is a proof of your progress when you no longer have to make an effort to meditate. Then you have rather to make an effort to stop meditating: it becomes difficult to stop meditation, difficult to stop thinking of the Divine, difficult to come down to the ordinary consciousness. Then you are sure of progress, then you have made real progress when concentration in the Divine is the necessity of your life, when you cannot do without it, when it continues naturally from morning to night whatever you may be engaged in doing. Whether you sit down to meditation or go about and do things and work, what is required of you is consciousness; that is the one need,—to be constantly conscious of the Divine.” (CWM 3: 19–20)

3.

“ `The number of hours spent in meditation is no proof of spiritual progress. It is a proof of your progress when you no longer have to make an effort to meditate.’

That is, instead of being in a state of tension, instead of making a tremendous effort to silence the inner machine and be able to concentrate your thought upon what you

want, when you do it quite simply, naturally, without effort, automatically, and you decide to meditate for some reason or other, what you want to see, learn or know remains in your consciousness and all the rest disappears as by a miracle; everything falls quiet in you, all your being becomes silent, your nerves are altogether soothed, your consciousness is wholly concentrated—naturally, spontaneously—and you enter with an intense delight into a yet more intense contemplation.

This is the sign that you have succeeded; otherwise it is not the thing.” (CWM 4: 120–121)

4.

“Then you have rather to make an effort to stop meditating: it becomes difficult to stop meditation, difficult to stop thinking of the Divine, difficult to come down to the ordinary consciousness.”

How I wish this would become true for everybody!

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: 121–122)

5.

“Those who meditate truly never speak about it; for them it is quite a natural thing. When it has become a natural thing, without any glory about it, you may begin to tell yourself that you are making progress.” (CWM 4: 103–104)

6.

“Certainly there is a moment in the course of the inner growth when far from having to make an effort to concentrate, to become absorbed in the contemplation and the seeking of the truth and its best expression—what the Buddhists call meditation—you feel, on the contrary, a kind of relief, ease, rest, joy, and to have to come out of that in order to deal with things that are not essential, everything that may seem like a waste of time, becomes terribly painful. External activities get reduced to what is absolutely necessary, to those that are done as service to the Divine. All that is futile, useless, precisely those things which seem like a waste of time and effort, all that, far from giving the least satisfaction, creates a kind of discomfort and fatigue; you feel happy only when you are concentrated on your goal.

Then you are really on the way.” (CWM 3: 209)

7.

“Meditation is best when it comes spontaneously. But there should be full concentration in the work if it is to take the place of meditation.” (CWSA 29: 222)

XXIX—True Success of Meditation

1.

“To enter into a deeper or higher consciousness or for that deeper or higher consciousness to descend into you—that is the true success of meditation.” (CWSA 29: 300)

2.

“Always I answer your letters but rarely I have time to put my answer on paper. You are capable of receiving these answers directly, but for that you must learn to keep your mind silent—this is the true meditation—the brain blank, immobile and turned upward. This is the necessary condition to receive the answers. If you can hand over the care of your existence and your development to the Supreme Consciousness, then peace will enter your heart and your problems will be solved.” (CWM 14: 348)

XXX—Be Open to Light Not Only in Meditation, but Also in Life

1.

“In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, ‘When I am meditating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations I will be in this condition of an opening towards the Light and call for it, but when I go out to walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it.’ To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life. For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and the outer life, is of no great use, for it leaves the world as it is. This is what has continually happened till now. Even those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace; the world was left to its ways, and misery and stupidity, Death and Ignorance continued, unaffected, their reign on this material plane of existence. For those who thus withdraw, it may be pleasant to escape from this turmoil, to run away from the difficulty and to find for themselves a happy

XXX—Be Open to Light Not Only in Meditation, but Also in Life condition elsewhere; but they leave the world and life uncorrected and untransformed; and their own outer consciousness too they leave unchanged and their bodies as unregenerate as ever.” (CWM 3: 24)

2.

“Isn’t the aspiration, the contemplation of which you speak, inconsistent with outer activity?”

No, if there is a contradiction, it is that the concentration is not done in the right way. Indeed the world is in this state of falsehood in which one cannot concentrate within oneself on the divine Presence without losing contact with the external being. I do not say that it is very easy, I have given you this as a somewhat far ideal, but it is quite possible and it has been done, I may assure you, and it takes away nothing from the capacity of not breaking one’s neck while running!” (CWM 4: 123)

3.

“Don’t the inner realisation and experiences help in the outer change?”

Not necessarily. They help only if one wants it; otherwise, on the contrary, one detaches oneself more and more from the outer nature. This is what happens to all those who seek *mukti*, liberation; they reject their outer nature with

XXX—Be Open to Light Not Only in Meditation, but Also in Life

its character and habits as something altogether contemptible with which one should not busy oneself; they withdraw all their energies, all forces of consciousness towards the heights, and if they do it with sufficient perfection, generally they leave their body once for all. But in the immense majority of instances, they do it only partially and, when they come out of their meditation, their contemplation, their trance or their *samadhi*, they are generally worse than others because they have left their outer nature aside without working on it at all. Even ordinary people, when their defects are a little too glaring, try to correct them or control them a little so as not to have too much trouble in life, while these people who think that the right attitude is to leave one's body and one's outer consciousness completely and withdraw entirely to the 'spiritual heights', treat that like an old coat one throws aside and does not mend—and when one takes it back it is full of holes and stains.

That does not help. It helps only if one has the sincere will to change; if one sincerely has the will to change, it is a powerful help because it gives you the force to make the change, the fulcrum to make the change. But one must sincerely want to change." (CWM 4: 348–349)

4.

"The including of the outer consciousness in the

XXX—Be Open to Light Not Only in Meditation, but Also in Life transformation is of supreme importance in this Yoga—meditation cannot do it. Meditation can deal only with the inner being. So work is of primary importance—only it must be done with the right attitude and in the right consciousness, then it is as fruitful as any meditation can be.” (CWSA 29: 221)

XXXI—How to Profit by One's Meditation

1.

"It is always better, for meditation—you see, we use the word 'meditation', but it does not necessarily mean 'moving ideas around in the head', quite the contrary—it is always better to try to concentrate in a centre, the centre of aspiration, one might say, the place where the flame of aspiration burns, to gather in all the energies there, at the solar plexus centre and, if possible, to obtain an attentive silence as though one wanted to listen to something extremely subtle, something that demands a complete attention, a complete concentration and total silence. And then not to move at all. Not to think, not to stir, and make that movement of opening so as to receive all that can be received, but taking good care not to try to know what is happening while it is happening, for if one wants to understand or even to observe actively, it keeps up a sort of cerebral activity which is unfavourable to the fullness of the receptivity—to be silent, as totally silent as possible, in an attentive concentration, and then be still.

If one succeeds in this, then, when everything is over, when one comes out of meditation, some time later—usually not immediately—from within the being something new emerges in the consciousness: a new understanding, a new appreciation of things, a new attitude in life—in short, a new way of being. This may be fugitive, but at that

moment, if one observes it, one finds that something has taken one step forward on the path of understanding or transformation. It may be an illumination, an understanding truer or closer to the truth, or a power of transformation which helps you to achieve a psychological progress or a widening of the consciousness or a greater control over your movements, over the activities of the being.

And these results are never immediate. For if one tries to have them at once, one remains in a state of activity which is quite the contrary of true receptivity. One must be as neutral, as immobile, as passive as one can be, with a background of silent aspiration not formulated in words or ideas or even in feelings; something that does this (*gesture like a mounting flame*) in an ardent vibration, but which does not formulate, and above all, does not try to understand.

With a little practice one reaches a state which may be obtained at will, in a few seconds, that is, one doesn't waste any of the meditation time. Naturally, in the beginning, one must slowly quieten the mind, gather up one's consciousness, concentrate; one loses three-quarters of the time in preparing oneself. But when one has practised the thing, in two or three seconds one can get it, and then one benefits from the whole period of receptivity.

Naturally, there are still more advanced and perfected states, but that comes later. But already if one

reaches that state, one profits fully by the meditation.”
(CWM 9: 115–116)

XXXII—Conscious Relation with the Divine Presence Affects Your Character and Life

“Among people who meditate there are some who know how to meditate, who concentrate not on an idea, but in silence, in an inner contemplation in which they say they reach even a union with the Divine; and that is perfectly all right. There are others, just a few, who can follow an idea closely and try to find exactly what it means; that too is all right. ... People who know how to meditate are very few in number. Besides, admitting that through much discipline and years of effort you have in your meditation succeeded in coming into conscious relation with the divine Presence, evidently this is a result, and this result should necessarily have an effect upon your character and your life.” (CWM 5: 41–42)

XXXIII—Role of Meditation in Bhakti

1.

“It is not at all a fact that your nature is incapable of love and bhakti; on the contrary that is the right way for you. Meditation is all right, but it will be most profitable for you if it is directed towards the increase of love and devotion; the rest will come of itself afterwards.

Also, it is not true that your nature is incapable of surrender; you made a great progress in that direction. But the complete surrender of all parts, especially of the whole vital, is certainly difficult. It can only come with the development of the consciousness. Meanwhile, that it has not fully come, is no reason for despair or giving up.”
(CWSA 31: 109–110)

2.

“The kind of worship (*pujā*) spoken of in the letter belongs to the religious life. It can, if rightly done in the deepest religious spirit, prepare the mind and heart to some extent but no more. But if worship is done as part of meditation or with a true aspiration to the spiritual reality and the spiritual consciousness and with the yearning for contact and union with the Divine, then it can be spiritually effective.

If you have a sincere aspiration to the spiritual change in your heart and soul, then you will find the way and the Guide. A mere mental seeking and questioning are

not enough to open the doors of the Spirit.” (CWSA 28: 420)

3.

“The principle of Bhakti Yoga is to utilise all the normal relations of human life into which emotion enters and apply them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. Worship and meditation are used only for the preparation and increase of intensity of the divine relationship.” (CWSA 23: 39)

4.

“If it is the way of *ahaitukībhakti* that you want to follow, that can be no obstacle; for there can be none better. For in that way everything can be made a means—poetry and music for instance become not merely poetry and music and not merely even an expression of bhakti, but themselves a means of bringing the experience of love and bhakti. Meditation itself becomes not an effort of mental concentration, but a flow of love and adoration and worship. If simply and sincerely followed, the way of *ahaitukībhakti* can lead as far as any other.” (CWSA 29: 355)

5.

“But why limit oneself, insist on one thing alone and shut out every other? Whether it be by Bhakti or by Light or by

Ananda or by Peace or by any other means whatsoever that one gets the initial realisation of the Divine, to get it is the thing and all means are good that bring it.

If it is Bhakti that one insists on, it is by Bhakti that Bhakti comes and Bhakti in its fullness is nothing but an entire self-giving, as Krishnaprem very rightly indicates. Then all meditation, all tapasya, all means of prayer or mantra must have that as its end and it is when one has progressed sufficiently in that that the Divine Grace descends and the realisation comes and develops till it is complete. But the moment of its advent is chosen by the wisdom of the Divine alone and one must have the strength to go on till it arrives; for when all is truly ready it cannot fail to come.” (CWSA 29: 490–491)

6.

“The bhakta offers up his life and all that he is and all that he has and all that he does to the Divine. This surrender may take the ascetic form, as when he leaves the ordinary life of men and devotes his days solely to prayer and praise and worship or to ecstatic meditation, gives up his personal possessions and becomes the monk or the mendicant whose one and only possession is the Divine, gives up all actions in life except those only which help or belong to the communion with the Divine and communion with other devotees, or at most keeps the doing from the secure fortress of the ascetic life of those services to men which

seem peculiarly the out flowing of the divine nature of love, compassion and good. But there is the wider self-consecration, proper to any integral Yoga, which, accepting the fullness of life and the world in its entirety as the play of the Divine, offers up the whole being into his possession; it is a holding of all one is and has as belonging to him only and not to ourselves and a doing of all works as an offering to him. By this comes the complete active consecration of both the inner and the outer life, the unmutilated self-giving." (CWSA 23: 573–574)

XXXIV—To Truly Think, Meditate

1.

“If you have observed yourselves even a little, you must have noticed that the contact with what is not yourselves is established first of all through the medium of your senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, etc. The impact felt in this way, whether slight or violent, pleasant or unpleasant, arouses a feeling in you—like or dislike, attraction or repulsion—which very quickly turns into an idea, an opinion you form about the object, whatever it may be, that has determined the contact.

An example: you go out and as you step out of your house you see that it is raining and at the same time you feel the damp cold seizing you; the sensation is unpleasant, you feel a dislike for the rain and inwardly, almost mechanically, you say to yourself, ‘This rain is really a nuisance, especially as I have to go out! Not to mention that I am going to get dreadfully dirty; Paris is very dirty in rainy weather, especially now that all the streets have been dug up’ (and so on)....

All these and many other similar thoughts about the simple fact that it is raining come to assail your mind; and if nothing else, outwardly or inwardly, comes to attract your attention, for a long while, almost without your noticing it, your brain may produce minute, trivial thoughts about this small, insignificant sensation....

This is how most human lives are spent; this is what human beings most often call *thinking*—a mental activity that is almost mechanical, unreflecting, out of our control, a reflex. All thoughts concerning material life and its many needs are of the same quality.

Here we face the first difficulty to be overcome; if we want to be able to truly think, that is, to receive, formulate and form valid and viable thoughts, we must first of all empty our brain of all this vague and unruly mental agitation. And this is certainly not the easiest part of our task. We are dominated by this irrational cerebral activity, we do not dominate it.

Only one method is worth recommending: meditation. But as I was telling you last time, there are many ways of meditating; some are very effective, others less so.

Each one should find his own by successive trial and error. However, one thing can be recommended to everyone: reflection, that is to say, concentration, self-observation in solitude and silence, a close and strict analysis of the multitude of insignificant little thoughts which constantly assail us.

During the few moments you devote each day to this preliminary exercise of meditation, avoid, if possible, the complacent contemplation of your sensations, your feelings, your states of mind.

We all have an inexhaustible fund of self-indulgence, and very often we treat all these little inner movements with the greatest respect and give them an importance which they certainly do not have, even relative to our own evolution.

When one has enough self-control to be able to analyse coldly, to dissect these states of mind, to strip them of their brilliant or painful appearance, so as to perceive them as they are in all their childish insignificance, then one can profitably devote oneself to studying them. But this result can only be achieved gradually, after much reflection in a spirit of complete impartiality.” (CWM 2: 22–24)

2.

“You will observe within yourself certain thoughts that are stronger and more tenacious than others, thoughts concerning social usages, customs, moral rules and even general laws that govern earth and man.

They are your opinions on these subjects or at least those you profess and by which you try to act.

Look at one of these ideas, the one most familiar to you, look at it very carefully, concentrate, reflect in all sincerity, if possible leaving aside all bias, and ask yourself why you have this opinion on that subject rather than any other.

The answer will almost invariably be the same, or

nearly:

Because it is the opinion prevalent in your environment, because it is considered good form to have it and therefore saves you from as many clashes, frictions, criticisms as possible.

Or because this was the opinion of your father or mother, the opinion which moulded your childhood.

Or else because this opinion is the normal outcome of the education, religious or otherwise, you received in your youth. This thought is not your own thought.

For, to be your own thought, it would have to form part of a logical synthesis you had elaborated in the course of your existence, either by observation, experience and deduction, or by deep, abstract meditation and contemplation.

This, then, is our second discovery.

Since we have goodwill and endeavour to be integrally sincere, that is, to make our actions conform to our thoughts, we are now convinced that we act according to mental laws we receive from outside, not after having maturely considered and analysed them, not by deliberately and consciously receiving them, but because unconsciously we are subjected to them through atavism, by our upbringing and education, and above all because we are dominated by a collective suggestion which is so powerful, so overwhelming, that very few succeed in avoiding it altogether." (CWM 2: 24–25)

3.

"Moreover, this is only a preliminary work. We are still very far from true thought, which brings us into relation with the infinite source of knowledge.

These are only exercises for training ourselves gradually to an individualising control of our thoughts. For control of the mental activity is indispensable to one who wants to meditate.

I cannot speak to you in detail today about meditation; I shall only say that in order to be genuine, to serve its full purpose, meditation must be disinterested, impersonal in the integral sense of the word." (CWM 2: 26–27)

4.

"Here is a description, taken from an old Hindu text, of a typical meditation:

'The great and magnificent King ascended to the chamber of the Great Collection and, stopping at the threshold, exclaimed with intense emotion:

'Away! Advance no further, thoughts of lust! Away! Advance no further, thoughts of bad will! Away! Advance no further, thoughts of hate!'

'And entering the chamber, he sat upon a seat of gold. Then, having rejected all passion, all feeling contrary to righteousness, he attained the first *dhāma*, a state of well-being and joy arising from solitude, a state

of reflection and seeking.

'Setting aside reflection and seeking, he attained the second *dhāma*, a state of well-being and joy arising from serenity, a state void of reflection and seeking, a state of quietude and elevation of mind.

'Ceasing to delight in joy, he remained indifferent, conscious, self-controlled, and attained the third *dhāma*, experiencing the inmost contentment proclaimed by the sages, saying, 'One who, self-controlled, dwells in indifference, experiences an inner well-being.'

'Setting aside this well-being, rejecting pain, dead to both joy and suffering, he attained the state of most pure and perfect self-mastery and serenity which constitute the fourth *dhāma*.

'Then the great and magnificent King left the chamber of the Great Collection and, entering the golden chamber, sat upon a seat of silver. He beheld the world in a thought of love and his love went forth to the four regions in turn; and then with his heart full of love, with a love growing without end or limit, he enfolded the vast world, in its entirety, to its very ends.

'He beheld the world in a thought of pity and his pity went forth to the four regions in turn; and then with his heart full of pity, with a pity growing without end or limit, he enfolded the vast world, in its entirety, to its very ends.

'He beheld the world in a thought of sympathy and

his sympathy went forth to the four regions in turn; and then with his heart full of sympathy, with a sympathy growing without end or limit, he enfolded the vast world, in its entirety, to its very ends. "He beheld the world in a thought of serenity and his serenity went forth to the four regions in turn; and then with his heart full of serenity, with a serenity growing without end or limit, he enfolded the vast world, in its entirety, to its very ends.'

'He beheld the world in a thought of pity and his pity went forth to the four regions in turn; and then with his heart full of pity, with a pity growing without end or limit, he enfolded the vast world, in its entirety, to its very ends.

One who strives in sincere quest for truth, who is ready, if necessary, to sacrifice all he had thought until then to be true, in order to draw ever nearer to the integral truth that can be no other than the progressive knowledge of the whole universe in its infinite progression, enters gradually into relation with great masses of deeper, completer and more luminous thoughts.

After much meditation and contemplation, he comes into direct contact with the great universal current of pure intellectual force, and thence forth no knowledge can be veiled from him.

From that moment serenity—mental peace—is his portion. In all beliefs, in all human knowledge, in all

religious teachings, which sometimes appear so contradictory, he perceives the deep truth which nothing can now conceal from his eyes.

Even errors and ignorance no longer disturb him, for, as an unknown master says:

‘He who walks in the Truth is not troubled by any error, for he knows that error is the first effort of life towards truth.’

But to attain this state of perfect serenity is to attain to the summit of thought’.” (CWM 2: 26–28)

5.

“... in order to contend victoriously with the injurious effects of the polluted mental atmosphere in which we live, we must build up within ourselves a pure, luminous and powerful intellectual synthesis.

For this purpose we must bring down into ourselves the highest thoughts within our reach, that is, within the field of our mental activity, and make them our own.

But since thoughts are living beings, they have, as we do, their likes and dislikes, their attractions and repulsions.

We must therefore adopt a special attitude towards them [highest thoughts within our reach], treat them as people, make advances and concessions to them and show them the same attentions as we would to someone we would wish to be our friend.

On this matter, a modern philosopher writes:

‘Sometimes thinkers in their meditations, explorers and prospectors of the intellectual world in their discoveries, and poets—the diviners of thought—in their dreams, feel and vaguely sense that the idea is not something abstract and bodiless. It appears to them to be winged, something which soars, comes close and flees, denies and gives itself, something which must be called, pursued and won’.” (CWM 2: 79)

6.

“And even when our mental synthesis is made up of thoughts that we have received and made our own in the course of a constant and persevering effort of meditation, we must love the idea with a very powerful love, perhaps even more powerful still, so that we may always be in quest of a new idea, ready to give it the most eager reception if it is willing to come to us. For we are well aware that each new idea will constrain us to modify our synthesis, relegate to the background ideas which had seemed to us master-ideas, bring to the light other ideas too long disregarded, rearrange them all so that they do not clash, to the great detriment of our brain, in brief, a long and sometimes painful task. Indeed we are very seldom disinterested with regard to ideas; there are some which we prefer to others and which, consequently, occupy a place in our mental activity which they do not always deserve.” (CWM 2: 81)

7.

“Moreover, the building up of a synthesis of pure and powerful thoughts does not lead solely to our own happiness. The clearer and higher the flame, the more light it sheds around it.

The star we allow to shine through us will foster the birth of similar stars by its example; fortunately, not only darkness and ignorance, but also knowledge and light can be contagious.

In addition, the care we take to remain conscious of our highest thoughts will compel us to control our thoughts constantly, and this control is gradually obtained by the methods I outlined to you last month—analysis, reflection, meditation, etc. Those who have achieved the control of their mental being can emanate at will a certain portion of their intellectual power, send it wherever they think proper, while remaining perfectly conscious of it.

These emanations, which are true messengers, will take your place wherever, physically, it is for any reason impossible for you to go yourself.” (CWM 2: 94)

8.

“And since men are mental beings, thought, if not truly their best and highest, is at least their most constant, normal and effective means for enlightening their ignorance. Armed with its functions of gathering and reflection, meditation, fixed contemplation, the absorbed

dwelling of the mind on its object, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyasāna*, it stands at our tops as an indispensable aid to our realisation of that which we pursue, and it is not surprising that it should claim to be the leader of the journey and the only available guide or at least the direct and innermost door of the temple.” (CWSA 23: 289)

XXXV—Meditation and Studying

1.

"This [*inclination to meditate while reading books on spiritual life*] is quite a normal movement. In reading these books you get into touch with the Force behind them and it is this that pushes you into meditation and a corresponding experience." (CWSA 31: 63)

2.

"I have already said that you can spend the time in study as the sadhana is not active. If the sadhana were active then study could be done in the spare time, i.e. in times not given to work or meditation." (CWSA 31: 69)

3.

"Your objection was to learning languages and especially French as inimical to peace and silence because it meant activity. The mind, when it is not in meditation or in complete silence, is always active with something or another—with its own ideas or desires or with other people or with things or with talking etc. None of these is any less an activity than learning languages. Now you shift your ground and say it is because owing to their study they have no time for meditation that you object. That is absurd, for if people want to meditate, they will arrange their time of study for that; if they don't want to meditate, the reason

must be something else than study and if they do not study they will simply go on thinking about 'small things'. Want of time is not the cause of their non-meditation and passion for study is not the cause." (CWSA 31: 72)

4.

"If the power to meditate long is there, a sadhak will naturally do it and care little for reading—unless he has reached the stage when everything is part of the Yogic consciousness because that is permanent. Sadhana is the aim of a sadhak, not mental development. But if he has spare time, those who have the mental turn will naturally spend it in reading or study of some kind." (CWSA 31: 61)

5.

"Studies strengthen the mind and turn its concentration away from the impulses and desires of the vital. Concentrating on study is one of the most powerful ways of controlling the mind and the vital; that is why it is so important to study." (CWM 17: 78) (CWM 12: 133)

6.

"On the days when I do not study, I feel uneasy. But when I begin to study, happiness comes. I don't understand this process."

What do you mean by process? It is not a process; the disappearance of the uneasiness is the very natural result of concentrating the mind on study, which on the one hand provides it with a healthy activity, and on the other draws its attention away from this morbid contemplation of the little physical ego.” (CWM 17: 70) (CWM 12: 131)

7.

“The writing [*floating before the eyes*] is often seen by sadhaks either in meditation and sleep or with the waking eyes or in both states. But if you see it only in sleep or an inward condition, it is not so easy to remember when waking unless you train yourself to remember.” (CWSA 30: 188)

XXXVI—Advantages of Meditation, Concentration and Contemplation

1.

“But if through meditation or concentration we turn inward or upward, we can bring down into ourselves or raise up from the depths calm, quiet, peace and finally silence. It is a concrete, positive silence (not the negative silence of the absence of noise), immutable so long as it remains, a silence one can experience even in the outer tumult of a hurricane or battlefield. This silence is synonymous with peace and it is all-powerful; it is the perfectly effective remedy for the fatigue, tension and exhaustion arising from that internal over-activity and noise which generally escape our control and cease neither by day nor night.

This is why the first thing required when one wants to do Yoga is to bring down and establish in oneself the calm, the peace, the silence.” (CWM 16: 229–230)

2.

“From meditation wisdom springs, without meditation wisdom declines. Knowing the two paths of progress and decline, a man should choose the Path which will increase his wisdom.” [These lines are from the Dhammapada and not Mother’s words] (CWM 3: 271)

3.

"It is very good indeed. The peace and silence must settle deep in, so deep that whatever comes from outside can only pass over the surface without troubling the settled calm within—it is good also that the meditation comes of itself. It means that the Yoga-Force is beginning to take up the sadhana." (CWSA 29: 149)

4.

"Please give your Grace to this unfortunate lady, whose letter I enclose. Be kind enough to instruct me what I should write to her. She prays for your upadeśa and blessings.

But it is not by *upadeśa* that this sadhana is given or carried on. It is only those who are capable by aspiration and meditation on the Mother to open and receive her action and working within that can succeed in this Yoga." (CWSA 32: 136)

5.

"If the Yoga is guided by a received written Shastra,—some Word from the past which embodies the experience of former Yogins,—it may be practiced either by personal effort alone or with the aid of a Guru. The spiritual knowledge is then gained through meditation on the truths that are taught and it is made living and conscious by their

realisation in the personal experience; the Yoga proceeds by the results of prescribed methods taught in a Scripture or a tradition and reinforced and illumined by the instructions of the Master. This is a narrower practice, but safe and effective within its limits, because it follows a well-beaten track to a long familiar goal.” (CWSA 23: 55)

6.

“It is not that I want you to do all by your own strength; the Mother’s force is there. I should like you however to persist in meditation and the endeavour to be quiet within; even if at present there is no definite self-understanding or experience, this is the way to open the nature to them; we will try to do the rest for you.” (CWSA 32: 302–303)

7.

“Why should you decide beforehand that your birthday is spoiled? You have only to throw off all these undesirable ideas and feelings which proceed from a still imperfectly purified part of the external being and take the right attitude which you should always have when you come to the Mother. There should be no idea of what others have or have not—your relation is between the Mother and yourself and has nothing to do with others. Nothing should exist for you but yourself and the Divine—yourself receiving, her forces flowing into you. To secure that better, do not spend the time at your disposal in speech—

especially if anything of the depression remains with you, it will waste the time in discussing things which cannot help the true consciousness to predominate. Concentrate, open yourself and let the Mother bring you back to the psychic condition by what she will pour into you in meditation and silence.”(CWSA 32: 525)

8.

“In the book The Mother Sri Aurobindo says, ‘The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender.’ And ‘rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind’s ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature’s desires’, etc. [p. 9]. How can I apply this in my working life?

This has to be done in life itself—whether the life is in an Asram or outside, the rule and method is the same. It is an internal change for which one must become conscious of the lower nature as well as of the psychic and spiritual workings. Meditation is usually necessary for that but so also is life, for it is only life that tests the genuineness of the change.” (CWSA 35: 110)

9.

"All the difficulties you describe are quite natural things common to most people. It is easy for one, comparatively, to remember and be conscious when one sits quiet in meditation; it is difficult when one has to be busy with work. The remembrance and consciousness in work have to come by degrees, you must not expect to have it all at once; nobody can get it all at once. It comes in two ways,—first, if one practises remembering the Mother and offering the work to her each time one does something(not all the time one is doing, but at the beginning or whenever one can remember), then that slowly becomes easy and habitual to the nature. Secondly, by the meditation an inner consciousness begins to develop which, after a time, not at once or suddenly, becomes more and more automatically permanent. One feels this as a separate consciousness from that outer one which works. At first this separate consciousness is not felt when one is working, but as soon as the work stops one feels it was there all the time watching from behind; afterwards it begins to be felt during the work itself, as if there were two parts of oneself—one watching and supporting from behind and remembering the Mother and offering to her and the other doing the work. When this happens, then to work with the true consciousness becomes more and more easy."(CWSA 29: 259)

10.

“Openness in work means the same thing as openness in the consciousness. The same Force that works in your consciousness in meditation and clears away the cloud and confusion whenever you open to it, can also take up your action and not only make you aware of the defects in it but keep you conscious of what is to be done and guide your mind and hands to do it. If you open to it in your work, you will begin to feel this guidance more and more until behind all your activities you will be aware of the Force of the Mother.” (CWSA 29: 262)

11.

“The ease and peace are felt very deep and far within because they are in the psychic and the psychic is very deep within us, covered over by the mind and vital. When you meditate you open to the psychic, become aware of your psychic consciousness deep within and feel these things. In order that this ease and peace and happiness may become strong and stable and felt in all the being and in the body, you have to go still deeper within and bring out the full force of the psychic into the physical. This can most easily be done by regular concentration and meditation with the aspiration for this true consciousness. It can be done by work also, by dedication, by doing the work for the Divine only without thought of self and keeping the idea of consecration to the Mother always in

the heart. But this is not easy to do perfectly.” (CWSA 29: 299)

12.

“*Sweet Mother,*

How can one draw energy into oneself from outside?

That depends on the kind of energy one wants to absorb, for each region of the being has a corresponding kind of energy. If it is physical energy, we absorb it principally through respiration, and all that facilitates and improves respiration increases at the same time the absorption of physical energy.

But there are many other kinds of energies, or rather many other forms of Energy, which is *one* and universal.

And it is through the various yogic exercises of breathing, meditation, *japa* and concentration that one puts oneself in contact with these various forms of Energy.” (CWM 16: 222)

13.

“The only thing I can suggest about diseases is to call down peace. Keep the mind away from the body by whatever means—whether by reading Sri Aurobindo’s books or meditation. It is in this state that the Grace acts. And it is the Grace alone that cures. The medicines only give a faith to the body. That is all.” (CWM 15: 149)

14.

"How to open to the Mother? The following are the means:

(1) To remember You constantly or from time to time—

Good.

(2) By taking Your name through Japa—

Helpful.

(3) With the help of meditation—

More difficult if one has not the habit of meditation." (CWM
14: 40–41)

15.

"We give the name 'psychic' to the psychological centre of our being, the seat within us of the highest truth of our existence, that which can know this truth and set it in movement. It is therefore of capital importance to become conscious of its presence in us, to concentrate on this presence until it becomes a living fact for us and we can identify ourselves with it.

In various times and places many methods have been prescribed for attaining this perception and ultimately

achieving this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical. In reality, everyone has to find the one which suits him best, and if one has an ardent and steadfast aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet, in one way or another—outwardly through reading and study, inwardly through concentration, meditation, revelation and experience—the help one needs to reach the goal. Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and to realise. This discovery and realisation should be the primary preoccupation of our being, the pearl of great price which we must acquire at any cost.” (CWM 12: 4–5)

16.

“*Sweet Mother,*

You have said that I do not think well. How can one develop one’s thought?

You must read with much attention and concentration, not novels or dramas, but books that make you think. You must meditate on what you have read, reflect on a thought until you have understood it. Talk little, remain quiet and concentrated, and speak only when it is indispensable.” (CWM 16: 242) (CWM 12: 141–142)

17.

“Nor in the field of forces is it possible to accumulate, for receptivity occurs in proportion to expenditure: the more one expends usefully, the more one makes oneself capable of receiving. Thus the intelligence one can acquire is proportionate to the intelligence one uses. We are formed to manifest a certain quantity of intellectual forces, but if we develop ourselves mentally, if we put our brains to work, if we meditate regularly and above all if we make others benefit by the fruit, however modest, of our efforts, we make ourselves capable of receiving a greater quantity of ever deeper and purer intellectual forces. And the same holds true for love and spirituality.” (CWM 2: 102)

18.

PLAY: Towards the Future

“I promised my friend that I would go and spend the afternoon with her and tell her something about the marvellous teaching that guides our life. We shall probably read together some of those pages that are so full of profound truth. To meditate on these things is a great joy to both of us.” (CWM 12: 456)

19.

"As regards the 'opening of the channel', can it be done sooner by more concentration, meditation, etc., disregarding the literary side for the time being?"

One can get the power of receptivity to inspiration by concentration and meditation making the inner being stronger and the outer less gross, tamasic and insistent." (CWSA 27: 572)

20.

"Do you mean that the method you advised [to 'sit in vacant meditation and see what comes from the intuitive Gods'] can really do something?"

It was a joke. But all the same that is the way things are supposed to come. When the mind becomes decently quiet, an intuition perfect or imperfect is supposed to come hopping along and jump in and look round the place. Of course, it is not the only way." (CWSA 27: 214)

21.

"As for the 'urge', if you resist the inspiration, the chances are that you will lose both the urge and your meditation. So it is better to let the flood have its way—especially in this case, of course, for there is no harm in *this* kind of urge." (CWSA 27: 575)

22.

“Mantras come to many people in meditation. The Rishis say in the Veda that they had the Truth by vision and inspiration, ‘truth-hearing seers’, *kavayaḥsatyaśrutaḥ* — Veda is *śruti* got by inner hearing.” (CWSA 29: 323)

23.

“Mother, we sometimes have sudden ideas. Where do they come from and how do they work in the head?”

Where do they come from?—From the mental atmosphere. Why do they come?... Perhaps you meet them on your way as one meets a passer-by in a public square. Most often it is that; you are on a road where ideas are moving about and it so happens that you meet this particular one and it passes through your head. Obviously, those who are in the habit of meditating, of concentrating, and for whom intellectual problems have a very concrete and tangible reality, by concentrating their minds they attract associated ideas, and a ‘company of ideas’ is formed which they organise so as to solve a problem or clarify the question they are considering. But for this, one must have the habit of mental concentration and precisely that philosophical mind I was speaking about, for which ideas are living entities with their own life, which are organised on the mental chess-board like pawns in a game of chess: one takes them, moves them, places them, organises them,

one makes a coherent whole out of these ideas, which are individual, independent entities with affinities among themselves, and which organise themselves according to inner laws. But for this, one must also have the habit of meditation, reflection, analysis, deduction, mental organisation. Otherwise, if one is just 'like that', if one lives life as it comes, then it is exactly like a public square: there are roads and on the roads people pass by, and then you find yourself at crossroads and it all passes through your head—sometimes even ideas without any connection between them, so much so that if you were to write down what passes through your head, it would make a string of admirable nonsense!" (CWM 9: 250–251)

24.

"Does it [inspiration] not come, Mother, whenever one wants it?"

Whenever one wants it? Generally not, for one does not know the mechanism of one's being and cannot open the doors at will.

It is a thing that can be done. It is one of the earliest things that you are taught to do in Yoga: to open the door whenever one wants. It is the result of meditation or concentration or aspiration: all these processes are followed to open the door somewhere towards anything

whatever. For the other kind of receptivity people unfortunately always have.... It is impossible

And generally you try to open it precisely towards the highest thing, not towards anything whatever. For the other kind of receptivity people unfortunately always have.... It is impossible to be altogether shut up in an ivory tower — besides, I believe it would not be very favourable, it would be impossible to progress if one were completely shut up in oneself." (CWM 5: 207)

25.

"By going deep [*in meditation*] one person may see visions; another may fall in deeper consciousness but see no vision—and so on. The result varies with the nature." (CWSA 30: 88)

26.

"These lights and visions are not hallucinations. They indicate an opening of the inner vision whose centre is in the forehead between the eyebrows. Lights are very often the first thing seen. Lights indicate the action or movement of subtle forces belonging to the different planes of being,—the nature of the force depending on the colour and shade of the light. The sun is the symbol and power of the inner or higher Truth—to see it in meditation is a good sign. The sea is also often symbolic, indicating usually the vital nature, sometimes the expanse of consciousness

in movement. The opening of vision must be allowed to develop, but too much importance need not be given to the individual visions unless or until they become evidently symbolic or significant or shed light on things in the sadhana etc.” (CWSA 30: 93–94)

27.

The Diverse Nature and Significance of Visions

“Your visions are not mental images but significant symbols. The white dove is the higher divine or spiritual Consciousness above the mental surrounded by the golden lightnings of the Truth. The lamb is the psychic aspiring to the Truth. When one has a thought or feeling and creates a mental form of it, that is a mental image—or when not so positively or consciously self-created forms arise either in meditation or sleep, which correspond to mental thoughts or vital feelings, one’s own or those of others, those also are simply mental images or vital formations. The true significant ones are those that come of themselves and correspond to things, states of consciousness or a play of forces that are actual and not determined mainly by one’s ideas, will or feelings.”
(CWSA 30: 100)

28.

"These are the ordinary normal experiences of the sadhana when there is an opening from above—the contact with the peace of the Brahman, Self or Divine and the contact with the higher Power, the Power of the Mother. He does not know what they are, quite naturally, but feels very correctly and his description is quite accurate. 'How beautiful, calm and still all seems—as if in water there were not even a wave. But it is not Nothingness. I feel a Presence steeped in life but absolutely silent and quiet in meditation',—there could hardly be a better description of this experience,—the experience of the peace and silence of the Divine or of the Divine itself in its own essential peace and silence. Also what he feels about the Force is quite correct, 'something from above the manifested creation (mind-matter), a Force behind that is distinct from that which gives rise to emotions, anger, lust which are all purified and transformed gradually', in other words, the Divine or Spiritual Force, other than the cosmic vital which supports the ordinary embodied consciousness; that is also very clear. I suppose it is only a contact yet, but a very true and vivid contact if it gives rise to so vivid and true a feeling. It looks as if he were going to make a very good beginning." (CWSA 30: 428)

29.

“In the depths of our being, in the silence of contemplation, a luminous force floods our consciousness with a vast and luminous peace which prevails over all petty reactions and prepares us for union with the Divine—the very purpose of individual existence.” (CWM 16: 434)

30.

“Then when I am quiet (*gesture of open hands*), it is as though there was nothing any more and all were wonderful. And then as soon as people begin to speak to me or as soon as I see someone, all the complexities come in—they make a mess of everything.

I am sure that it is the passage from this life to that Life.... When one will completely go over to that side, oh! all speculation will stop, all desire to explain, all desire to deduce, conclude, arrange—to all that there will be an end.... If one could ... be—*be*, simply be, be. But for us (I have noticed it), if we do not speak, if we do not think, if we do not decide, we believe we are outside life.... And then it is not always the same silence. The silence of the unspoken word, it is not that: it is the silence of the contemplation... that is dynamic. Silence of a dynamic contemplation. It is that.

Certainly it is the new mode of life that is preparing itself; therefore the other one must give place to it.” (CWM 11: 265)

31.

“It is not easy to get into the silence. That is only possible by throwing out the mental and vital activities. It is easier to let the silence get into you, i.e., to open yourself and let it descend. The way to do this and the way to call down the higher powers is the same. It is to remain quiet at the time of meditation, not fighting with the mind or making mental efforts to pull down the power of the Silence but keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them. If the mind is active, one has only to learn to look at it, drawn back and not giving any sanction from within, until its habitual or mechanical activities begin to fall quiet for want of support from within. If it is too persistent, a steady rejection without strain or struggle is the one thing to be done.” (CWSA 36: 300)

32.

“This knowledge [of Soul and Nature] comes by an inner meditation through which the eternal self becomes apparent to us in our own self-existence. Or it comes by the Yoga of the Sankhyas, the separation of the soul from nature. Or it comes by the Yoga of works in which the personal will is dissolved through the opening up of our mind and heart and all our active forces to the Lord who assumes to himself the whole of our works in nature.” (CWSA 19: 418)

33.

“But in the first place, if we have proceeded rightly on the path of our Yoga, we shall have attained to Self through a purified mind and heart, and a purified mind is one that is necessarily passive and open to the knowledge. Secondly, even the mind in spite of its tendency to limit and divide can be taught to think in the rhythm of the unifying Truth instead of the broken terms of the limiting appearance. We must therefore accustom it by meditation and concentration to cease to think of things and beings as separately existent in themselves and rather to think always of the One everywhere and of all things as the One. Although we have spoken hither to of the withdrawing motion of the Jiva as the first necessity of knowledge and as if it were to be pursued alone and by itself, yet in fact it is better for the sadhaka of the integral Yoga to unite the two movements.” (CWSA 23: 370)

34.

“This realisation of all things as God or Brahman has, as we have seen, three aspects of which we can conveniently make three successive stages of experience. First, there is the Self in whom all beings exist. The Spirit, the Divine has manifested itself as infinite self-extended being, self-existent, pure, not subject to Time and Space, but supporting Time and Space as figures of its consciousness. It is more than all things and contains them all within that

self-extended being and consciousness, not bound by anything that it creates, holds or becomes, but free and infinite and all-blissful. It holds them, in the old image, as the infinite ether contains in itself all objects. This image of the ethereal (Akasha) Brahman may indeed be of great practical help to the sadhaka who finds a difficulty in meditating on what seems to him at first an abstract and unseizable idea. In the image of the ether, not physical but an encompassing ether of vast being, consciousness and bliss, he may seek to see with the mind and to feel in his mental being this supreme existence and to identify it in oneness with the self within him. By such meditation the mind may be brought to a favourable state of predisposition in which, by the rending or withdrawing of the veil, the supramental vision may flood the mentality and change entirely all our seeing. And upon that change of seeing, as it becomes more and more potent and insistent and occupies all our consciousness, there will supervene eventually a change of becoming so that what we see we become. We shall be in our self-consciousness not so much cosmic as ultra-cosmic, infinite. Mind and life and body will then be only movements in that infinity which we have become, and we shall see that what exists is not world at all but simply this infinity of spirit in which move the mighty cosmic harmonies of its own images of self-conscious becoming." (CWSA 23: 371)

35.

“Naturally, if you enter into contemplation and aspire for a higher life and call down the forces from above, this recuperates your energies more than anything else.” (CWM 7: 73)

36.

“There are some who are not officially Yogis, they are not *gurus* and have no disciples; the world does not know what they do; they are not anxious for fame and do not attract to themselves the attention of men; but they have the higher consciousness, are in touch with a Divine Power, and when they create they create from there. The best paintings in India and much of the best statuary and architecture were done by Buddhist monks who passed their lives in spiritual contemplation and practice; they did supreme artistic work, but did not care to leave their names to posterity. The chief reason why Yogis are not usually known by their art is that they do not consider their art-expression as the most important part of their life and do not put so much time and energy into it as a mere artist. And what they do does not always reach the public. How many there are who have done great things and not published them to the world!” (CWM 3: 108)

37.

"Your experience about the meditation is common enough—I used to have it or analogous things hundreds of times. I suppose it is to teach us first that grace is more effective than tapasya and, secondly, that either equanimity or a cheerful spontaneous happy self-opening is as effective, to say the least, as the grimmest wrestling for a result. But it would be dangerous to assume from that that no tapasya and no endeavour is needful—for that might very well mean inertia. I have seen too that very often a long tapasya with doubtful results prepares the moment of grace and the spontaneous down flow. All which seem to be contradictions, but are not in a whole view of things." (CWSA 29: 172)

XXXVII—Images Seen in Meditation and Concentration

1.

"Sometimes when one wants to concentrate, usually there are disturbing thoughts, but often some kind of images pass before..."

Do you see images when you meditate?

Sometimes.

When the eyes are open or closed?

Closed.

Closed. And what images? Colours or images?

Sometimes colours, sometimes images.

Well... Always or only sometimes?

Not always.

And so? You are asking what it is? It can be many, many things. It can be simply that, your physical eyes being closed, your inner eyes open and begin to see in their

domain or in the subtle physical or the most material vital, it may be that.

It can be a projection of your own thoughts, that is, when you begin reflecting on something, certain images pass before you, like that; they pass rather before your mind than your eyes, and it is like an imaged objectivisation of your thought, your state of thought or state of consciousness. But then, it becomes quite clear, coherent and it is interesting. It can serve as an indication.

It can be something else also. If you are truly quiet and your mind is quiet, it can be... how shall I put it?... some kind of messages coming to you from other people or other worlds or other forces, which come to tell you something, to show you something; usually, if you see colours which are... pulsating, and then suddenly it is as though you were absorbing them: this usually indicates forces sent by someone or something, which come with some sort of power. They are some kind of messages. So, if you are very quiet in your mind, sometimes they bring an indication of what they mean.

Many things are possible and you must observe very attentively, but very quietly, without any mental activity, without seeking to understand at that time; because as soon as your mind becomes active and tries to understand, it will jam everything and probably you will not see anything any more.

But if you remain very quiet, only if you observe—as though you were silently looking at something, you understand—then you will begin seeing more precisely, and little by little distinguishing between different categories of things. You will be able to know what one thing is and what another etc., whether it comes from you or from outside, whether it is on a material plane or on another plane. All this is learnt through a very quiet observation, quiet but very sharp, you understand; because there are very tiny shades, very tiny, between different things, and when you get used to distinguishing these nuances, you can discern exactly what it is.

It is always the same thing. One must be very quiet, very attentive, calm the mind as much as possible, because as soon as it begins to stir, the phenomenon is distorted.

In any case, in a very general way, this proves that the inner vision is beginning to develop or is developed.”
(CWM 6: 377–379)

XXXVIII—Experiences in Meditation

1.

"The meditation experience seems to be developing in the right direction. Before it was only an opening; but to get something settled, there must be this assimilation and the growth instability, in peace. Peace is the basis of the spiritual change—all the rest falls into the peace and is sustained on it as on a sure foundation." (CWSA 29: 124)

2.

"While sitting in the meditation hall, I felt a sort of oneness with the Mother's consciousness. But these days it is not possible to go deep in meditation at all. Perhaps it is not even necessary if there is receptivity in the waking state."

What is most important is the change of consciousness of which this feeling of oneness is a part. The going deep in meditation is only a means and it is not always necessary if the great experiences come easily without it." (CWSA 32: 190)

3.

"From time to time, I feel a pressure above my head and also in my head and forehead. For the last few days, when I sit for meditation, there is a feeling as though ants were

crawling at the top of my neck and in the spinal cord. Does this have any value?

You can write to him that the pressure he feels on his head is the pressure of the Mother's force (the force of the higher consciousness) preparing an opening through the three upper centres (brahmarandhra, base of sahasradala; inner mind centre in the forehead; and the heart or psychic-emotional centre). The feeling in the spine is due to a very slight flow of the current of the Shakti from above—the spine being the base of all the centres and the channel through which the Force tends most easily to flow from one centre to another (Sahasradala = the centre where the human or mental and the higher or spiritual consciousness meet)." (CWSA 32: 209–210)

4.

"It is this trance ecstasy that has descended upon you each time you went inside or were even on the point of going inside in meditation. It is the universal experience of sadhaks that a force or consciousness or Ananda like this first comes from above—or around—and presses on or surrounds the head, then it pierces the skull as it were and fills first the brain and forehead, then the whole head and descends occupying each centre till the whole system is full and replete.(Of course there are or can be preliminary rushes occupying the whole body for a time or some other

part of the system most open and least resistant to the influence.” (CWSA 30: 141)

5.

“About the snake you saw in your meditation—serpents indicate always energies of Nature and very often bad energies of the vital plane; but they can also indicate luminous or divine energies like the snake of Vishnu. The one you saw was evidently of this latter type—a luminous divine energy and therefore there was no cause for alarm, it was a good sign.” (CWSA 30: 170–171)

6.

“Sometimes when I meditate, the body seems to vanish. I do not feel any kind of physical sensation, but at the same time I am conscious of everything around me. My consciousness remains only like an idea in the head. At times there is not a single thought in my mind; thoughts do come in it, but they just pass without creating any kind of confusion. This state is pleasant—like having rest. Mother, what exactly is this condition?”

It is a withdrawal from the most external consciousness into the Purusha, the witness in the physical. One finds there a great repose, indeed.” (CWM 14: 358)

7.

"As for the physical its difficulty is universal in everybody and not peculiar to you. It has come up because it always comes up in the sadhana when the physical consciousness has to be worked upon for the necessary change. As soon as that is done, the difficulty you feel will first diminish and then go.

It is this work that is going on and when you felt the white light in meditation and the result which lasted even after opening the eyes, the head and eyes cool and all vast and wide, it was this working taking place in your physical mind to change it. The rest of the physical consciousness was still undergoing another kind of working and so felt heat and not this release and wideness." (CWSA 28: 200–201)

8.

"The two sides of the body are supposed to represent two different sides of the being, the side of consciousness and knowledge and the side of force and action. The feeling you had at meditation may have been the sense of the removal of some veil of obscurity covering the mind—the head from the crown to the throat being the seat of the thinking mind." (CWSA 28: 247)

9.

Mahalakshmi

"A verse from the Chandi on Mahalakshmi came to me a minute or two after the Mother began to meditate with me. Afterwards the Mother explained that three forms of Mahalakshmi appeared in the meditation in response to my invocation. The first, the Mother said, was the original (Overmental) form of Mahalakshmi, and the second was the traditional one. About the third, the Mother did not speak fully. The form was three faced with something like a crown on top. Is there any tradition in India or outside of a three-faced form of Mahalakshmi? And what is the significance of the same goddess-personality of the Mother—Mahalakshmi—appearing in three successive forms?"

The Mother told you all that she saw about the last form—it disappeared almost immediately. The first form was the true one, that which she wears on the Overmind Plane which is the home of the greater Gods—as soon as it touched your mind, it took the traditional form which is the one with which your mind is familiar. The third shape must be a symbolic one (not traditional)—it would seem to be a correspondent one on the Shakti side to the Trimurti, indicating the unity in difference of three powers in the Cosmic Consciousness—in it is the same manifestation in different forms,—the Overmind Power, the traditional Lakshmi and the One Power in the Mother here." (CWSA 32: 70–71)

10.

Mahasaraswati

"Today, immersed in deep meditation, I saw a beautiful chakra opening above my head, and on that chakra two lotuses were blooming and on those lotuses you and the Mother were sitting. After that, I invoked the Mother in my entire being and then I saw Mahasaraswati descending. Why did Mahasaraswati descend at my call and why did the chakra open above my head?"

It is Mahasaraswati's work to use the power and light and experiences that come in from above so as to change in detail the whole outer nature." (CWSA 32: 71)

11.

"Sitting in meditation today I saw a river flowing from the higher consciousness level to the heart level in me. On this river was a golden boat and seated in it was Mahasaraswati, travelling down the river in golden and white light. What is the meaning of this?"

That is the work of Mahasaraswati to move between the higher consciousness and the heart and through them establish the rule of the Truth in all details of the mind and life and physical nature." (CWSA 32: 72)

12.

"When I opened myself to the Mother in meditation, I

saw her approaching me with an infant in her arms. As she came near, the golden Purusha frowned at her and she drew back behind you. I have seen this vision several times. What am I to do? You fill my whole being but, despite opening myself to the Mother, she is not allowed to approach me.

The infant in the Mother's arms is the symbol of the psychic being. The soul in direct touch with the divine Truth is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature (*manas, prāṇa, anna* of the Taittiriya Upanishad); one may practise Yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason, power and all kinds of experiences in the vital, even physical siddhis, but if the true soul-power behind and the psychic nature do not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this Yoga, the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. If the soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then the Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the mere power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible. It is this new birth, this awakening of the psychic consciousness, that the Mother is offering in the vision. If the golden Purusha refuses it, it must be because he is bound by some kind of attachment, probably to mere 'knowledge'. In that case, he is not very consistent; for it was he who demanded

surrender to the Mother and now he rejects the very heart and meaning of the surrender. Probably this repeated experience is an indication of the principal difficulty in the sadhana. If there is refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the sadhana. Only if it is accepted, can his coming and doing sadhana here be fruitful." (CWSA 32: 162–163)

13.

"Last night after eight o'clock after returning from work, I sat for meditation. My mind and vital became quiet and opened to the Mother. My heart became vast and opened to her. Then in this quietness something very soothing descended from my chest down to my navel and below it. Then, below the navel, I saw a bright white light penetrating and it filled the whole area with light; then it rose up above the navel till even the head was filled with light. I am unable to express the peace and quietness I felt at that time. The peace was very pure. Now whenever I sit for meditation, I see a very white light coming around me.

The white Light is the Mother's light. Wherever it descends or enters, it brings peace, purity, silence and the openness to the higher forces. If it comes below the navel, that means that it is working in the lower vital." (CWSA 32: 265)

14.

"Today while meditating in the Pranam hall before the Mother came down, I saw in meditation: 'The Mother is absorbed in deep concentration.' Why did I see her like that?"

The Mother is always in a concentrated consciousness in her inner being—so it is quite natural that you should see like that." (CWSA 32: 272)

15.

"Today while meditating in the Pranam hall I saw: The sky is filled with blue light. From the sky a long path is coming down on earth. The path is beautifully paved. On this path the Mother is slowly and joyfully coming towards the earth. Her whole body is white and full of golden light and this light is spreading out on all sides. When the Mother has come to the end of the path, her body will get mixed with the soil of the earth. Then I suddenly woke up from meditation. Was this a vision? What plane was it from?"

Yes, it is a vision from the plane of mind (not ordinary, but higher mind). It indicates the descent of the Mother with her light of purity and Truth (white and golden) into Matter." (CWSA 32 : 273–274)

16.

"In the afternoon I went to sleep remembering the Mother. After a while I saw that my subtle mind, vital and body had risen up high into a beautiful world, profound and peaceful. Then I saw many saints, sages and Gods tirelessly calling the Mother in their meditations. The joy of that world was truly deep. What a beautiful world! Then I saw the Mother slowly descend into their midst; she had ten arms and a bright white complexion. Suddenly I woke up. But lying quietly on the bed, I realised that my outer mind, life and body were moving inside the Mother's circle. In this condition I looked at my body and saw that my gross body had a beautiful golden colour. All this time I kept calling the Mother quietly. Is all this true?"

You seem to have ascended into a plane of the Higher Spiritualised Mind with a descent into it of Maheshwari bringing the power of the Divine Truth. The result in the physical consciousness was a perception of the One Consciousness and Life in all things and an illumination of the cells of the body with the golden light of the higher Truth." (CWSA 32 : 275)

17.

"Just yesterday you wrote to me, 'The next step is to be conscious in the samadhi' and today it actually took place. A great Holy Woman had come. Several of us went for her

darshan. When my turn came, without looking at her face, I threw myself on her lap. She put her hands on my head, caressed me slowly, and gave me two spiritual powers. After a while, I raised my head and looked at the Holy Woman. Her face appeared like the Mother's. Then I said, 'May I ask you a question?' She did not seem to like this, but as she had not refused, I repeated the question. She said, 'No, I don't like questions.' Then we entered into a trance together. After a long time we both came back to consciousness.

This whole thing is beyond my understanding. Please tell me: (1)Who was the Holy Woman? (2)Why did she grant me the gift of higher powers? (3) A trance within a trance?

Obviously the Holy Woman was the Mother herself in a supraphysical form. It was natural that she should not like questions—the Mother does not like mental questions very much at any time and least of all when she is giving meditation as she was doing in this experience. It is rather funny to ask 'why' (your eternal why) higher powers should be given. People do not question the gifts of the Shakti or demand reasons for her giving them, they are only too glad to get them. Trance within trance of course, since your sadhana was going on in the trance, according to the ways of trance. It is also in this way that it can go on in conscious sleep." (CWSA 32: 278–279)

18.

"... see a rough rock. Sunlight falls upon it and the rock changes: in the centre a hollow circle is made and rocks arrange themselves round the circle. In the centre of the circle appears a stone image of Shiva nearly two feet high. Afterwards, out of this image the Mother emerges. She is in meditation. The sunlight falls just behind the Mother's body. What does it signify?"

Rocks = the physical (most material) being.

An opening in the material making room for the formation of the spiritual consciousness there.

Stone image of Shiva = the realisation of the silent Self or Brahman there (peace, silence, wideness of the Infinite, purity of the witness Purusha).

Out of this silence emerges the Divine Shakti concentrated for the transformation of the material.

Sunlight = Light of Truth." (CWSA 32: 280)

19.

"Yesterday night in a dream I was in a garden—it was night perhaps; there was not much light. I was there with some other sadhaks and we were there to meditate with the Mother. I could not see Mother but I knew she was there, high up, waiting to give us meditation. But some of the sadhaks were careless, some were yawning, some were lying down. I was trying to meditate and I felt Mother's hand come down and touch my forehead for about a

minute. Then I felt something in me being drawn up through my whole body as she slowly drew her hand back, and I felt something being taken away. But when I woke up, I did not know if it was a good or bad thing Mother took away. What was it?

It was certainly a true dream of the lower vital or perhaps subtle physical plane, where the laziness, indifference, frivolity of the sadhaks is a fact and the chief obstacle to the supramental descent into Matter. Because in your inner physical you were sincere and aspiring, the Mother's blessing came upon you and removed something there that was in the way. There is no indication in the dream as to what it was, but something in the lower vital or physical connected with this general defect." (CWSA 32: 282)

20.

"Today in meditation my entire body opened and spread out infinitely. I felt a slight uneasiness at first, but I could feel the Mother's force. It carried me deeper and deeper into dense darkness through immense worlds of disgust and depression. Though I felt no peace and joy on this long journey, I continued to walk steadily and swiftly. Someone seemed to say, 'Do not be depressed. Walk on, proceed. You have to cross through still darker worlds of disgust and depression, but keep on going.' Along with this experience, I felt a great force. My heart opened wide; peace and

profound contentment descended into it and I saw white light playing everywhere. Crossing another dark world, I saw a vibrant golden light. How powerful and beautiful that golden light was! My body, mind and heart were satisfied. I felt a sense of fearlessness. A sadhak's life is like the life of a warrior. However long the struggle, whatever the obstacles, we will ascend to the Supreme Truth. Is this the right way to observe my problems and difficulties?

Yes, that is the attitude you have to keep. If it is kept, then there will be no disturbance or only a superficial unease. The experience itself was that of the descent of the Mother's light of Divine Consciousness into domains of being which are ignorant or inconscient and obscure. The Mother herself has descended into these domains and moved through them to bring light there." (CWSA 32: 285–286)

21.

"This morning during my meditation before the Mother, a very tender feeling rose from within me. She was sitting before us with an ocean of compassion and love which she wants to give away unconditionally and without reserve. But we cannot receive it; and instead of reproaching ourselves for our inability, we put the blame on the Mother, pouring our venom on her which she swallows and offers back to us as Amrita in return.

This experience brought me a mixed feeling of peaceful silence, self-reproach and a touch of sadness. It has remained with me all day, but now I apprehend a reaction; for usually my experiences recede, leaving me with depression or emptiness.

What you felt was an opening of the psychic being in your heart and the perceptions that came to you were perfectly true. The reaction you speak of does often come after an experience. But if the depression can be avoided, emptiness does not matter. Up to a certain stage the nature needs after an experience a quiescent period to assimilate experience. One has then not to be depressed but to remain quiet waiting and aspiring for more experience, more opening, a more continuous flow of the truth." (CWSA 32: 286)

22.

"Sometimes when I sit in meditation, I find that instead of myself, the Mother is sitting. Even my body seems to be that. Pray let me know what it means.

Probably you became aware of some part of your being which feels united with the Mother." (CWSA 32: 287)

23.

"X told me that she was in constant touch with the Divine Mother long before she came to Pondicherry. She saw her

not only in meditation or vision but before her wide-awake eyes, in a concrete form. She often conversed with her; especially when some difficulty arose, the Mother would come and tell her what to do. If what she says is correct, she must be a very advanced sadhika. How much truth do you find in her experiences and visions?

She has not related them to us. But there is nothing improbable in it. It means simply that she externalised her inner vision and experience so as to see through the physical eyes also, but it was the inner vision that saw and the inner hearing that heard, not the physical sight or hearing. That is common enough. It does not indicate an 'advanced' sadhana, whatever that phrase may mean, but only a special faculty." (CWSA 32: 288–289)

24.

"Last night at the meditation, I got the same desire for knowledge [whether I will ever get any realisation]. Then I saw the Mother closing her eyes and it was as though her mind was pressing my mind on all sides. Then my mind became still and I felt the contact of the Mother's mind even in the cells. After that I felt that all my questions were answered and it was no use asking anything at all.

That is the right way. Union with the Mother's consciousness is the true way for knowledge to come." (CWSA 32: 363–364)

25.

"In meditation with the Mother today, I felt devotion for Sri Aurobindo, not in the mind but in the heart. The mind and body are at peace, but there is still difficulty in the vital and below. Take this difficulty away from me.

If the mind and the heart have a settled devotion and are full of the Mother's presence or in constant contact with her Light and Force, then the difficulties of the vital and physical consciousness in you can be met and conquered. It is that you must get first. To try to deal with the difficulties of the vital without this contact or presence, is premature and cannot succeed." (CWSA 32: 383)

26.

"May I ask the significance of what I very often feel in my meditation with the Mother in the morning? So long as Mother is meditating I have quite a good meditation, but as soon as Mother comes out of her meditation my own meditation becomes lighter and I can feel that she is no longer in meditation. I would like to know if it is a good sign for sadhana.

It shows at least that your contact with the Mother's consciousness is perfectly spontaneous and genuine. The Mother puts out her Force on all in the meditation and the intensity of your meditation shows that you receive it—as soon as she ceases, the dynamic pressure lightens and your meditation lightens with it. It is certainly a good sign, a good seed of the responsiveness that is necessary.” (CWSA 32: 526)

27.

“During the twilight meditation with the Mother, my consciousness rose upwards in an utter passivity. From the neck upwards, the head was not in a normal state. What was this?”

It means the whole mind was liberated for a while from imprisonment in the body sense and became free in the passivity of the wider Self.” (CWSA 32: 527)

28.

“It is only at the beginning that concentration is necessary to see these colours, afterwards it comes of itself. There was a long time when I used to see colours spontaneously or wherever I cast my eyes, just as you do now, and at every time of concentrated meditation they used to fill the room. Many, indeed, begin to see them spontaneously without any concentration at all, first with

closed eyes, afterwards with the eyes open. Seeing them with the eyes closed happens often enough to people who have never practised or even heard of Yoga; but in such cases it proves that there is some kind of occult vision there very near to the surface." (CWSA 35: 236)

29.

"Last night during my meditation I saw a cat—probably one of the Mother's cats, the one which sleeps on the staircase—come and enter the room where I was meditating. But I at once opened my eyes. Would you very kindly let me know the meaning of this cat and why I opened my eyes.

If it is the cat Bushy, she has some strange connection with the siddhi in the physical consciousness. It was she who ushered us into our present house running before us into each room. The change to this house marked the change from the sadhana on the vital to the sadhana on the physical level." (CWSA 35: 274)

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved into 28 rue Francois Martin, the 'Meditation House', on 7 February 1927

30.

"I find it difficult to emerge from the peace I found in meditation. How difficult it must be to come out of the

peace of Nirvana or Samadhi! I think that is why Yoga could not be made dynamic up till now.

It is only because they make the peace an end, not, as we aim at doing, a basis for the divine consciousness and all its dynamisms." (CWSA 35: 309)

31.

"In the evening meditation I saw a white cock in the physical and heard it crowing. I felt it as an indication of the dawn of the Supramental Descent. Was this a right feeling? What does the symbol indicate?"

That is of course a symbol of triumph. It is true that a Force came down full of an intense white light which the Mother had never known to come down before and it seemed to have a supramental authority. Your feeling therefore was probably right." (CWSA 35: 361)

32.

"Yesterday after dusk, I felt as if some welcome revolution had taken place in the Divine order of things. I attended the meditation and felt the whole place filled with calm and silence. ...Then descended a virāṭmahāpuruṣa, Himalayan in proportions, in the form of Sri Aurobindo, who, as if finding the earth incapable of bearing his weight, stood behind the Mother and placed his hands on her shoulders.

The whole world was surcharged with silence and Ananda. The sight is beyond my powers to describe. An immeasurable force rushed into me, wave upon wave. . . . Was my experience true?

The experience you had was a true one, for something came down at that meditation which had not come down before and your experience was a translation of this descent in your consciousness. That you should have become aware of it in this way shows that your stay here has been very profitable to you and prepared your consciousness for the true realisation. The capacity for it is now there in you. Your future sadhana should be a development from the experience to the realisation.” (CWSA 35: 361–362)

33.

“Either because the silence deepened or because the dullness increased, I felt a little sleepy after work. After waking I found my thoughts were moving about very slowly in a dull way. During meditation the mental lethargy passed away, but something of it remained in the body.

It is sometimes a little difficult to say whether it is silence or the physical’s translation of the silence into a kind of inertia. I have experienced that very often in the rather difficult task of turning the *tamas* into *śama*, physical *tamas*

into spiritual rest and peace which is its divine counterpart." (CWSA 35: 379)

34.

"X: It was like a pain in the heart which lasted for a day. The next day, when I woke up it was as if I were coming out from a profound meditation and all my thoughts, all my actions seemed to be directed by something or someone who was watching beside my head. All the words which came out of my mouth were right.

What was this pain like? a pressure? a tearing apart? a tension?

X: It was as though something in me was not happy, but all that changed during the night; the next day the uneasiness had gone.

It was undoubtedly a mental opening to the higher consciousness, an ascent of the mental consciousness towards the higher consciousness. And it was probably a resistance in the emotional vital which caused the pain, that disagreeable sensation which disappeared during the night with the liberation of the consciousness in a higher domain.

Y: When I stood before Sri Aurobindo, I felt a kind of sharp pain. I prayed to Sri Aurobindo to give me something. And suddenly the pain was changed into an intense joy.

This was a contact with your psychic being.

Z: One has often the experience of an ascent of the consciousness above the earth. One seems to enter a region where all problems, all questions disappear rather than receive an answer. They seem no longer of any importance. But still this is not 'going from knowledge to knowledge'.

This is an opening of the inner being to the divine Presence in the psychic centre, and there you know at every moment not only what must be done but why it should be done and how it should be done, and you have the vision of the truth of things behind their appearances. Instead of seeing things in the usual way, that is, from outside, and so much from outside that, except in a few rare cases, one is incapable even of knowing what another person thinks (you must make a great effort, you see only the surface of things and nothing of what goes on behind); well, after this inner opening and this identification with the Presence in the psychic centre, you see things from within outwards, and the outer existence becomes an expression, more or less deformed, of what you see within: you are aware of the inner existence of beings and their form; their outer

existence is only a more or less deformed expression of this inner truth. And it is because of this that I say that the basic equilibrium is completely changed. Instead of being outside the world and seeing it as something outside you, you are inside the world and see outer forms expressing in a more or less clumsy fashion what is within, which for you is the Truth.” (CWM 4: 19–21)

35.

“My sweet little Mother,

Yesterday evening during the meditation I felt so much love—I felt waves, vibrations of love. But this love pours itself out on others. Before, when I felt a lot of love it remained silent; I became more serious and I did not express it. But this time, on the contrary, I allowed the love to express itself because I don’t find it undesirable. But if You think it necessary, I will turn it inwards.

The love that one contains in silence acts within oneself for purification and transformation. The love that one turns outwards—if one does it in a pure and disinterested way—may occasionally help others. But most often they receive it wrongly... So you must do as your instinct guides you.” (CWM 17: 53)

“O Mother, where are the joy and the love that filled my whole being last night during meditation? I have never

known how to receive and keep what You give me.

You know how to receive, since you feel the presence of love and joy, but you do not seem to know how to keep them. You must learn to treasure in yourself silently what you have received.” (CWM 17: 70–71)

36.

“Mother,

An Oriya sannyasi named Z came here to stay. In a few months he left his sannyas and became a human being. He is very fond of meditation. His body shivers and shakes when he closes his eyes. He feels joy etc., but sometimes he sees snakes around him and upon him; sometimes he is among the wild animals. On the 4th or 5th he made a regular scene in the meditation hall. I have advised him not to meditate till I get some answer from you.

It must have been a fear (perhaps subconscious) of the consequences of having rejected the sannyasi robe and this fear translates by the attacks of snakes, etc. You can tell him not to fear, that I am informed and nobody will hurt him.

Let him try again to meditate with the confidence that he is protected. But he must not try in public first. If his meditations become quiet, then he can once more meditate with the others.

Blessings.” (CWM 17: 243) (CWM 15: 258–259)

37.

“Sweet Mother,

I am unable to answer a question by a visitor. He is a young teacher at Cuddalore who has been coming here for the last three or four years. He says that every time he meditates for about half an hour, he feels terribly hungry. During meditation he gets peace, feels happy and all that. But why this hunger? He has tried taking full food before meditation, yet the hunger still appears. Why, Mother?

It is because by the quietness of the meditation he increases the receptivity of the body to the Force. This capacity to receive and absorb may translate, although not necessarily, by a capacity to eat—but it does not mean that food is just then needed.” (CWM 17: 393)

38.

“Sweet Mother,

There are moments during meditation when I feel that something in me wants to soar aloft and enjoy full freedom. There is a kind of enthusiasm in the soul (I do not know whether it comes from the soul) to enjoy the supreme Ananda and forget life as it really is. What does all this mean?

It is the natural and indispensable counterpart of the moments—so numerous and so frequent!—when you are attached to the physical life and you understand and appreciate only that. The two extremes always alternate in experience until one has found the poise of the total and synthetic truth.

That alone can give the true Freedom which is experienced in all circumstances.” (CWM 16: 306)

39.

“*Sweet Mother,*

This morning in my meditation I saw so many things which were logically unrelated but which definitely produced the impression that something extraordinary is about to happen. This is the first time, perhaps, that I have had such a presentiment, lasting almost an hour.

I want to know whether there is any truth in it and how we should prepare for it.

Last night, we (you and I and a few others) were together for quite a long time in Sri Aurobindo’s permanent dwelling-place in the subtle physical (what Sri Aurobindo called the true physical). Everything that took place there (far too long and complicated to relate) was organised, so to say, to express concretely the rapidity of the present movement of transformation. And with a smile, Sri Aurobindo told you something like this: ‘Do you believe now?’ It was as if he were evoking the three lines from *Savitri*:

40.

"God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep,

For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done."

I think that this is a sufficient explanation of the meditation you refer to.

My blessings." (CWM 15: 112)

41.

"Last night after a little meditation when I was about to sleep, my body from the heart above was filled up by some energy. I did not do anything but just observed. It lasted for a few seconds only. Two or three times it has happened to me and on the previous occasions it lasted for some minutes. I would like to know what this is. Is it an experience of Kundalini Shakti? What is the best attitude to be adopted when under such pressure?"

The best attitude is to be quiet and calm, and to let the experience follow its course, observing it *without thinking about it.*" (CWM 14: 5556)

42.

"Sweet Mother, what is the difference between a symbolic dream and a vision?"

Usually one has a vision when one is not asleep, when one is awake. When one is awake and enters within oneself—whether in meditation or concentration—one has visions. Or at night you can't sleep... remain stretched out, remain quiet, don't sleep and you may have visions.

Dreams come when one is asleep, that is, when one has no longer the waking consciousness; whereas in vision one is in the waking consciousness, but one quietens or immobilises it, and it is another more inner consciousness which awakens; yet one is not asleep, the body is not asleep, it is just made quiet.

One can have visions even while remaining active. Some people have visions even amidst activity. Vision is another plane of perception which awakes. It is the senses in the mind or vital or physical which wake up and manage to pass their experiences to the outer consciousness. It is as though one had another pair of eyes behind these, eyes which could see in the vital instead of seeing in the physical. And this is always there." (CWM 7: 127)

43.

"Lights of various colours are one of the first things people see when they meditate." (CWSA 30: 117)

44.

"When you practise Yoga, the consciousness opens and you become aware—especially in sleep—of things, scenes,

beings, happenings of other (not physical) worlds and yourself in sleep go there and act there. Very often these things have an importance for the sadhana. So you need not regret seeing all this when you sleep or meditate.

But in no case should you fear. The fact that you were able to destroy the beings that fought with you (these were beings of a hostile vital world) is very good, for it shows that in your vital nature somewhere there is strength and courage. Moreover, using the Mother's name and having her protection, you should fear nothing." (CWSA 31: 472)

XXXIX—Meditation and Sleep

1.

“When the pressure [in meditation] gives a tendency to insideness (samadhi), the physical being, not being accustomed to go inside except in the way of sleep, translates this into a sense.” (CWSA 29: 319–320)

2.

“The Yogic sleep is good only when it is Yogic enough to contain something, to be an inner consciousness or an experience of other planes. The *jāgarti* is important—to be conscious in the sleep, an inner waking. But when the mind is not accustomed, it tends to respond to the impulse towards this ‘going inside’ into an inner consciousness caused by meditation by simply falling into the usual sleep to which it is accustomed. *Nidrā* is one of the recognised difficulties of Yoga— *nidrā* refusing to turn into samadhi, whether *svapna-samādhī* or *suṣupti*. So the force is necessary and I will try to send it. I only wish people would give me more time for this inner work both for myself and them! But that seems past hoping for.” (CWSA 29: 320)

3.

“I think the sleepiness is a stage which everybody goes through—a sort of mechanical reaction of the physical to the pressure for including it in the concentration of the

sadhana. It is best not to mind it; it will go of itself as the consciousness increases and takes the physical into its poise. It is better to let us know about any physical troubles.” (CWSA 29: 319)

4.

“This tendency to sit and be perfectly quiet and this pressure of sleep are not at all due to laziness. You must put that idea out of your head. It is due to the tendency to quiet, peace, going inside; when the sadhana begins with some intensity, it is most often like that for a time. Afterwards there is a more even balance between the inner and the outer consciousness or rather the outer begins to change and become of one piece with the inner. So do not let this trouble you.” (CWSA 29: 319)

5.

“It [*the tendency to fall asleep during meditation*] is a common obstacle with all who practise Yoga at the beginning. This sleep disappears gradually in two ways—(1) by the intensifying of the force of concentration—(2) by the sleep itself becoming a kind of swapnasamadhi in which one is conscious of inner experiences that are not dreams (i.e. the waking consciousness is lost for the time, but it is replaced not by sleep but by an inward conscious state in which one moves in the supraphysical of the

mental or vital being).” (CWSA 29: 320) (CWSA 30: 253–254)

6.

“It is probably that [*in meditation*] you go inside into a sort of samadhi but are not yet conscious there (hence the idea of sleep). X is not asleep, but he has when he goes inside no control of his body. Many Yogis have this difficulty and use a contrivance which is put under the chin to hold up the head and with it the body during this inward-going concentration.” (CWSA 29: 320)

7.

“There is no harm in the deep sleep that comes—as I have told you, it is the tendency to go deep inside that brings it and it is necessary to go deep inside in order to establish the full connection between the psychic and the rest of the nature.” (CWSA 29: 321)

8.

“When one tries to meditate, the first obstacle in the beginning is sleep. When you get over this obstacle, there comes a condition in which, with the eyes closed, you begin to see things, people, scenes of all kinds. This is not a bad thing, it is a good sign and means that you are making progress in the Yoga. There is, besides the outer physical sight which sees external objects, an inner sight in us which can see things yet unseen and unknown, things at a

distance, things belonging to another place or time or to other worlds; it is the inner sight which is opening in you. It is the working of the Mother's force which is opening it in you, and you should not try to stop it. Remember the Mother always, call on her and aspire to feel her presence and her power working in you; but you do not need, for that, to reject this or other developments that may come in you by her working hereafter. It is only desire, egoism, restlessness and other wrong movements that have to be rejected." (CWSA 30: 99–100)

9.

"The sleep does come like that when one tries to meditate. It has to be dealt with, where that is possible, by turning it into a conscious inner and indrawn state and, where not, by remaining in a quietly concentrated wakefulness open (without effort) to receive." (CWSA 29: 319)

10.

"I suppose you have no time just now for sitting in meditation. The pressure of sleep is a pressure to go inside and the habit of meditation makes it possible to turn the sleep that comes into a kind of sleep-samadhi in which one is conscious of various experiences and progresses in the inner being." (CWSA 30: 76)

11.

"I always tell those who complain of not being able to sleep, 'Meditate then and you will end up by sleeping.' It is better to fall asleep while concentrating than 'like that', scattered and strewn without knowing even where one is.

To sleep well one must learn how to sleep.

If one is physically very tired, it is better not to go to sleep immediately, otherwise one falls into the unconscious. If one is very tired, one must stretch out on the bed, relax, loosen all the nerves one after another until one becomes like a rumpled cloth in one's bed, as though one had neither bones nor muscles. When one has done that, the same thing must be done in the mind. Relax, do not concentrate on any idea or try to solve a problem or ruminate on impressions, sensations or emotions you had during the day. All that must be allowed to drop off quietly: one gives oneself up, one is indeed like a rag. When you have succeeded in doing this, there is always a little flame, there—that flame never goes out and you become conscious of it when you have managed this relaxation. And all of a sudden this little flame rises slowly into an aspiration for the divine life, the truth, the consciousness of the Divine, the union with the inner being, it goes higher and higher, it rises, rises, like that, very gently. Then everything gathers there, and if at that moment you fall asleep, you have the best sleep you could possibly have. I guarantee that if you do this carefully, you are sure to

sleep, and also sure that instead of falling into a dark hole you will sleep in light, and when you get up in the morning you will be fresh, fit, content, happy and full of energy for the day.” (CWM 4: 351–352)

12.

“It [meditation before sleep] can certainly have an effect—though not perhaps through the whole sleep—for the sleep passes through many phases or planes and the effect is not likely to survive all these changes of consciousness and domain. It is possible however to get after a time a control and consciousness in the sleep itself. As for the subconscious, it can certainly have an effect, but most when there is a precise and positive will put upon the subconscious in the meditation.” (CWSA 31: 451)

13.

“In my waking consciousness I feel that I flow always in the stream of sadhana, but in my sleep I am quite a different person. I want to be changed in my sleep also. During sleep I want to keep in constant contact with the Mother. Is there any process or should I simply call her help before I retire to bed?”

Aspire and want it always—that is the first thing. As for methods, perhaps it is best not to go to sleep straight in

the ordinary way, but to meditate and through meditation pass into sleep.

At least before going to bed have a meditation.”
(CWSA 32: 457)

14.

“I did not come to the Meditation Hall for the evening meditation, but remained near X’s room. At meditation time I fell into the same inwardness or sleepiness as in the Hall. Is it not possible to do so usually?”

It is the pressure of the Force on the physical consciousness which produces that result of inwardness, though the translation of it into sleepiness can only be a transitory failing of the physical consciousness which is accustomed to associate inward going with sleep.” (CWSA 32: 528)

15.

“If before retiring to bed one has talked a lot or had a lively discussion, if one has read an exciting or intensely interesting book, one should rest a little without sleeping in order to quieten the mental activity, so that the brain does not engage in disorderly movements while the other parts of the body alone are asleep. Those who practise meditation will do well to concentrate for a few minutes on a lofty and restful idea, in an aspiration towards a higher

and vaster consciousness. Their sleep will benefit greatly from this and they will largely be spared the risk of falling into unconsciousness while they sleep.” (CWM 12: 52)

16.

“What you describe is the same neutral condition that you had before. It is a transitional state in which the old consciousness has ceased to be active, the new is preparing behind a neutral quietude. One must take it quietly and wait for it to turn into the spiritual peace and the psychic happiness which is quite different from vital joy and grief. To have neither vital joy nor vital grief is considered by the Yogins to be a very desirable release,—it makes it possible to pass from the ordinary human vital feelings to the true and constant inner peace, joy or happiness. I suppose you have no time just now for sitting in meditation. The pressure of sleep is a pressure to go inside and the habit of meditation makes it possible to turn the sleep that comes into a kind of sleep-samadhi in which one is conscious of various experiences and progresses in the inner being.” (CWSA 30: 76)

17.

“He [Sri Aurobindo] says that all dreams are not ordinary dreams, associations of memories, that there are dreams which are revelations. ...

It happens that when you need to dream of something, so that it may enlighten you on a point of your nature, give you an indication about the effort you must make, it comes. ...

I think there is an entire category of dreams which are absolutely commonplace, useless and simply tiring, which one can avoid if, before going to sleep, one makes a little effort of concentration, tries to put himself in contact with what is best in him, by either an aspiration or a prayer, and to sleep only after this is done... even, if one likes, try to meditate and pass quite naturally from meditation into sleep without even realising it... Usually there is a whole category of dreams which are useless, tiring, which prevent you from resting well—all this might be avoided. And then, if one has truly succeeded well in his concentration, it is quite possible that one may have, at night, not exactly dreams but experiences of which one becomes conscious and which are very useful, indications, as I just told you, indications about questions you asked yourself and of which you did not have the answers; or else a set of circumstances where you ought to take a decision and don't know what decision to take; or else some way of being of your own character which does not show itself to you clearly in the waking consciousness—because you are so accustomed to it that you are not aware of it—but something that harms your development and obscures your consciousness, and which appears to you in a

symbolic revelatory dream, and you become clearly aware of the thing, then you can act upon it.” (CWM 7: 118–119)

18.

“The difficulty of keeping the consciousness at night happens to most—it is because the night is the time of sleep and relaxation and the subconscious comes up. The true consciousness comes at first in the waking state or in meditation, it takes possession of the mental, the vital, the conscious physical, but the subconscious vital and physical remain obscure and this obscurity comes up when there is sleep or an inert relaxation. When the subconscious is enlightened and penetrated by the true consciousness, this disparity disappears. The Pishachic woman that tried to enter [*in a dream*] is the false vital impure Shakti—and the voice that spoke was that of his psychic being. If he keeps his psychic being awake and in front, it will always protect him against these dark forces as it did this time.” (CWSA 31: 446–447)

19.

“*Sweet Mother,*

At times I talk in my sleep. It is a sign that the mind lacks control, isn't it? So what should I do to keep it quiet at night?

Generally when the body is asleep at night, the mind goes out because it is difficult for it to remain quiet for a long time; and that is why most people do not talk.

But your mind seems to remain in your body, so you must ask it to remain perfectly quiet and silent so that your body can rest properly. A little concentration for that, before going to sleep, will surely be effective.

Blessings.” (CWM 16: 402)

20.

“If you have a disposition for exteriorisation and if you follow a yoga, you are always asked to protect your sleep: by some contemplation, a mental movement, any movement—there are many ways of protecting oneself.” (CWM 4: 129)

XL—Meditation Recommended in the *Gīta*

1.

"A continual resort to meditation, *dhyāna-yoga-paro-nityam* [always resorting to the yoga of meditation], is the firm means by which the soul of man can realise its self of Power and its self of silence. And yet there must be no abandonment of the active life for a life of pure meditation; action must always be done as a sacrifice to the supreme Spirit. This movement of recoil in the path of Sannyasa prepares an absorbed disappearance of the individual in the Eternal, and renunciation of action and life in the world is an indispensable step in the process. But in the Gita's path of Tyaga it is a preparation rather for the turning of our whole life and existence and of all action into an integral oneness with the serene and immeasurable being, consciousness and will of the Divine, and it preludes and makes possible a vast and total passing upward of the soul out of the lower ego to the inexpressible perfection of the supreme spiritual nature, *parā prakṛti*." (CWSA 19: 535)

2.

"An entire control has to be acquired over the mind, speech and body, over even the vital and physical reactions, hunger and cold and heat and physical pleasure and pain; the whole of our being must become indifferent, unaffected by these things, equal to all outward touches

and to their inward reactions and responses. This is the most direct and powerful method, the straight and sharp way of Yoga. There has to be a complete cessation of desire and attachment, *vairāgya*; a strong resort to impersonal solitude, a constant union with the inmost self by meditation is demanded of the seeker. And yet the object of this austere discipline is not to be self-centred in some supreme egoistic seclusion and tranquillity of the sage and thinker averse to the trouble of participation in the world-action; the object is to get rid of all ego." (CWSA 19: 533–534)

3.

"But this Yoga is after all no easy thing to acquire, as Arjuna indeed shortly afterwards suggests, for the restless mind is always liable to be pulled down from these heights by the attacks of outward things and to fall back into the strong control of grief and passion and inequality. Therefore, it would seem, the Gita proceeds to give us in addition to its general method of knowledge and works a special process of Rajayogic meditation also, a powerful method of practice, *abhyāsa*, a strong way to the complete control of the mind and all its workings. In this process the Yogin is directed to practise continually union with the Self so that that may become his normal consciousness. He is to sit apart and alone, with all desire and idea of possession banished from his mind, self-controlled in his whole being

and consciousness. 'He should set in a pure spot his firm seat, neither too high, nor yet too low, covered with a cloth, with a deer-skin, with sacred grass, and there seated with a concentrated mind and with the workings of the mental consciousness and the senses under control he should practise Yoga for self-purification, *ātma-viśuddhaye*.' The posture he takes must be the motionless erect posture proper to the practice of Rajayoga; the vision should be drawn in and fixed between the eye-brows, 'not regarding the regions.' The mind is to be kept calm and free from fear and the vow of Brahmacharya observed; the whole controlled mentality must be devoted and turned to the Divine so that the lower action of the consciousness shall be merged in the higher peace. For the object to be attained is the still peace of Nirvana. 'Thus always putting himself in Yoga by control of his mind the Yogin attains to the supreme peace of Nirvana which has its foundation in Me, *śāntiṁ nirvāṇa-paramāṁ matsamsthām*.

This peace of Nirvana is reached when all the mental consciousness is perfectly controlled and liberated from desire and remains still in the Self, when, motionless like the light of a lamp in a windless place, it ceases from its restless action, shut in from its outward motion, and by the silence and stillness of the mind the Self is seen within, not disfigured as in the mind, but in the Self, seen, not as it is mistranslated falsely or partially by the mind and represented to us through the ego, but self-perceived by

the Self, *svapṛakāśa* [self-perceived by the Self]. Then the soul is satisfied and knows its own true and exceeding bliss, not that untr tranquil happiness which is the portion of the mind and the senses, but an inner and serene felicity in which it is safe from the mind's perturbations and can no longer fall away from the spiritual truth of its being. Not even the fieriest assault of mental grief can disturb it; for mental grief comes to us from outside, is a reaction to external touches, and this is the inner, the self-existent happiness of those who no longer accept the slavery of the unstable mental reactions to external touches. It is the putting away of the contact with pain, the divorce of the mind's marriage with grief, *duḥkha saṁyoga-viyogam*. The firm winning of this inalienable spiritual bliss is Yoga, it is the divine union; it is the greatest of all gains and the treasure beside which all others lose their value. Therefore is this Yoga to be resolutely practised without yielding to any discouragement by difficulty or failure until the release, until the bliss of Nirvana is secured as an eternal possession.

The main stress here has fallen on the stilling of the emotive mind, the mind of desire and the senses which are the recipients of outward touches and reply to them with our customary emotional reactions; but even the mental thought has to be stilled in the silence of the self-existent being. First, all the desires born of the desire-will have to be wholly abandoned without any exception or residue and

the senses have to be held in by the mind so that they shall not run out to all sides after their usual disorderly and restless habit; but next the mind itself has to be seized by the buddhi and drawn inward.” (CWSA 19: 241–242)

4.

“But still by the equality of their understanding and by their seeing of one self in all things and by their tranquil benignancy of silent will for the good of all existences they too meet me in all objects and creatures. No less than those who unite themselves with the Divine in all ways of their existence, *sarva-bhāvena*, and enter largely and fully into the unthinkable living fountainhead of universal things, *divyam purusam acintya-rūpam*, these seekers too who climb through this more difficult exclusive oneness towards a relationless unmanifest Absolute find in the end the same Eternal. But this is a less direct and more arduous way; it is not the full and natural movement of the spiritualised human nature.

And it must not be thought that because it is more arduous, therefore it is a higher and more effective process. The easier way of the Gita leads more rapidly, naturally and normally to the same absolute liberation. ... How different is it for those who seek after the Purushottama in the way of the Gita! When they meditate on him with a Yoga which sees none else, because it sees all to be Vasudeva, he meets them at every point, in every

movement, at all times, with innumerable forms and faces, holds up the lamp of knowledge within and floods with its divine and happy lustre the whole of existence. Illumined, they discern the supreme Spirit in every form and face, arrive at once through all Nature to the Lord of Nature, arrive through all beings to the Soul of all being, arrive through themselves to the Self of all that they are; incontinently they break through a hundred opening issues at once into that from which everything has its origin.” (CWSA 19: 400–401)

5.

“... we need observe only the turn by which the Gita closes the passage: ‘Therefore at all times be in Yoga.’

For that is after all the essential, to make the whole being one with the Divine, so entirely and in all ways one as to be naturally and constantly fixed in union, and thus to make all living, not only thought and meditation, but action, labour, battle, a remembering of God. ‘Remember me and fight,’ means not to lose the ever-present thought of the Eternal for one single moment in the clash of the temporal which normally absorbs our minds, and that seems sufficiently difficult, almost impossible. It is entirely possible indeed only if the other conditions are satisfied. If we have become in our consciousness one self with all, one self which is always to our thought the Divine, and even our eyes and our other senses see and sense the Divine

Being everywhere so that it is impossible for us at any time at all to feel or think of anything as that merely which the unenlightened sense perceives, but only as the Godhead at once concealed and manifested in that form, and if our will is one in consciousness with a supreme will and every act of will, of mind, of body is felt to come from it, to be its movement, instinct with it or identical, then what the Gita demands can be integrally done. The remembrance of the Divine Being becomes no longer an intermittent act of the mind, but the natural condition of our activities and in a way the very substance of the consciousness. The Jiva has become possessed of its right and natural, its spiritual relation to the Purushottama and all our life is a Yoga, an accomplished and yet an eternally self-accomplishing oneness." (CWSA 19: 300)

6.

"In the Gita we have a process which is not the process of Raja-Yoga. It seeks a short cut to the common aim and goes straight to the stillness of the mind. After putting away desire and fear the Yogin sits down and performs upon his thoughts a process of reining in by which they get accustomed to an inward motion. Instead of allowing the mind to flow outward, he compels it to rise and fall within, and if he sees, hears, feels or smells outward objects he pays no attention to them and draws the mind always inward. This process he pursues until the mind ceases to

send up thoughts connected with outward things. The result is that fresh thoughts do not accumulate in the chitta at the time of meditation, but only the old ones rise. If the process be farther pursued by rejecting these thoughts as they rise in the mind, in other words by dissociating the thinker from the mind, the operator from the machine and refusing to sanction the continuance of the machine's activity, the result is perfect stillness. This can be done if the thinker whose interest is necessary to the mind, refuses to be interested and becomes passive. The mind goes on for a while by its own impetus just as a locomotive does when the steam is shut off, but a time must come when it will slow down and stop altogether. This is the moment towards which the process moves. *Na kinchid api chintayet:*—the Yogin should not think of anything at all. Blank cessation of mental activity is aimed at leaving only the sakshi, the witness watching for results. If at this moment the Yogin entrusts himself to the guidance of the universal Teacher within himself, Yoga will fulfil itself without any farther effort on his part. The passivity will be confirmed, the higher faculties will awake and the cosmic Force passing down from the vijnana through the supermind will take charge of the whole machine and direct its workings as the Infinite Lord of All may choose." (CWSA 12: 26)

XLI—Meditating with the Mother's Music

1.

"What should one try to do when one meditates with your music at the Playground?"

This music aims at awakening certain profound feelings.

To hear it one should make oneself as silent and passive as possible. And if, in the mental silence, a part of the being can take the attitude of the witness who observes without reacting or participating, then one can take account of the effect which the music produces on the feelings and emotions; and if it produces a state of deep calm and of semi-trance, then that is quite good." (CWM 12: 239) (CWM 16: 233)

2.

"Sweet Mother,

What is the difference between meditating here in my room and going to meditate at the Playground with everyone else? Is it better to meditate there or here in my room?"

Meditate where you meditate best—that is to say, wherever you are most silent and calm." (CWM 16: 275)

XLII—Meditating in Sri Aurobindo's Room

1.

"Somebody wants to visit Sri Aurobindo's room again and sit there to meditate for some time.

What are his qualifications and titles to such a great privilege?

Visiting again is all right. People can come to Sri Aurobindo's room. But to be allowed to sit and meditate there, one must have done much for Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, You have said that to be allowed to sit in Sri Aurobindo's room and meditate there, 'one must have done much for Him'. What do you mean by that, Mother? What can one do for the Lord which will be this 'much'?

To do something for the Lord is to give Him something of what one has, or of what one does, or of what one is. That is to say, to offer to Him one part of our goods or all of our possessions, to consecrate to Him one part of our work or all our activities, or to give ourselves to Him totally and without reserve so that He may take possession of our nature in order to transform and divinise it. But there are many people who, without giving anything, always want to take and to receive. These people are selfish and unworthy

to meditate in Sri Aurobindo's room." (CWM 13: 29–30)
(CWM 16: 248–249)

XLIII—Meditation Recommended in Rajayoga

1.

“The preliminary movement of Rajayoga is a careful self-discipline by which good habits of mind are substituted for the lawless movements that indulge the lower nervous being. By the practice of truth, by renunciation of all forms of egoistic seeking, by abstention from injury to others, by purity, by constant meditation and inclination to the divine Purusha who is the true lord of the mental kingdom, a pure, glad, clear state of mind and heart is established.” (CWSA 23: 36)

2.

“We see this in the attempts we make to get rid of our evil *saṁskāras* or associations when we first tread the path of Yoga. If anger is a powerful element in our nature, we may put it down for a time by sheer force and call it self-control, but eventually unsatisfied Nature will get the better of us and the passion return upon us with astonishing force at an unexpected moment. There are only two ways by which we can effectively get the better of the passion which seeks to enslave us. One is by substitution, replacing it whenever it rises by the opposite quality, anger by thoughts of forgiveness, love or forbearance, lust by meditation on purity, pride by thoughts of humility and our own defects or nothingness; this is the method of Rajayoga, but it is a

difficult, slow and uncertain method; for both the ancient traditions and the modern experience of Yoga show that men who had attained for long years the highest self-mastery have been suddenly surprised by a violent return of the thing they thought dead or for ever subject.” (CWSA 13: 34)

3.

“The path of knowledge is the well-known path of RajaYoga, in which one practises detachment from one’s physical being, saying, ‘I am not the body’, then detachment from one’s sensations, ‘I am not my sensations’, then from one’s feelings, saying, ‘I am not my feelings’, and so on. One detaches oneself from thought and goes more and more within until one finds something which is the Eternal and Infinite.

It is a path of meditation, which is truly the path of self knowledge seen from the point of view of the divine reality. It is the path of meditation, concentration, of withdrawal from life and action. This was the one most practised in the old yogas.” (CWM 8: 43)

4.

“This preliminary is of supreme importance; without it the course of the rest of the Rajayoga is likely to be troubled, marred and full of unexpected mental, moral and physical perils. This moral purification is divided in the established

system under two heads, five *yamas* and five *niyamas*. The first are rules of moral self-control in conduct such as truth-speaking, abstinence from injury or killing, from theft etc.; but in reality these must be regarded as merely certain main indications of the general need of moral self-control and purity. *Yama* is, more largely, any self-discipline by which the rajasic egoism and its passions and desires in the human being are conquered and quieted into perfect cessation. The object is to create a moral calm, a void of the passions, and so prepare for the death of egoism in the rajasic human being. The *niyamas* are equally a discipline of the mind by regular practices of which the highest is meditation on the divine Being, and their object is to create a sattwic calm, purity and preparation for concentration upon which the secure pursuance of the rest of the Yoga can be founded." (CWSA 23: 539)

XLIV—Meditation in the Traditional System of Yoga

1.

“The traditional systems, whatever their other differences, all proceed on the belief or the perception that the Eternal and Absolute can only be or at least can only inhabit a pure transcendent state of non-cosmic existence or else a non-existence. All cosmic existence or all that we call existence is a state of ignorance. ... The supreme quiescent Self or else the absolute Nihilis the sole Truth, the only object of spiritual knowledge. The state of knowledge, the consciousness other than this temporal that we must attain is Nirvana, an extinction of ego, a cessation of all mental, vital and physical activities, of all activities whatsoever, a supreme illumined quiescence, the pure bliss of an impersonal tranquility self-absorbed and ineffable. The means are meditation, a concentration excluding all things else, a total loss of the mind in its object. Action is permissible only in the first stages of the search in order to purify the seeker and make him morally and temperamentally a fit vessel for the knowledge.” (CWSA 23: 287–288)

2.

“But if phenomenal existence is unreal, of what use is it to remain in the world? Let us abandon house and wealth and wife and friends and children; let us flee from them to the

solitude of mountain & forest and escape as soon as possible by knowledge & meditation from the world of phenomena. Such was the cry that arose in India before and after the days of Buddha, when the power of the Jnanamarga was the strongest on the Hindu consciousness. The language of the Bhakta is not very different; 'Let us leave the things of the world,' he cries, 'let us forget all else and think and speak only of the name of Hari'." (CWSA 17: 192–193)

3.

"There is no need to flee to the mountains in order to find God. He is not a hill-man or a serpent that we should seek for Him only in cave & on summit; nor a deer or tiger that the forest only can harbour Him. He is here, in you and around you; He is in these men and women whom you see daily, with whom you talk & pass your life. In the roar of the city you can find Him and in the quiet of the village, He is there. You may go to the mountains for a while, if the din of life deafens you & you wish to seek solitude to meditate; for to the Karmayogin also Jnana is necessary and solitude is the nurse of knowledge. You may sit by the Ganges or the Narmada near some quiet temple or in some sacred asram to adore the Lord; for to the Karmayogin also bhakti is necessary, and places like these which are saturated with the bhakti of great saints and impassioned God-lovers best feed and strengthen the impulse of

adoration in the soul. But if Karmayoga be your path, you must come back and live again in the stir of the world. In no case flee to solitude and inaction as a coward and weakling,—not in the hope of finding God, but because you think you can by this means escape from the miseries and misfortunes of your life which you are too weak to face. It is not the weak and the coward who can climb up to God, but the strong and brave alone.” (CWSA 17: 194–195)

4.

“The Word has power—even the ordinary written word has a power. If it is an inspired word it has still more power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself,—as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures—Veda, Upanishads, Gita,—it may well have a power to awaken a spiritual impulse, an uplifting, even certain kinds of realisation. To say that it cannot contradicts spiritual experience.

The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as *mantras*, they were the vehicles of their own realisations and could become vehicles of realisation for others. Naturally, these mostly would be illuminations, not the settled and permanent realisation that is the goal of Yoga—but they could be steps on the way or at least lights on the way. Many have such illuminations, even initial realisations while meditating on verses of the Upanishads or the Gita.

Anything that carries the Word, the Light in it, spoken or written, can light this fire within, open a sky, as it were, bring the effective vision of which the Word is the body. In all ages spiritual seekers have expressed their aspirations or their experiences in poetry or inspired language and it has helped themselves and others. Therefore there is nothing absurd in my assigning to such poetry a spiritual or psychic value and effectiveness to poetry of a psychic or spiritual character.” (CWSA 27: 714–715) (CWSA 29: 322–323)

5.

“It was always held in ancient India that religion, life and society should be so arranged that every man should have the opportunity to grow spiritually by whatever means is suitable to his capacity, *adhikāra*. Everywhere there was a system of gradations by which this purpose could be served. It provided for a continual contact of man at every step with what was behind and beyond the material life. In Vedic times meditation, worship and sacrifice were the means by which this connection with the Unseen was sought to be established and maintained. The sacrifice was symbolic in its ritual and the symbols were supposed to have an occult power to create a relation between the unseen powers worshipped and the worshipper; by it they were called in to preside over and help all the action and life of the human being. Worship was for establishing a

more inner relation and meditation the means of spiritual experience, development and knowledge. The institutions which grew up in later Vedic times, such as the four Asramas and the four Varnas, the fourfold arrangement of society originally had the same intention and are so recognised in the Gita. So trained a man could develop until he was ready for a deeper knowledge and receive the initiation. In the Vedic times this deeper knowledge was the mystic doctrine and practice of the Vedic Rishis; it was that that afterwards developed on a hundred branching lines into the later systems of Yoga.” (CWSA 29: 419–420)

6.

40 – “There are four very great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindavan and the colloquy with Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his cross humanised Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity. Yet it is said that none of these four events ever happened.

(1) Were the meditation and worship of former times the same as those of today?

(2) What does this mean: “the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity”?

(1) In ancient times, as in our own day, each religion had its own particular kind of meditation and worship. And yet everywhere, always, meditation is a special mode of mental activity and concentration, only the details of the practice vary. Worship is a series of ceremonies and rites that are scrupulously and exactly performed in honour of a deity.

Here Sri Aurobindo refers to the worship and meditation of ancient India, in Vedic and Vedantic times.

(2) The colloquy at Kurukshetra is the Bhagavad Gita.

Sri Aurobindo considers the message of the Gita to be the basis of the great spiritual movement which has led and will lead humanity more and more to its liberation, that is to say, to its escape from falsehood and ignorance, towards the truth. From the time of its first appearance, the Gita has had an immense spiritual action; but with the new interpretation that Sri Aurobindo has given to it, its influence has increased considerably and has become decisive." (CWM 10: 62–63)

7.

"The Rishi was in that age the head of the human world. He was at once sage, poet, priest, scientist, prophet, educator, scholar and legislator. He composed a song, and it became one of the sacred hymns of the people; he emerged from rapt communion with God to utter some puissant sentence, which in after ages became the germ

of mighty philosophies; ... He himself was the master of all learning and all arts and all sciences. The Rishies won their knowledge by meditation working through inspiration to intuition. Austere concentration of the faculties stilled the waywardness of the reason and set free for its work the inner, unerring vision which is above reason, as reason is itself above sight; this again worked by intuitive flashes, one inspired stroke of insight quivering out close upon the other, till the whole formed a logical chain; yet a logic not coldly thought out nor the logic of argument but the logic of continuous and consistent inspiration. ... The Rishies were inspired thinkers, not working through deductive reason or any physical process of sense-subdual. The energy of their personalities was colossal; wrestling in fierce meditation with God, they had become masters of incalculable spiritual energies, so that their anger could blast peoples and even the world was in danger when they opened their lips to utter a curse. This energy was by the principle of heredity transmitted, at least in the form of a latent and educable force, to their offspring." (CWSA 36: 134–135)

8.

"Tantric discipline is in its nature a synthesis. It has seized on the large universal truth that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is the secret of existence, Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is

power of the spirit or rather is spirit as power. To raise nature in man into manifest power of spirit is its method and it is the whole nature that it gathers up for the spiritual conversion. It includes in its system of instrumentation the forceful Hathayogic process and especially the opening up of the nervous centres and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman, the subtler stress of the Rajayogic purification, meditation and concentration, the leverage of will-force, the motive power of devotion, the key of knowledge. But it does not stop short with an effective assembling of the different powers of these specific Yogas. In two directions it enlarges by its synthetic turn the province of the Yogic method. First, it lays its hand firmly on many of the main springs of human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the soul's mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility. Again, it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation, which is the one all mastering preoccupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object. It is a bolder and larger system." (CWSA 24: 611–612)

9.

"This transcendence is usually sought by a withdrawal from the action of the lower nature. That withdrawal brings with

it a stressing of the tendency to inaction. Sattwa when it wishes to intensify itself, seeks to get rid of rajas and calls in the aid of the tamasic principle of inaction; that is the reason why a certain type of highly sattwic men live intensely in the inward being, but hardly at all in the outward life of action, or else are there incompetent and ineffective. The seeker of liberation goes farther in this direction, strives by imposing an enlightened tamas on his natural being, a tamas which by this saving enlightenment is more of a quiescence than an incapacity, to give the sattwic guna freedom to lose itself in the light of the spirit. A quietude and stillness is imposed on the body, on the active life-soul of desire and ego, on the external mind, while the sattwic nature by stress of meditation, by an exclusive concentration of adoration, by a will turned inward to the Supreme, strives to merge itself in the spirit. But if this is sufficient for a quietistic release, it is not sufficient for the freedom of an integral perfection. This liberation depends upon inaction and is not entirely self-existent and absolute; the moment the soul turns to action, it finds that the activity of the nature is still the old imperfect motion. There is a liberation of the soul from the nature which is gained by inaction, but not a liberation of the soul in nature perfect and self-existent whether in action or in inaction. The question then arises whether such a liberation and perfection are possible and what may be the condition of this perfect freedom." (CWSA 24: 688)

10.

"In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig Veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra. In the same Upanishad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss, and he seems to be identified with the power of the will and responsible for human actions. In other Upanishads the Gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man." (CWSA 15: 7)

11.

"The Rishis of the Upanishads followed another method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions; or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms." (CWSA 15: 14)

12.

"On him [Brihaspati], it is said, the ancient or pristine Rishis meditated; meditating, they became illumined in mind;

illuminated, they set him in front as the god of the ecstatic tongue, *mandrajihvam*, the tongue that takes joy of the intoxicating wine of Soma, *mada*, *madhu*, of that which is the wave of sweetness, *madhumān ūrmiḥ*, hidden in the conscient existence and out of it progressively delivered. But of whom is there question? The seven divine Rishis, *ṛṣayo divyāḥ*, who fulfilling consciousness in each of its seven principles and harmonising them together superintend the evolution of the world, or the human fathers, pitaro *manuṣyāḥ*, who first discovered the higher knowledge and formulated for man the infinity of the Truth-consciousness? Either may be intended, but the reference seems to be rather to the conquest of the Truth by the human fathers, the Ancients. The word *dīdhyaṇa* in the Veda means both shining, becoming luminous, and thinking, meditating, fixing in the thought. It is constantly being used with the peculiar Vedic figure of a double or complex sense. In the first sense it must be connected with *viprāḥ*, and the suggestion is that the Rishis became more and more luminous in thought by the triumphant force of Brihaspati until they grew into Illuminates, *viprāḥ*. In the second it is connected with *dadhire* and suggests that the Rishis, meditating on the intuitions that rise up from the soul with the cry of Brihaspati in the sacred and enlightening Word, holding them firmly in the thought, became illuminated in mind, open to the full inflow of the superconscient. They were thus able to bring into the front

of the conscious being that activity of the soul-thoughts which works usually in the background, veiled, and to make it the leading activity of their nature. As a result Brihaspati in them became able to taste for them the bliss of existence, the wine of Immortality, the supreme Ananda. The formation of the definite physical consciousness is the first step, this awakening to the Ananda by the bringing forward in mind of the intuitive soul as the leader of our conscious activities is the consummation or, at least, the condition of the consummation." (CWSA 15: 319–320)

13.

"The result of the procession of the shining dawns, of the divine returns of Surya, of the increasings of Pushan and his leading on the Path is summed up in the creation of Savitri the luminous Creator. It is the god Savitri who sets us there where the ancient doers of the Work have preceded us; that is the desirable flame and splendour of the divine Creator on which the seer has to meditate and towards which this god impels our thoughts, that the bliss of the creative godhead on the forms of which our soul must meditate as it journeys towards it. It is the supreme creation in which the goddess undivided and infinite speaks out her Word and the all-ruling kings Varuna, Mitra and Aryaman; to that consummation the power of all these godheads turns with a united acceptance." (CWSA 15: 489)

14.

“What the Rishi means is a ‘mind pouring the light,’ a labour of the clarity of an enlightened or illumined mind; it is not a human priest or a sacrificial fire, but the inner Flame, the mystic seer-will, *kavi-kratu*, and that can certainly manifest by this process the Gods and the worlds and all planes of the being. The Rishis, it must be remembered, were seers as well as sages, they were men of vision who saw things in their meditation in images, often symbolic images which might precede or accompany an experience and put it in a concrete form, might predict or give an occult body to it: so it would be quite possible for him to see at once the inner experience and in image its symbolic happening, the flow of clarifying light and the priest god pouring the clarified butter on the inner self offering which brought the experience. This might seem strange to a Western mind, but to an Indian mind accustomed to the Indian tradition or capable of meditation and occult vision it would be perfectly intelligible. The mystics were and normally are symbolists, they can even see all physical things and happenings as symbols of inner truths and realities, even their outer selves, the outer happenings of their life and all around them. That would make their identification or else an association of the thing and its symbol easy, its habit possible.” (CWSA 16: 14–15)

15.

“The process of the Vedic mantra involves three movements, corresponding to three psychological activities necessary to the act of meditation or realisation, a movement from soul into mind, a movement from mind into speech, & the movement of speech itself reacting on mind and soul.” (CWSA 16: 725–726)

16.

“But on the other hand there is a true *vairagya* of sorrow and disappointment; sometimes men have tried in their ignorance for ignoble things and failed, not from weakness but because these things were not in their nature, were unfit for them and below their true greatness and high destiny. The sorrow and disappointment were necessary to open their eyes to their true selves; then they seek solitude, meditation & Samadhi, not as a dram [a small drink of whisky or other spirits] to drown their sorrow and yet unsated longing, but because their yearning is no longer for unworthy things but for the love of God or the knowledge of the Eternal. Sometimes great spirits enter the way of the Sannyasin, because in the solitude alone with the Eternal they can best develop their divine strength (*Brahmatej*) to use it for divine purposes. Once attained they pour it in a stream of divine knowledge or divine love over the world; such were Shankaracharya and Ramakrishna. Sometimes it is the sorrows & miseries of the

world that find them in ease & felicity and drive them out, as Buddha & Christ were driven out, to seek light for the ignorant and help for sufferers in the depths of their own being. True Sannyasins are the greatest of all workers, because they have the most unalloyed & inexhaustible strength and are the mightiest in God to do the works of God.” (CWSA 17: 197–198)

17.

“This then is the meaning of the Upanishad that OM, the syllable, technically called the Udgitha, is to be meditated on as a symbol of the four fold Brahman with two objects, the ‘singing to’ of one’s desires & aspirations in the triple manifestation and the spiritual ascension into the Brahman Itself so as to meet and enter into heaven after heaven & even into Its transcendent felicity. For, it says, with the syllable OM one begins the chant of the Samaveda, or, in the esoteric sense, by means of the meditation on OM one makes this soul-ascension and becomes master of all the soul desires. It is in this aspect & to this end that the Upanishad will expound [explain] OM. To explain Brahman in Its nature & workings, to teach the right worship and meditation on Brahman, to establish what are the different means of attainment of different results and the formulae of the meditation and worship, is its purpose. All this work of explanation has to be done in reference to Veda & Vedic sacrifice and ritual of which OM is the substance. In a

certain sense, therefore, the Upanishad is an explanation of the purpose & symbology of Vedic formulae & ritual; it sums up the results of the long travail of seeking by which the first founders & pioneers of Vedantism in an age when the secret & true sense of Veda had been largely submerged in the ceremonialism & formalism of the close of the Dwapara Yuga, attempted to recover their lost heritage partly by reference to the adepts who still remained in possession of it, partly by the traditions of the great seekers of the past Yuga, Janaka, Yajnavalkya, Krishna and others, partly by their own illuminations and spiritual experience. The Chhandogya Upanishad is thus the summary history of one of the greatest & most interesting ages of human thought.” (CWSA 18: 261–262)

18.

“A passage of the Prasna Upanishad on the power and significance of the mystic syllable AUM illustrates the earlier stage of the process:

This syllable OM, O Satyakama, it is the supreme and it is the lower Brahman. Therefore the man of knowledge passeth by this house of the Brahman to the one or the other. And if one meditate on the single letter, he getteth by it knowledge and soon he attaineth on the earth. And him the Riks lead to the world of men and there perfected in Tapas and Brahmacharya and faith he experienceth the greatness of the spirit. Now if by the double letter he is

accomplished in the mind, then is he led up by the Yajus to the middle world, to the moon world of Soma. He in the world of Soma experienceth the majesty of the spirit and returneth again. And he who by the triple letter again, even this syllable OM, shall meditate on the highest Purusha, is perfected in the light that is the Sun. As a snake putteth off its skin, even so is he released from sin and evil and is led by the Samans to the world of Brahman. He from this dense of living souls seeth the higher than the highest Purushawholieth in this mansion. The three letters are afflicted by death, but now they are used undivided and united to each other, then are the inner and the outer and the middle action of the spirit made whole in their perfect using and the spirit knows and is not shaken. This world by the Riks, the middle world by the Yajus and by the Samans that which the seers make known to us. The man of knowledge passeth to Him by OM, his house, even to the supreme spirit that is calm and ageless and fearless and immortal." (CWSA 20: 337)

19.

The Power of Words

"... In this regard, we can say that the active power of words comes from three different causes.

The first two lie in the word itself, which has become a battery of forces. The third lies in the fact of living

integrally the deep thought expressed by the word when we pronounce it.

Naturally, if these three causes of effectiveness are combined, the power of the word is considerably enhanced.

1) There are certain words whose resonance in the physical world is the perfect vibratory materialisation of the more subtle vibration produced by the thought in its own domain.

2) There are other words which have been repeated in certain circumstances for hundreds of years and which are instinct with the mental forces of all those who have pronounced them. They are true batteries of energy.

3) Finally, there are words which assume an immediate value when they are pronounced, as a result of the living thought of the one who pronounces them.

To illustrate what I have just said with an example, here is a very powerful word, for it can combine the qualities of all three categories: it is the Sanskrit word 'AUM'.

It is used in India to express the divine Immanence. There, it is associated with every meditation, every contemplation, every yogic practice.

More than any other sound, this sound 'AUM' gives rise to a feeling of peace, of serenity, of eternity.

Moreover, this word is instinct with the mental forces which for centuries all those who have used it have

accumulated around the idea that it expresses; and, for Hindus especially, it has the true power of bringing one into contact with the divine Essence it evokes.

And as Orientals have a religious mind and the habit of concentration, few pronounce this word without putting into it the conviction that is needed to make it fully effective.” (CWM 2: 66–67)

XLV—Rest Needs to Transform into Contemplation

1.

“It is generally admitted that in the process of education a certain kind of lighter, more frivolous, more entertaining productions are necessary to reduce the strain of effort and give some relaxation to the children and even to adults. From a certain point of view, this is true; but unfortunately this concession has served as an excuse to justify a whole category of things which are nothing but the efflorescence of all that is vulgar, crude and base in human nature. Its coarsest instincts, its most depraved taste find in this concession a good excuse to display and impose themselves as an inevitable necessity. They are nothing of the kind, however; one can relax without being dissolute, take rest without being vulgar, enjoy oneself without allowing the grosser elements in the nature to rise to the surface. But from the point of view of austerity, these needs themselves change their nature; relaxation is transformed into inner silence, rest into contemplation and enjoyment into bliss.” (CWM 12: 6162)

2.

“There are two different states, that which the consciousness takes in concentration and that which it takes in relaxation—the latter is the ordinary consciousness (ordinary for the sadhak, though not perhaps the ordinary

consciousness of the average man), the former is what he is attaining to by tapas of concentration in sadhana. To go into the Akshara and witness experiences from there is easy for the sadhak who has got so far. He can also concentrate and maintain the unification of the main aspects of is being, although with more difficulty—but a relaxation there brings him back to the relaxed 'ordinary' consciousness. It is only when what is gained by sadhana becomes normal to the ordinary consciousness that this can be avoided. In proportion as this is done, it becomes possible not only to experience the truth subjectively, but make it manifest in action." (CWSA 29: 316)

3.

(The disciple's Hindi students asked him to say something on the subject of holidays. He referred their request to the Mother, who replied:)

Holidays

Shall we say *holy days*? There are two kinds of them: traditionally, the Lord for six days (or aeons) worked to create his world and the seventh He stopped for rest, concentration and contemplation. This can be called the day of God.

The second one is: the men, the creatures, during six days work for their personal interests and egoistic motives, and

the seventh they stop working to take rest and have time to look inwardly or upwardly, in contemplation of the source and origin of their existence and consciousness, in order to take a dip in It and renew their energies.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the modern manner of understanding the word or the thing, that is to say, all the possible ways of wasting time in a futile attempt at amusing oneself.” (CWM 17: 212) (CWM 12: 161)

4.

“I hope that it is only a crisis or a passing disorder. I am doing my best from here to mend the breakdown, but you must help me by keeping there a firm quietness and calm concentration. This was the object of my telegram. I am of the opinion that when he recovers his balance, my original instructions (in Moni’s letter) should be adhered to and he should go to some quiet place where there will not be any high pressure. He must be instructed to put away every other object except the quieting of his mind, vital being and body and the attainment of a poise of serene calm and peace. Also it is better for him not to pass the whole day in meditation and Sadhana but to take plenty of relaxation for the relief of the physical being and do some kind of physical work (not exhausting) which will keep it occupied and healthy. He must be assured that this change does not mean at all a rejection but that it is necessary to secure the proper condition for his future Sadhana. He must of

XLV—Rest Needs to Transform into Contemplation

course keep himself in constant spiritual connection with me and write to me from time to time.

Please keep me constantly informed of his condition until he recovers.” (CWSA 36: 346)

XLVI—Coming Out of Concentration or Meditation

1.

“You enter into a condition of deep inwardness and quiet. But if one comes too suddenly out of it into the ordinary consciousness, then there may be a slight nervous shock or a beating of the heart such as you describe, for a short time. It is always best to remain quiet for a few moments before opening the eyes and coming out of this inwardness.” (CWSA 29: 313–314)

2.

“It is certainly much better to remain silent and collected for a time after the meditation. It is a mistake to take the meditation lightly—by doing that one fails to receive or spills what is received or most of it.”(CWSA 29: 314)

3.

“Your meditation is all right, as Mother saw—but when you came out of it, you fell into the ordinary consciousness, that is the difficulty. You must try to keep the true consciousness always, even in activity—then the sadhana will begin to be there all the time and your difficulty will disappear.” (CWSA 29: 314)

XLVII—Temporary Retirement into Meditation May Be Necessary

1.

“It may be necessary for an individual here and there to plunge into meditation for a time and suspend work for that time or make it subordinate; but that can only be an individual case and a temporary retirement. Moreover, a complete cessation of work and entire withdrawal into oneself is seldom advisable; it may encourage a too one sided and visionary condition in which one lives in a sort of mid world of purely subjective experiences without a firm hold on either external reality or on the highest Reality and without the right use of the subjective experience to create a firm link and then a unification between the highest Reality and the external realisation in life.” (CWSA 29: 216)

2.

“The nature of the integral Yoga so conceived, so conditioned, progressing by these spiritual means, turning upon this integral transformation of the nature, determines of itself its answer to the question of the ordinary activities of life and their place in the Yoga.

There is not and cannot be here any ascetic or contemplative or mystic abandonment of works and life altogether, any gospel of an absorbed meditation and inactivity, any cutting away or condemnation of the Life-

Force and its activities, any rejection of the manifestation in the earth-nature. It may be necessary for the seeker at any period to withdraw into himself, to remain plunged in his inner being, to shut out from him the noise and turmoil of the life of the Ignorance until a certain inner change has been accomplished or something achieved without which a further effective action on life has become difficult or impossible. But this can only be a period or an episode, a temporary necessity or a preparatory spiritual manoeuvre; it cannot be the rule of his Yoga or its principle.” (CWSA 23: 185)

XLVIII—If One Does Only Meditation

1.

“ *'All work' is 'a school of experience'?* ”

Yes, surely. You don't understand?

No, Mother.

If you don't do anything, you cannot have any experience. The whole life is a field of experience. Each movement you make, each thought you have, each work you do, can be an experience, and *must* be an experience; and naturally work in particular is a field of experience where one must apply all the progress which one endeavours to make inwardly.

If you remain in meditation or contemplation without working, well, you don't know if you have progressed or not. You may live in an illusion, the illusion of your progress; while if you begin to work, all the circumstances of your work, the contact with others, the material occupation, all this is a field of experience in order that you may become aware not only of the progress made but of all the progress that remains to be made. If you live closed up in yourself, without acting, you may live in a completely subjective illusion; the moment you externalise your action and enter into contact with others, with circumstances and

the objects of life, you become aware absolutely objectively of whether you have made progress or not, whether you are more calm, more conscious, stronger, more unselfish, whether you no longer have any desire, any preference, any weakness, any unfaithfulness—you can become aware of all this by working. But if you remain enclosed in a meditation that's altogether personal, you may enter into a total illusion and never come out of it, and believe that you have realised extraordinary things, while really you have only the impression, the illusion that you have done so.

That's what Sri Aurobindo means." (CWM 7: 287–288)

2.

"It is evident that you are suffering from a nervous reaction due to overstrain. You have allowed for a long time an excessive vital energy kept up by a concentration of vital excitement to tyrannise over your body. The body was being weakened all the time, but the vital excitement prevented you from feeling it. Now it is making itself felt. The pains you have seem to be partly rheumatic, partly due to fatigue of the nerves. If you want to recover your strength, you must consent to take plenty of rest. Do not consider long rest and repose tamasic. Sleep long at night, rest much during the day.

Do not do anything in excess. 8 to 10 miles a day walking is far too much; two to three miles is quite sufficient, enough to give you air and exercise.

Also, five or six hours meditation is quite sufficient. Ten hours is too much; it is likely to overstrain the system. Intense meditation is not the only means of sadhana. Especially when one has to deal with the physical, it is not good to be always drawn within in meditation. What you have to learn is to keep at all times the true consciousness, calm, large, full of a quiet strength, looking at all in you and around you with true perception and knowledge, a calm unmoved observation and a quiet will ready to act when necessary. No overstress, no yielding to excitement, nervous sensitiveness or depression.

Learn to occupy your time in a quiet even and harmonious way. Walk a little but not too much. Meditate, but not too much, nor so as to overstrain the body. Read and write, but not so as to tire the brain. Look out a good deal on the physical world and its action and try to see it rightly. When you are stronger, but not now, you can undertake also some kind of physical work and action and learn to do it in the right way and with the right knowledge." (CWSA 36: 324)

3.

"Of course, until now, those who have achieved this conscious transformation, [cells spontaneously aware of

the Truth, of the Eternity of matter] who are aware of the eternal and infinite life within themselves, in the depths of their being, must, in order to preserve this consciousness, constantly refer back to their inner experience, return to their inner contemplation, live in a sort of more or less constant meditation. And when they come out of meditation, their outer nature is pretty much what it was before, and their way of thinking and reacting is not very different—unless they give up action altogether. But in that case the inner realisation, this transformation of the consciousness, is helpful only for the person who has achieved it, but it doesn't change the condition of matter or earthly life in the least." (CWM 15: 293–294)

4.

"The Mother refuses to relieve you of all work—work is a necessary part of this Yoga. If you do not do work and spend all the time in 'meditation', you and your sadhana will lose all hold of realities; you will lose yourself in uncontrolled subjective imaginations such as those you are now allowing to control you and lead you into actions—like your absenting yourself from Pranam, becoming fanciful and irregular in your taking of food, coming to the Mother at a wrong time and place under the imagination that she has called you—actions dictated by error and false suggestion and not by Truth. It is by doing work for the Mother with surrender to her, with obedience to her

expressed will, without fancies and vital self-will that you can remain in touch with the embodied Mother here and progress in the Yoga. Mere subjective experiences without control by us will not lead you to the Truth and may lead you far from it into sheer confusion and error.” (CWSA 32: 248)

5.

“Those who tried to do meditation alone and became impatient of work (because they could not consecrate it to the Mother) have generally been failures like X and Y. ...

As for the *purātana mānuṣa* I do not see that the workers have their external being less changed than others. There are some who are where they were or only a little progressive, there are others who have changed a good deal—none is transformed altogether, though some have found a sure and sound spiritual and psychic basis. But that applies equally to workers who do not spend time in meditation and to those who spend a long time in meditation.” (29: 222–223)

XLIX—Few May Succeed by Meditation Alone if It Is in Their Nature

1.

“Others have advanced far by meditation mainly, but work also. ... But one or two may succeed by meditation alone—if it is in their nature or if they have an intense and unshakable faith and bhakti. All depends on the nature of the sadhak.” (CWSA 29: 222–223)

2.

“... for meditation is not forbidden in this sadhana. Except for those who prefer to go through work alone, meditation and works and bhakti each in its place make up the foundations of the sadhana. But you are free to follow the way of meditation alone, as some others do, if you think that better.” (CWSA 28: 344)

3.

“And if some find that retirement is the best way of giving oneself to the Higher, to the Divine by avoiding as much as possible occasions for the bubbling up of the lower, why not? The aim they have come for is that and why blame or look with distrust and suspicion on the means they find best or daub it with disparaging adjectives to discredit it—grim, inhuman and the rest? It is your vital that shrinks from it and your vital mind that supplies these epithets

XLIX—Few May Succeed by Meditation Alone if It Is in Their Nature which express only your shrinking and not what the retirement really is. For it is the vital or the social part of it that shrinks from solitude; the thinking mind does not but rather courts it. The poet seeks solitude with himself or with Nature to listen to his inspiration; the thinker plunges into solitude to meditate on things and commune with a deeper knowledge; the scientist shuts himself up in his laboratory to pore by experiment into the secrets of Nature; these retirements are not grim and inhuman. Neither is the retirement of the sadhak into the exclusive concentration of which he feels the need; it is a means to an end, to the end on which his whole heart is set. As for the Yogin or bhakta who has already begun to have the fundamental experience, he is not in a grim and inhuman solitude. The Divine and all the world are there in the being of the one, the supreme Beloved or his Ananda is there in the heart of the other.” (CWSA 31: 343)

4.

“I have not suggested that you are to progress by *dhyana* alone; but you have a great capacity for that and you cannot progress fully without it. In this Yoga some kind of action is necessary for all—though it need not take the form of some set labour.” (CWSA 29: 225)

L—To Meditate on a Subject

[Here the meaning of meditation is to think on some subject deeply. Compiler]

1.

"It is not meditation (thinking with the mind) but a concentration or turning of the consciousness that is important,—and that can happen in work, in writing, in any kind of action as well as in sitting down to contemplate."
(CWSA 29: 222)

2.

"Sweet Mother, when you tell us to meditate on a subject, we choose, for instance, to meditate that we are opening to the light; we imagine all sorts of strange things, we imagine a door opening, etc., but this always takes a mental form.

It depends on the individual. Everyone has his own particular process. It depends altogether on each one. Some people may have an imagery which helps them; others, on the contrary, have a more abstract mind and only see ideas; others, who live more in sensations or feelings, have rather psychological movements, movements of inner feelings or sensations—it depends on each one. Those who have an active and particularly

formative physical mind, see images, but everybody does not experience the same thing. If you ask the person next to you, for instance... (*To the next child*) When I give a subject, do you see images like that?

Sometimes.

Sometimes?

Most often I feel something.

What is it, most often?

A sensation.

A sensation, yes. It is more frequently a sensation—I mean generally—more frequently a sensation or a feeling than an image. The image always comes to those who have a formative mental power, an active physical mind. It is an indication that one is active in one's mental consciousness.

(The child who had asked the first question) *But is this right?*

But everything is right if it has a result! Any means is

good. Why shouldn't it be right?... Images like that are not necessarily ridiculous. They are not ridiculous, they are mental images. If they bring you some result, they are quite appropriate. If they give you an experience, they are appropriate.

For example, when I ask you to go deep down within yourselves, some of you will concentrate on a sensation, but others may just as well have the impression of going down into a deep well, and they clearly see the picture of steps going down into a dark and deep well, and they go down farther and farther, deeper and deeper, and sometimes reach precisely a door; they sit down before the door with the will to enter, and sometimes the door opens, and then they go in and see a kind of hall or a room or a cave or something, and from there, if they go on they may come to another door and again stop, and with an effort the door opens and they go farther. And if this is done with enough persistence and one can continue the experience, there comes a time when one finds oneself in front of a door which has... a special kind of solidity or solemnity, and with a great effort of concentration the door opens and one suddenly enters a hall of clarity, of light; and then, one has the experience, you see, of contact with one's soul.... But I don't see what is bad in having images!" (CWM 9: 378-379)

3.

"Mother, in the Friday Classes, you often read a sentence to us [At that time it was from the Dhammapada] and ask us to meditate on it. But how should we meditate on a sentence? That is, should we think, meditate on the idea or... what should we do?"

Meditate on a sentence?

Yes.

Obviously on what it means.

That is, we must think...

Yes. Then?

Because that, Mother, becomes a mental function or what?

The sentence is already a mental formation; the mental formation is made. The sentence is the expression of the mental formation. So when you meditate on a sentence, there are two methods. There is an active, ordinary external method of reflecting and trying to understand what these words mean, understand intellectually what the sentence means exactly—that is active meditation. You

concentrate on these few words and take the thought they express and try, through reasoning, deduction, analysis, to understand what it means.

There is another method, more direct and deep; it is to take this mental formation, this combination of words with the thought they represent, and to gather all your energy of attention on it, compelling yourself to concentrate all your strength on that formation. For instance, instead of concentrating all your energies on something you see physically, you take that thought and concentrate all your energies on that thought—in the mind, of course.

And then, if you are able to concentrate the thought sufficiently and stop it from vacillating, you pass quite naturally from the thought expressed by the words to the *idea* which is behind and which could be expressed in other words, other forms. The characteristic of the idea is the power to clothe itself in many different thoughts. And when you have achieved this, you have already gone much deeper than by merely understanding the words. Naturally, if you continue to concentrate and know how to do it, you can pass from the idea to the luminous force that is behind. Then you enter a much vaster and deeper domain. But that asks for some training. But still, that is the very principle of meditation.

If you are able to go deep enough, you find the Principle and the Force behind the idea, and that gives you

the power of realisation. This is how those who take meditation as a means of spiritual development are able to unite with the Principle which is behind things and obtain the power to act on these things from above.

But even without going so far—that implies a rather hard discipline, doesn't it, a long-standing habit—you can pass quite easily from the thought to the idea, and that gives you a light and an understanding in the mind which enables you, in your turn, to express the idea in any form. An idea can be expressed in many different forms, in many different thoughts, just as when you come down to a more material level, a thought can be expressed through many different words. Going downwards, towards expression, that is, spoken or written expression, there are many different words and different formulas which may serve to express a thought, but this thought is only *one* of the forms of thought which can express the idea, the idea behind, and this idea itself, if it is followed deeply, has behind it a principle of spiritual knowledge and power which can then spread and act on the manifestation." (CWM 9: 381–382)

4.

"When you have a thought you look for words, don't you, and then you try to arrange these words to express your thought; you can use many words to express a thought, you tell yourself, 'No, look, if I put this word instead of that,

it would express what I am thinking much better.’ That is what you learn when you are taught style, how to write.

But when I give you a written sentence which has the power to express a thought and tell you to concentrate on it, then, through this thought-form you can go back to the idea behind, which can be expressed in many different thoughts. It is like a great hierarchy: there is a Principle right at the top, which itself is not the only one, for you can go still higher up; but this Principle can be expressed in ideas, and these ideas can be expressed in a great number of thoughts and this great number of thoughts can make use of many languages and an even greater number of words.

When I give you a thought it is simply to help you to concentrate.... There are schools which put an object in front of you, a flower or a stone, or any object, and then you sit around it and concentrate on it and your eyes go like this (*Mother squints*) until you become the object. That too is a method of concentration. By gazing steadily like that, without moving, you finally pass into the thing you are gazing at. But you must not begin to gaze at all kinds of things: only gaze steadily at that. That gives you a look... it makes you squint.

All this is to learn concentration, that’s all.

Sometimes one of these sentences expresses a very deep truth. It is one of those happy sentences which are

very expressive. So that helps you to find the truth that is behind.

When we have finished the Dhammapada, that is what I intend to do. I am at present translating the latest of Sri Aurobindo's books we have published, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, and I intend, every Friday, to give one single sentence, one single aphorism—with or without the commentary as necessary—as a subject for meditation. We still have to see how we should go about it.... We could proceed in two different ways. As I am going to take them up in order, you will always know which one will be for the following week and prepare questions in advance; or else if you don't prepare the questions in advance, perhaps it will be more interesting to take a sentence, to have a meditation on it, and in the following lesson to ask me questions on the sentence from the previous week. Then, from the questions I am asked, I shall choose those that seem to me the most intelligent and answer them. And later we shall take a new sentence which will serve as the subject for meditation on that day and the subject for questions the following week. And this I am going to do with a very precise, very definite purpose: to bring you out of your mental somnolence and compel you to reflect and try to understand what I tell you.... For, it makes a little noise in your ears, a still softer noise in your heads, and then it goes out from the other side, and then it is finished! Sometimes, very rarely, by a special grace, there is just a

little effect here, like this (gesture), which lasts like a little flickering flame—it burns, and then, pfft!... Something blows on it, it goes out and it is all finished.” (CWM 9: 383–384)

5.

“Every Friday I shall read out to you a few verses of the Dhammapada, then we shall meditate on that text. This is to teach you mental control. If I think it necessary I shall give you an explanation.” (CWM 3: 183)

6.

“In what way can the teaching of the Buddha now be an obstacle or help to humanity on the path of supramentalisation?”

Everything that helps humanity to make progress is a help, and all that prevents it from making progress is an obstacle!

In fact, you are asking this because we study and meditate on the Dhammapada.... Naturally, I took this text because I consider that at a particular stage of development it can be very useful. It is a discipline which has been crystallised in certain formulas and if one uses these formulas profitably, it can be very helpful, otherwise I wouldn't have taken it. How helpful depends on each one. It depends on whether one knows how to profit from it or not.” (CWM 9: 197)

7.

"*You mean you have started the meditations, Mother?*"

Yes!... And giving you explanations on what I read. We have even begun, in the small class, to meditate on the disciplines which are necessary to lead a spiritual life. And when I took up the reading of the Dhammapada, we read many things leading to the knowledge of spiritual life." (CWM 9: 372)

"Commentaries on the Dhammapada. The Mother gave these commentaries on the Buddhist teachings of the *Dhammapada* between August 1957 and September 1958. She was speaking to a large gathering of Ashram members and students of the Ashram school, members of her 'Friday class' at the Ashram Playground. After reading out a chapter of the text, the Mother spoke about the points that interested her and then asked the class to meditate on them. She did not comment systematically on the *Dhammapada* verses, but she did cover most of the central ideas of the text." (CWM 3 Publisher's Note)

8.

"Mother reads from Lights on Yoga, 'Surrender and Opening'.

... (*Silence*)

We can meditate for five minutes. Let us try collective

meditation, shall we? It's going to be a little difficult. We can try.

You would like to try on what we have read?

Do not think, just concentrate like this: let what we have read enter into you, and try to experience it; try.

Don't try to think, to turn over ideas, have answers to questions, nothing of all that. Just remain like this (*gesture*), open.

It was about opening, right through. You should let what was read enter into you, and then, in this way, do its work inside you. You must remain as silent and quiet as possible.

We shall see what is going to happen."

(*Meditation for more than five minutes*)(CWM 7: 265)

9.

"Everything in its essence and its truth should be included in this realisation. This realisation must be an expression as total, as complete, as universal as possible of the divine reality. Only that can save humanity and the world. That is the great spiritual revolution of which Sri Aurobindo speaks. And this is what he wanted us to realise.

He has traced its broad outline in the very book we shall start reading next Wednesday: *The Supramental Manifestation*.

And the first sentence I read today remains the key of the entire problem not only for the individual but also for the collectivity:

'All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection.'

I would like us to take this as the subject of our meditation." (CWM 9: 78-79)

10.

"The ideal would be exactly what I have written in the last Bulletin, [*April 1957.*], ...

Have no ambition,
above all pretend nothing,
but be at every moment
the utmost that you can be.

That is the ideal state in the integral life—whatever one does. And if one realises that, well, one is certainly very far on the path of perfection.... But it is obvious that a certain inner maturity is needed to do this in all sincerity. You may set this as a programme for yourselves.

If you like we shall take it as the subject of our meditation." (CWM 9: 98)

11.

"This brief talk was given to the children as an exception on a Tuesday before the meditation.

"We said that we were going to prepare ourselves methodically for the sadhana.... There is one point on which I have already insisted strongly, but unfortunately without much result among you all. And I thought that perhaps it would be good to begin with that to prepare you for a future sadhana.

So, the subject of our meditation this evening will be this: 'On the harm done by incontinence of speech.'

Very often I have told you that every word spoken uselessly is dangerous chatter. But here, the situation has reached the very limit—there are things which have been said, said over and over again, repeated by all those who have tried to perfect humanity, unfortunately without much result—it is a question of malicious gossip... of slander, of that pleasure taken in speaking ill of others. Anyone who indulges in this kind of incontinence debases his consciousness, and when to this incontinence is added the habit of vulgar quarrelling, expressed in coarse language, then that amounts to suicide, spiritual suicide within oneself.

I stress this point and insist that you take it *very* seriously." (CWM 9: 144)

12.

“So Sri Aurobindo makes Kali the great liberating power who ardently impels you towards progress and leaves no ties within you which would hinder you from progressing.

I think this will be a good subject for meditation.”
(CWM 9: 377)

13.

(Examples of subjects for meditation)

New birth. Birth to a new consciousness. The psychic consciousness. 5 July 1957

How to awaken in the body the aspiration for the Divine. 26 July 1957

Turning one’s gaze inward. Looking within oneself. 2 August 1957

The ill-effects of uncontrolled speech. 9 August 1957 (CWM 14: 53)

LI—If You Cannot Meditate

1.

"I cannot meditate, for when I sit many thoughts come in. Which path must I take, then, to advance and make it easier for the Mother to work in me?"

If you cannot meditate, pray. Offer all you do to the Mother and pray to her to take control of your actions and your nature. Love and worship. What is needed is to get a full opening in which you will become conscious of the Mother. These things will bring the opening. Only, even if it takes time, you must not get depression, despair or revolt—for these things get into the way of the opening." (CWSA 32: 159)

2.

"I tried to meditate, but I simply had to give it up as the mind would not cooperate."

When you cannot meditate, remain quiet and call in the Mother's Peace or Force." (CWSA 32: 215)

3.

"If I cannot concentrate or meditate, I simply imagine myself lying eternally in the Mother's lap and going out when she sends me out."

This is the best possible kind of concentration.” (CWSA 32: 147)

4.

“I am not getting much time to sit down for meditation, but the calmness is maintained throughout my work. What should I do when I can make no time for meditation?”

Keep yourself open, remember the Mother always—call for her help and guidance in your work. You must get into a condition in which not only the calmness remains always but the sadhana is going on all the time in work and rest as well as in meditation.” (CWSA 32: 156)

LII—If You Do Not Succeed, Do Not Get Discouraged

1.

"I may stress one point, however, that there need not be only one way to realisation of the Divine. If one does not succeed or has not yet succeeded in reaching him, feeling him or seeing him by the established process of meditation or by other processes like japa, yet one may have made progress towards it by the frequent welling up of bhakti in the heart or a constantly greater enlargement of it in the consciousness or by work for the Divine and dedication in service. You have certainly progressed in these two directions, increased in devotion and shown your capacity for service. You have also tried to get rid of obstacles in your vital nature and so effect a purification, not without success, in several difficult directions. The path of surrender is indeed difficult, but if one perseveres in it with sincerity, there is bound to be some success and a partial overcoming or diminution of the ego which may help greatly a farther advance upon the way. I can see no sufficient reason for the discouragement which so often overtakes you and sometimes makes you think that you are not cut out for the path; to indulge such a thought is always a mistake. A too ready proneness to discouragement and a consequent despondency is one of the weaknesses of your vital nature and to get rid of it

would be a great help. One must learn to go forward on the path of Yoga, as the Gita insists, with a consciousness free from despondency—*anirvinṇacetasā*. Even if one slips, one must rectify the posture; even if one falls, one has to rise and go undiscouraged on the divine way. The attitude must be, 'The Divine has promised himself to me if I cleave to him always; that I will never cease to do whatever may come'." (CWSA 29: 212–213)

2.

"I am depressed that the Divine has made me meditate the wrong way for three and a half years without letting me know it was wrong. Why did I feel that I must stimulate my aspiration through great concentration in meditation in order to expedite my progress? Why only now has the Mother told me that I have been meditating in the wrong way, with too much strain and stiffness and tension? This makes me sad beyond words. The more I think about it, the sadder I become. I am so bewildered and confused.

What am I to do? It seems to me that before I was trying to fit the wrong key into the lock of the faery palace, but now I have been left with no key at all.

What is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment. The Mother did not merely point out the impediment; she showed you very expressly how to do it and at that time you understood her, though now (at the

time of writing your letter to me) the light which you saw seems to have been clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. It is the reason why I object to the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimāna*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to Siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital force, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness,—the habit of these moods shows a clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is therefore quite incorrect to say that the Mother took away the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace and left you with none at all. For she not only showed you the true key but gave it to you. It was not a mere vague exhortation to cheerfulness she gave you, but she described exactly the condition felt in the right kind of meditation—a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any

unquiet interference. And she asked you if you had not experienced that condition and you said that you had and knew it very well. Now that condition is the beginning of psychic opening and, if you have had it, you know what the psychic opening is; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. What you should have done was to keep the key the Mother gave you present in your consciousness and apply it—not to go back and allow sadness and a repining view of the past to grow upon you. In this condition which we term the right or psychic attitude, there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. The Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil; the results remain packed behind and come out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks

through somehow and forces itself upon the external nature. There lies the difference between a mental and vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness, and ... we have deprecated pulling and straining and advocated the attitude of psychic openness. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way,—either, because of some difficulty, you try to force the lock turning the key this way and that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn and the door opens.” (CWSA 32: 220–223)

3.

“There is an entire line of philosophers and people who have replaced the notion of God by the notion of an impersonal Absolute or by a notion of Truth or a notion of justice or even by a notion of progress—of something eternally progressive; but for one who has within him the capacity of identifying himself with that, what has been said about it hasn’t much importance. Sometimes one may read a whole book of philosophy and not progress a step farther. Sometimes one may be quite a fervent devotee of a religion and not progress. There are people who have spent entire lifetimes seated in contemplation and attained nothing. There are people (we have well-known examples) who used to do the most modest of manual works, like a cobbler mending old shoes, and who had an experience. It

is altogether beyond what one thinks and says of it. It is a gift, that's all. And all that is needed is to be that—to succeed in identifying oneself with it and live it. At times you read one sentence in a book and that leads you there. Sometimes you read entire books of philosophy or religion and they get you nowhere. There are people, however, whom the reading of philosophy books helps to go ahead. But all these things are secondary. There is only one thing that's important: that is a sincere and persistent will, for these things don't happen in a twinkling. So one must persevere. When someone feels that he is not advancing, he must not get discouraged; he must try to find out what it is in the nature that is opposing, and then make the necessary progress. And suddenly one goes forward.”
(CWM 6: 26)

LI—Causes of Not Being Able to Meditate

1.

“What are the causes for not being able to meditate?”

Because one has not learnt to do it.

Why, suddenly you take a fancy: today I am going to meditate. You have never done so before. You sit down and imagine you are going to begin meditating. But it is something to learn as one learns mathematics or the piano. It is not learnt just like that! It is not enough to sit with crossed arms and crossed legs in order to meditate. You must learn how to meditate. Every where all kinds of rules have been given about what should be done in order to be able to meditate.

If at a tender age, when you are taught, for instance, how to squat, if one was taught at the same time not to think or to remain very quiet or to concentrate or gather one’s thoughts, or... all sorts of things one must learn to do, like meditating; if, when quite young and at the same time that you were taught to stand straight, for instance, and walk or sit or even eat—you are taught many things but you are not aware of this, for they are taught when you are very small—if you were taught to meditate also, then spontaneously, later, you could, the day you decide to do so, sit down and meditate. But you are not taught this. You are taught absolutely nothing of the kind.” (CWM 6: 151)

LIV—Meditation Becomes Difficult if Outer Consciousness Is Low

1.

“But it is very remarkable... I have met many people who were trying this method of detachment and separation from life, and living exclusively in the inner reality. These people, almost all of them, had in the outer life absolutely gross defects. When they returned to the ordinary consciousness, they were very much lower than one of the élite, for instance, a man of great culture and great intellectual and moral development. These people in their ordinary conduct, when they came out of their meditation, their exclusive concentration, lived very grossly. They had very, very ordinary defects, you see. I knew many of this kind. Or perhaps they had come to a stage where their outer life was a sort of dream in which they were, so to say, not existing. But one had altogether the impression of beings who were completely incomplete, totally incomplete, that is, outwardly there was nothing at all.

But if in the outer consciousness one is very low, how can one meditate? It becomes very difficult, doesn't it?

Yes, very difficult!

Then how do these people succeed?

But they came out of it completely, they left it as one takes off a cloak, then they put it aside and entered another part of their being. And this is what happened exactly, it was as though they took away this consciousness, laid it aside and entered another part of their being. And in their meditation, as long as they remained there, it was very good. But these people, most of them, when in that state, were in a kind of samadhi, and they could not even speak; and so when they came back and returned to the ordinary consciousness, it was just where it was before, completely unchanged; there was no contact.

You see, what makes the thing difficult for you to understand is that you *don't know* concretely, practically, that there are... different planes of your being, as of all beings, which may not have any contact among themselves, and that one may very well pass from one plane to another, and live in a certain consciousness, leaving the other absolutely asleep." (CWM 7: 290–291)

2.

"The only way to get rid of it is to meet it with a fixed resolution of the higher vital and the mind and psychic being to combat, reject and master it. As you were determined to master the sex impulse and the desire of the palate, so you must determine to master this 'irrational knot' of despondency in the lower vital nature. If you indulge it and regard it as a natural part of yourself with

LIV—Meditation Becomes Difficult if Outer Consciousness Is Low
good causes for existence or if you busy yourself finding this or that justification for it when it comes, there is no reason why it should let go its unpleasant grip upon you. Be firm and courageous here, as you have learnt to be with other movements of your lower vital; you will then, I think, find less difficulty in your meditation and your general sadhana.” (CWSA 31: 208–209)

3.

“I don’t know how thoughts that are harmful to my consecration slip into my mind and upset me. I try my best to drive them away and to remain absorbed in contemplation of You, but very often they return. Why are they repeated, and where do they come from? Do they belong to the universal nature which is not yet purified, and will they keep on returning until my entire human nature is transformed?”

Yes, they belong to the unregenerate universal Nature. But to the extent that we ourselves are transformed, we can keep them at a distance and they no longer trouble us.” (CWM 15: 235–236)

4.

(A sadhak asked how to get rid of the invasion of wrong suggestions.)

LIV—Meditation Becomes Difficult if Outer Consciousness Is Low

“The only radical way is to concentrate and go beyond your mental.

Silence and contemplation.

Blessings.” (CWM 14: 349)

LV—Be More Obstinate in Meditation Than the Opposition of Lower Nature

1.

“Even if you are not apparently successful in your meditation, it is better to persist and to be more obstinate than the opposition of your lower nature.

I am quite satisfied with your way of doing the work and it is sure to help you to come nearer to me.

My love and blessings.” (CWM 17: 205) (CWM 14: 52)

2.

“Now, if you wish to have a meditation, say so. Yes or no? Yes? Good! Try to eliminate from your consciousness all that is darkly attached to living uselessly.” (CWM 7: 311)

3.

“There are always difficulties and a hampered progress in the early stages and a delay in the opening of the inner doors until the being is ready. If you feel whenever you meditate the quiescence and the flashes of the inner Light and if the inward urge is growing so strong that the external hold is decreasing and the vital disturbances are losing their force, that is already a great progress. The road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the

LV—Be More Obstinate in Meditation Than the Opposition of Lower
Nature

sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures.” (CWSA 29: 110)

4.

“What is curious is that there are, as it were, demonstrations of the natural tendency of the body (I suppose it is not the same for all bodies: it depends upon how the body has been built, that is to say, father, mother, antecedents, etc.) a demonstration of the body left to itself. For example, this one has a kind of imagination (it is something queer), a dramatic imagination: all the time it has the feeling that it is living through catastrophes; and then, with the faith it always has, the catastrophe is transformed into a realisation—absurd things like that. So for a time, it is left to this imagination (this is what has happened these days) and when it is completely tired of this stupid activity, it prays, yes, with all its intensity, so that the thing may stop. Immediately, just that, hop! it does this (*gesture*), it turns around straightaway and goes into a contemplation—not distant, but quite close—of this wonderful Presence that is everywhere.” (CWM 11: 143–144)

LVI—The Impression of Swooning in Meditation

1.

“As for the impression of swooning, it is simply because you were not in sleep, as you imagined, but in a first condition of what is usually called *svapna samādhī* dream trance. What you felt like swooning was only the tendency to go deeper in, into a more profound *svapna samādhī* or else into a *suṣupta* trance—the latter being what the word trance usually means in English, but it can be extended to the *svapna* kind also. To the outer mind this deep loss of the surface consciousness seems like a swoon, though it is really nothing of the kind—hence the impression. Many sadhaks here get at times or sometimes for a long period this deeper *svapna samādhī* in what began as sleep—with the result that a conscious sadhana goes on in their sleeping as in their waking hours. This is different from the dream experiences that one has on the vital or mental plane which are themselves not ordinary dreams but actual experiences on the mental, vital, psychic or subtle physical planes. You have had several dreams which were vital dream experiences, those in which you met the Mother, and recently you had one such contact on the mental plane which, for those who understand these things, means that the inner consciousness is preparing in the mind as well as in the vital, which is a great advance.

You will ask why these things take place either in sleep or in an indrawn meditation and not in the waking state. There is a two fold reason. First, that usually in Yoga these things begin in an indrawn state and not in the waking condition,—it is only if or when the waking mind is ready that they come as readily in the waking state. Again in you the waking mind has been too active in its insistence on the ideas and operations of the outer consciousness to give the inner mind a chance to project itself into the waking state. But it is through the inner consciousness and primarily through the inner mind that these things come; so, if there is not a clear passage from the inner to the outer, it must be in the inner states that they first appear. If the waking mind is subject or surrendered to the inner consciousness and willing to become its instrument, then even from the beginning these openings can come through the waking consciousness. That again is a familiar law of the Yoga.” (CWSA 30: 16–17)

LVII—Barriers in Meditation

1.

“Ego, I suppose, or inertia [*hinders the feeling of satisfied peace or quiet release in meditation*]. If higher meditation or being above keeps you dull and without any kind of satisfaction or peace in sadhana, these are the only two reasons I can think of.” (CWSA 29: 318)

2.

“I meant [*by 'thinking of the Divine'*] the giving up of the preoccupation with your ego and its rights and claims and ideas of unfair treatment and all the rest and to think more of the Divine and the seeking for the Divine for which you came here and make that your chief preoccupation. It is not in meditation alone, but in life and thought and act and feeling that that has to be done.” (CWSA 31: 219)

3.

“If the mind gets tired, naturally it is difficult to concentrate—unless you have become separated from the mind.” (CWSA 29: 318)

4.

“Intensity of prayer is not at all to be rejected; it is one of the most powerful means of the sadhana.

As for the obstacle to meditation or experience, it would usually be when some part of the being is dealt with which has still to be prepared and to open. Such periods always occur in sadhana and one has to meet these with a patient and persistent aspiration and a quiet vigilance of self-introspection that will bring about the necessary opening. It should not awaken depression or lead to any relaxation of will and the effort of sadhana. Open yourself more and more, that is all that is needed.” (CWSA 30: 362)

5.

“Write to her again that if she wants to do sadhana, she must get rid of fear altogether; fear opens the door to the adverse forces. She should not listen to people who try to put fear in her. If ugly forms or sounds are seen and heard, one has not to fear but reject them and call in the Mother’s protection. If she feels calmness in the meditation, that is the necessary basis—with that basis one can safely practise the Yoga. It is not indispensable that the mind should be entirely *blank*—it is sufficient that it is quiet with a fundamental silence which is not disturbed even if thoughts pass across it.” (CWSA 31: 279)

6.

“The difficulty you have in sadhana may come from the vital or physical mind becoming active. That often happens after the first experiences of calm and silence. One has to

detach oneself from these activities in meditation as a witness and call down the original calm into these parts also. But this may take time. If one can in meditation sufficiently isolate oneself from the surroundings and go inside, the quietude comes more quickly.” (CWSA 31: 462)

7.

“What you feel coming across the meditation is a resistance in the subconscious material throwing up a thing like the cold or a nervous unrest or a causeless uneasiness. They must of course be dismissed. When this part opens to the pressure from above, then these things are felt no more.” (CWSA 31: 668)

8.

“Be on your guard against any suggestions that try to raise up your egoism, as for instance, that you are a greater Sadhaka than others or that your Sadhana is unique or of an exceptionally high kind. There seems to be some suggestion of this kind to you already. You had a rich and rapid development of psychic experiences, but so precisely have some others who have meditated here and none of yours are unique in their kind or degree or unknown to our experience. Even if it were otherwise, egoism is the greatest danger of the Sadhana and is never spiritually justifiable. All greatness is God’s; it belongs to no other.” (CWSA 36: 372)

9.

"The first internal condition necessary is concentration of the will against the obstacles to meditation, ie wandering of the mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience and restlessness etc.

The second is an increasing purity and calm of the inner consciousness (*citta*) out of which thought and emotion arise; ie a freedom from all disturbing reactions, such as anger, grief, depression, anxiety about worldly happenings etc. Mental perfection and moral are always closely allied to each other." (CWSA 36: 295)

10.

"I have been here for one and a half years but I know nothing of the sadhana. I meditate, but nothing happens in the meditation. I feel there is no love in me towards the Mother. What shall I do to feel this love?"

Become truthful, pure, sincere, straightforward." (CWSA 32: 462)

LVIII—Wrong Way of Meditating

1.

"Can you explain in a few master strokes what you mean by 'pulling down'? As I understand it, it is when one makes mental efforts of concentration and meditation without having any eagerness for it.

That is not what is meant by pulling. When one is open and too eager and tries to pull down the force, experience etc. instead of letting it descend quietly, that is called pulling. Many people pull at the Mother's forces—trying to take more than they can easily assimilate and disturbing the working." (CWSA 32: 223)

2.

"During the evening meditation my mind tries to become conscious of the thoughts which the Mother brings down. Is this the right activity?

It is not altogether the way—if the mind is active it is more difficult to become aware of what the Mother is bringing. It is not thoughts she brings, but the higher light, force etc." (CWSA 32:230)

3.

"If there is an obstacle at pranam, it must be something

wrong in the attitude—perhaps the old error of expecting some outward sign of love, approval or favour from the Mother. The pranam is not for that, but for receiving from her inwardly through the meditation and through the pranam itself. Nothing must be demanded—the consciousness must be surrendered and quiet to receive what she thinks best to give.” (CWSA 32: 534)

4.

“But is it really impossible to give X some experience of peace, silence or meditation? That would mean that the Divine is not omnipotent.

My dear sir, what has the omnipotence of the Divine to do with it? In this world there are conditions for everything—if a man refuses to fulfil the conditions for Yoga, what is the use of appealing to the Divine’s omnipotence? He does not believe that the Divine is here. He regards us as Gurus. Yes, but he begins by disputing all my way of Yoga. He does not understand and does not care to understand my processes. He has ideas of his own, does not want peace or equality or surrender or anything else, wants only Krishna and bhakti. He has read things in Ramakrishna and elsewhere as to how to do it, insists on following that. Rejects all suggestions I can make as unpracticable. Erects a sadhana of violent meditation, japa, prayer—for these are the traditional things, has no idea that there are

conditions without which they cannot be effective. Meditates, japs, prays himself into pits of dullness and disappears. Also tries in spite of my objections a wrestling tapasya which puts his vital into revolt. Then by a stroke of good luck I succeed unexpectedly in making a sort of psychic opening. Decides to try surrender, purification of the heart, rejection of ego, true humility etc.—tries a little of it and is really progressing. After two months finds that Krishna is not appearing—gets disgusted and drops the beastly thing. And after all that he is always telling me ‘What an impotent Guru you are! You are evidently able to do nothing for me.’ Evidently! That’s X.” (CWSA 35: 440–441)

5.

“How can the people in this Asram judge whether a man has progressed in Yoga or not? They judge from outward appearances—if a sadhak secludes himself, sits much in meditation, gets voices and experiences, etc. etc. they think he is a great sadhak! X was always a very poor Adhar. He had a few experiences of an elementary kind—confused and uncertain, but at every step he was getting into trouble and going off on a side path and we had to pull him up. At last he began to get voices and inspirations which he declared to be ours—I wrote to him many letters of serious warning and explanation but he refused to listen, was too much attached to his false voices and inspirations and, to

avoid rebuke and correction, ceased to write or inform us. So he went wholly wrong and finally became hostile. You can tell this by my authority to anybody who is puzzled like yourself about this matter." (CWSA 35: 609) (CWSA 30: 312–313)

6.

"Sweet Mother,

*Often after a long meditation (an effort to meditate),
I feel very tired and want to rest. Why is this and how can
I feel differently?*

So long as you are making an effort, it is not meditation and there is not much use in prolonging this state.

To obtain mental silence, one must learn to relax, to let oneself float on the waves of the universal force as a plank floats on water, *motionless* but *relaxed*.

Effort is never silent." (CWM 16: 310)

7.

*"What will be the result if I meditate on the thought that
here is no difference between a certain thing, no matter
which, and me; for the Divine is as much present in that
thing as in me?*

Probably a disastrous result; that is, a passive opening to all sorts of influences, most of which are hardly commendable." (CWM 16: 188)

8.

“What happened in the beginning of his sadhana must have been that he made the mistake of entering into a passive meditation instead of into a concentration proper. This kind of passive meditation can bring a great peace and quiet and joy. The Light also may come and other spiritual experiences. But it leaves the vital and body passive and without defence against inertia, illness etc. instead of bringing it either a dynamic force or a strong self-contained peace. The consciousness instead of being concentrated gets widely diffused and loosely extended. From the passivity came the weakness and disinclination for the worldly duties; from the diffusion the play of activity in the mind which prevented sleep and could not be controlled in a tendency also for the subtle being to go out of the body in the waking condition instead of through sleep as it ordinarily does, whence the beating of the heart and the cold feet. Concentration must in the earlier stages be active and dynamic with the consciousness gathered and capable of turning the will in any direction.

The concentration in this Yoga must be in the head or in the heart-centre, not in the centre at the base of the spinal cord—that can only come afterwards when all the other centres have been opened.

It is sometimes a little difficult to correct the effects of a wrong start. At any rate he may try the effects of an active concentration in either the head (forehead centre)

or heart. The latter may be safer so as to avoid the return of the heating of the head which came from that first concentration. If there are any disturbing results, the concentration should not be continued and all should be turned towards a purification of the being such as he speaks of having practised and only when this is sufficiently advanced, should the concentration be resumed.” (CWSA 29: 317)

9.

“When one meditates there are moments when one sees very unpleasant forms in front of himself for some days. It begins and later ends. What does it mean?”

Yes, it means probably that instead of meditating in a silent concentration, one has opened one’s consciousness either in a vital domain or in a not very pleasant mental domain. That’s what it means. It can also mean—it depends on the degree of development one has reached—it can mean in certain cases, when one is master of one’s concentration and knows where one goes—still this already requires a fairly great discipline—it may be that it is a particular attack of adverse forces, of bad wills, coming either from certain beings or from certain domains; but it is not necessarily attacks; it can simply be that one has opened one’s consciousness in a place that’s not very desirable or else sometimes, often, that one had in himself a number of

movements of the vital and the mind which were not very desirable, and when one enters the silence of meditation or that kind of passive attitude of expectation of something which is going to happen, all these vibrations which have gone out of him come back to him in their real appearance which is not very pleasant. This happens often: one had bad feelings, not positively wicked but still things which are not desirable, bad thoughts, movements of dissatisfaction, revolt or impatience, or a lack of contentment or... you see, one may be angry with somebody, even in thought, no need of speaking... things like that. When one is quiet and tries to be still so as to have an experience, all these things come back to him in their true form, that is, not very pleasant forms: very ugly, forms which are at times very ugly. I think that I have already told you this several times: it's something that happens frequently if you don't control your thoughts and your vital reactions and if someone has displeased you for some reason or other, if that person has done or said something which you do not like, and you consider him hostile and so the spontaneous reaction is to want to punish him in some way or other or if one is still more primitive—if I may say so—to want to take vengeance or hope that something bad will happen to him.

However, it may even come very spontaneously, a violent reaction, like that, then you don't think about it any more. But now, at night, when you are asleep, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, in a case like this, the person in

question comes to you with an extreme violence, either to kill you or to make you ill, as though he wished you as much harm as possible, and then in your ignorance you say, 'Well, I was quite right to be angry with him.' But it is quite simply your own formation which returns to you, nothing else but that. The person has nothing to do with it—he is quite innocent in the affair. This is a phenomenon which occurs very often, I mean for people who have movements of rancour or anger or violence; and they always see in a dream of this kind the justification of their movements—whereas it is only a very striking image of their own feelings. For the formation returns upon one in this way.

Then in these cases what should one do?

What should one do? First, never have bad thoughts to begin with; and then, secondly, never be afraid, even if you see extremely ugly things—not only have no fear but no disgust and no repulsion, simply a perfect quietude—and try to be as pure and calm as possible. Then, whatever it may be, whether it be your own formation or it comes from others, whether it be an attack or a bad place—no matter what it is—everything will be all right. But above all, this: quiet, calm, naturally sheltered from every kind of possible fear, and without any disgust, without any recoiling, nothing; like that: a perfect indifference with a

complete calm. Then nothing bad can happen, absolutely nothing. Even if it is truly an enemy who comes to attack you, he becomes powerless.

In all cases, without exception, whatever may happen, calm and quietude and serene peace and an absolute faith in the divine Grace—if you have all this, nothing can happen to you. And you must have all this if you want to have experiences; because experiences without this—it's not good; but with this, it's excellent." (CWM 7: 80–82)

10.

"The difficulty you feel or any sadhak feels about sadhana is not really a question of meditation versus bhakti versus works, it is a difficulty of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you like to call it. Yours seems to be characterised on one side by a tremendous effort in the mind, on the other by a gloomy certitude in the vital which seems to watch and mutter under its breath if not aloud, 'Yes, yes, go ahead, my fine fellow, but—[Nothing has ever happened, nothing is happening, nothing will happen.—Ed.]and at the end of the meditation, 'What did I tell you, [Nothing happened]'. A vital so ready to despair that even after a 'glorious' flood of poetry, it uses the occasion to preach the gospel of despair. I have passed through most of the difficulties of the sadhak, but I cannot recollect to have looked on delight of poetical creation or concentration

in it as something undivine and a cause for despair. This seems to me excessive.” (CWSA 31: 196–197)

11.

“Aspire for perfect surrender, calm, peace, light, consciousness and strength in the mind and the heart. When the mental being and psychic being are thus open, luminous and surrendered, then the vital can open and receive the same illumination. Till then premature adventures on the vital plane are not advisable.

If the movement cannot be stopped, then observe the following instructions:

(1) Never allow any fear to enter into you. Face all you meet and see in this world with detachment and courage.

(2) Ask for the protection of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother before you sleep or meditate. Use their names when you are attacked or tempted.

(3) Do not indulge in this world in any kind of sympathy such as you felt for the old man in the temple or accept such suggestions, e.g., that he was your spiritual preceptor, which was obviously false since you could have no other spiritual preceptor than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was because of this sympathy and the accepted suggestion that he was able to go inside you and create the pain you felt.

(4) Do not allow any foreign personality to enter into you, only the Light, Power etc. from above.” (CWSA 30: 208)

12.

“It seems to be some tamas or inertia coming down on the system. It is sometimes like that when the vital gets dissatisfied with the conditions or with what has been attained and initiates a sort of non-cooperation or passive resistance, saying, ‘As I am not satisfied, I won’t take interest in anything or help you to do anything.’

It may be because I asked you to stop meditating and to wait. The vital does not like waiting. But I had to tell you that because of the burning of the centres, the disturbance of sleep and the rest—these must go before you can meditate in the right way and with success. If you meditate at all now, it should be only in calm and peace with a very quiet aspiration for the divine calm and peace to descend into you.

It is also perhaps due to your penchant for Nirvana. For the desire of Nirvana easily brings this kind of collapse of the energies. Nirvana is not the aim of my Yoga—but whether for Nirvana or for this Yoga, calm and peace in the whole being are the necessary foundation of all siddhi.” (CWSA 31: 139)

13.

"I have a deep regard for X and an inner affection for him. Now when I begin to meditate by thinking of the Mother, I sometimes see him meditating with us. This brings a happy feeling, yet I worry lest it should bring any harm in my sadhana. I hope it will not bring trouble.

If you bring somebody in between you and the Mother, it is bound to give trouble." (CWSA 32: 485)

14.

"Mother, why is it that the same contemplation does not always produce the same sensation in oneself? That is, for example, when one looks at the sea or the stars and thinks of one's insignificance, then there is a particular sensation which is produced within, and then at another time, when one wants to have the same experience, even if one thinks about it, why doesn't it recur?"

One can never have the same experience twice because one is never the same person twice. Between the first experience and the second, even if one hour has passed, you are no longer the same man and you can never reproduce identically the same thing. If you take care to become more conscious, more sincere, more concentrated, the experience you have will be different, but it may be deeper and more clear. But if you cling to something you

have had and want to reproduce the same thing, you will have nothing at all, because you can't have the same thing and you are in a state in which you refuse to have a new experience, for you are attached to the past one. And usually when one has had an experience which was a revelation, something altogether important, one doesn't want to leave it, one is afraid of not having it any longer, and so, in this movement of clinging to something, one prevents oneself from progressing and puts oneself in conditions in which one can't have the next experience.

Well, this has to be understood, because it is an absolute fact: one can never have the same experience twice." (CWM 7: 34)

LIX—Stress of Meditation Would Not Bring Madness

1.

“Usually there is some predisposition [*to madness*] behind, hereditary, natal (due to some circumstances of birth) or founded in insufficient nervous balance. Often there is in the vital excessive ambition, lust or some other violent Ripu. But these though they might distort or break the sadhana by opening it to undesirable Forces could not bring madness (megalomania, erotic mania, or what is called religious mania)—only if there is some taint or want of nervous balance. Anxiety or excessive stress of meditation would not bring it either except by acting upon some such predisposing weakness. In some cases possession by beings of the vital worlds without any such predisposing cause may be possible, but that will be more easily curable. There are however cases of people who break down their nervous balance by wrong practices—there the madness has nothing really to do with the sadhana.” (CWSA 31: 807–808)

LX—Dangers of Strenuous Meditation

1.

“The three experiences of which you speak belong all to the same movement or the same stage of your spiritual life; they are initial movements of the consciousness to become aware of your inner being which was veiled, as in most, by the outer waking self. There are, we might say, two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness, another behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self. This inner self once awake opens in its turn to our true real and eternal self. It opens inwardly to the soul, called in the language of this Yoga the psychic being which supports our successive births and at each birth assumes a new mind, life and body. It opens above to the Self or spirit which is unborn and by conscious recovery of it we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.

You did quite right in first developing the sattwic qualities and building up the inner meditative quietude. It is possible by strenuous meditation or by certain methods of tense endeavour to open doors on to the inner being or even break down some of the walls between the inner and outer self before finishing or even undertaking this preliminary self-discipline, but it is not always wise to do it

as that may lead to conditions of sadhana which may be very turbid, chaotic, beset with unnecessary dangers. By adopting the more patient course you have arrived at a point at which the doors of the inner being have begun almost automatically to swing open. Now both processes can go on side by side, but it is necessary to keep the sattwic quietude, patience, vigilance,—to hurry nothing, to force nothing, not to be led away by any strong lure or call of the intermediate stage which is now beginning before you are sure that it is the right call. For there are many vehement pulls from the forces of the inner planes which it is not safe to follow.” (CWSA 30: 257–258)

LXI—If Meditation Leads to Inertia and Unconsciousness, Some Believe They Are Remarkable

1.

“‘There are some who, when they are sitting in meditation, get into a state which they think very fine and delightful.’

What is this state?

Whatever it may be, they think their state is delightful and remarkable. They have a very high opinion of themselves. They believe they are remarkable people because they are able to sit quietly without moving; and if they don't think of anything, that is remarkable. But usually it is a kind of kaleidoscope that is going on in their head, they do not even notice it. Still, those who can remain for a moment without moving, without speaking and thinking, have certainly a very high opinion of themselves. Only, as I have said, if they are pulled out of it, if someone comes and knocks at the door and they are told, 'There is somebody waiting for you', or 'Madam, your child is crying', they immediately get furious and say: 'There, my meditation is spoilt! Completely spoilt.' I am telling you things I have seen with my own eyes. People who were very serious in their meditation, and could not be interrupted in their meditation without their getting violently angry....

LXI—If Meditation Leads to Inertia and Unconsciousness, Some
Believe They Are Remarkable

Naturally this is not a sign of great spiritual progress. They stormed against everybody because they had been pulled out of their beatific meditation.

... Most of the time people try to concentrate and enter into a kind of half sleepy and, in any case, very tamasic state. They become some kind of inert thing; the mind is inert, the feeling is inert, the body is immobile. They can remain like that for hours, for there is nothing more durable than inertia! All this that I am telling you now—these are experiences of people I have met. And these people, when they come out of their meditation, sincerely believe they have done something very great. But they have simply gone down into inertia and unconsciousness. ... But this effect [of coming into conscious relation with the divine Presence in meditation] is very different according to individuals.” (CWM 5: 41–44)

LXII—Meditation Cannot Transform Outer Being

1.

“There are cases in which the person is split into two in so radical a way that while in meditation such people can enter into contact with the Divine and obtain this supreme felicity of identification, but when they come out of this and lead their normal life, begin to live and act, they can be the most ordinary men with the most ordinary and sometimes even the most vulgar reactions. Indeed, I know people who become altogether ordinary men, and then they do, for example, all the things one should not do, like passing their time in gossiping about others, thinking of themselves only, having all selfish reactions and wanting to organise their life for their petty personal well-being; they do not think of others at all and never do anything for anybody, have no large idea. And yet, in their meditation, they have had this contact. And that is why people who have discovered how very difficult it is to change this petty outer nature that one takes up along with the body, how difficult it is to transcend oneself, to transform one’s movements, say: ‘It is not possible, it is no use trying; in coming to the world, you have taken a body of dust, you have only to let it fall off and prepare to go away, leaving the world as it is; and the only thing to do is to run away as quickly as one can; and if everybody runs away, there will no longer be a world and therefore no more misery.’ That’s logical. If

they are told: 'But perhaps what you propose to do is very selfish, to go away and leave others floundering?'—'Well, they have only to do what I do. If everybody did what I am doing, they would get out of it, there would be no longer any world, no longer any misery.' As though it depended upon the will of individuals who have not even taken any part in the making of the world! How can they hope to stop it? At least if it was they who had made it, they could know how it was made and could try to undo it (although it is not always easy to undo what one has done), but it is not they who have made it, they do not even know how it has been made and they have the presumption to want to undo it, because they imagine that they themselves can run away from it.... I do not think it is possible. One cannot run away, even if one tries. That however is another subject. In any case, for me, my experience (which is sufficiently long, for it is now almost fifty-three years since I have been dealing with people, with their yoga, their inner efforts; I have seen much here and there, a little everywhere in the world); well, I do not believe that it is by meditation that you can transform yourself. I am absolutely convinced of the contrary.

If while doing what you have to do—whatever it may be, whatever work it is—if you do it and while doing it are careful not to forget the Divine, to offer to Him what you do and try so to give yourself to Him that He may change all your reactions—instead of their being selfish, petty,

stupid and ignorant, making them luminous, generous—then in that way you will make progress. Not only will you have made some progress but you will have helped in the general progress. I have never seen people who have left everything in order to go and sit down in a more or less empty contemplation (for it is more or less empty), I have never seen such people making any progress, or in any case their progress is very trifling. I have seen persons who had no pretensions of doing yoga, who were simply filled with enthusiasm by the idea of terrestrial transformation and of the descent of the Divine into the world and who did their little bit of work with that enthusiasm in the heart, giving themselves wholly, without reserve, without any selfish idea of a personal salvation; these I have seen making magnificent progress, truly magnificent. And sometimes they are wonderful. I have seen sannyasis, I have seen people who live in monasteries, I have seen people who professed to be yogis, well, I would not exchange one of the others for a dozen such people (I mean, from the standpoint of terrestrial transformation and world progress, that is to say, from the standpoint of what we want to do, to try that this world may no longer be what it is and may become truly the instrument of the divine Will, with the divine Consciousness). It is not by running away from the world that you will change it. It is by working there, modestly, humbly but with a fire in the

heart, something that burns like an offering.” (CWM 5: 42–44)

2.

“There is this great, boundless, unconditioned consciousness and force [of Sachchidananda]; but our consciousness and force stands apart from it, even if within it, limited, petty, discouraged, disgusted with itself and the world, but unable to participate in that higher thing which it has seen. There is this immeasurable and unstained bliss; but our own being remains the sport of a lower Nature of pleasure and pain and dull neutral sensation incapable of its divine delight. There is this perfect Knowledge and Will; but our own remains always the mental deformed knowledge and limping will incapable of sharing in or even being in tune with that nature of Godhead. Or else so long as we live purely in an ecstatic contemplation of that vision, we are delivered from ourselves; but the moment we again turn our consciousness upon our own being, we fall away from it and it disappears or becomes remote and intangible. The Divinity leaves us; the Vision vanishes; we are back again in the pettiness of our mortal existence.” (CWSA 23: 394–395)

LXIII—It Is Not That Meditation Is of No Use

1.

"So meditation is of no use?"

No, and to the extent it is necessary, it will come spontaneously. All of a sudden, you will be seized by something that makes you still, makes you concentrate in the vision of an idea or of a psychological state. That captures you. You must not resist. Then you make the needed progress. At such a moment you see, you understand something; and then the next minute you start your work again with that something gained in you, but without any pretension. What I most fear are those who believe themselves very exceptional because they sit down and meditate. Of all things this is the most dangerous, because they become so vain and so full of self-satisfaction that they close up in this way all avenues of progress.... There is one thing that has always been said, but always misunderstood, it is the necessity of humility. It is taken in the wrong way, wrongly understood and wrongly used. Be humble, if you can be so in the right way; above all, do not be so in the wrong way, for that leads you nowhere. But there is one thing: if you can pull out from yourself this weed called vanity, then indeed you will have done something. But if you knew how difficult it is! You cannot do a thing well, cannot have a fine idea, cannot have a

right movement, cannot make a little progress without getting puffed up inside (even without being aware of it), with a self-satisfaction full of vanity. And you are obliged then to hammer it hard to break it. And still broken bits remain and these begin to germinate. One must work the whole of one's life and never forget to work in order to uproot this weed that springs up again and again and again so insidiously that you believe it is gone and you feel very modest and say: 'It is not I who have done it, I feel it is the Divine, I am nothing if He is not there', and then the next minute, you are so satisfied with yourself simply for having thought that!" (CWM 5: 44–45)

LXIV—Make Outer Being Participate in Deeper Life

1.

"I don't understand this: 'The disadvantage [of trance or samadhi] is that trance becomes indispensable and the problem of the waking consciousness is not solved; it remains imperfect. 'Waking consciousness is not solved'?"

And naturally! Because if in order to have a meditation or a relation with the inner world, you are obliged to enter into *samadhi*, your waking consciousness always remains what it is, without ever changing. That's what I said in other words, you see, when I said that people have a higher consciousness only in very deep meditation. When they come out of their meditation they are no better than they were before. All their defects are there which come back as soon as they come back into their waking consciousness; and they never make any progress because they do not establish a relation between their deeper consciousness, the truth of their being, and their outer being. You see, they take off their outer being as though they were taking off a cloak, and they put it in a corner: 'Come now, don't trouble me, keep quiet. You are a nuisance.' And then they enter into contemplation, their meditation, into their deep experience; and then they comeback, put on the cloak which of course has not

changed—which perhaps is dirtier still than before—and they remain exactly as they were without any meditation.

If you want the outer being to change, it is while remaining conscious of it that you should have the other experiences; and you must not lose contact with your ordinary outer consciousness if you want it to profit by the experience. There are many people... I knew people like that, who used to meditate for hours, almost all the time... they spent their time meditating, and then if by chance... if someone disturbed them in their meditation, if they had to do something, they flew into a rage, a fury, they abused everybody, they became more intolerable than if they had never meditated, than any ordinary person. This happened because they neglected making their outer being participate in their deeper life. They cut themselves into two, so there is a portion inside which progresses and a portion outside which becomes worse and worse, because it is completely neglected." (CWM 6: 427–428)

2.

"Some people can make an effort the whole day through, succeed in building something within themselves; they go to sleep at night and the next morning all that they had done on the previous day is lost, they have lost it in a state of unconsciousness. This happens very often, these are not exceptional cases, far from it. And this is what explains, you see, why some people—when they withdraw into their

higher mind for instance—can enter into very deep meditation and be liberated from the things of this world, and then when they return to their ordinary physical consciousness, are absolutely ordinary if not even vulgar, because they haven't taken care to establish any contact, and to see that what is above acts and transforms what is below." (CWM 7: 292)

3.

Becoming Aware of the Inner Being

"It is not that anything has been taken from you, but as you say at the end, your being is seen by you in two parts. That is a thing that happens as the sadhana proceeds and must happen in order that one may have completely the knowledge of oneself and the true consciousness. These two parts are the inner being and the outer being. The outer being (mind, vital and physical) has now become capable of quietude and it sits in meditation in a free, happy, vacant quietude which is the first step towards the true consciousness. The inner being (inner mind, vital, physical) is not lost but gone inside—the outer part does not know where—but probably gone inside into union with the psychic. The only thing that can have gone is something of the old nature that was standing in the way of this experience." (CWSA 30: 213)

4.

"Sweet Mother, you have said: 'Each meditation ought to be a new revelation, for in each meditation something new happens.' After the meditation, is one conscious of what has happened?"

But that's exactly the thing; I say: pay attention and become conscious. If one is very attentive, one becomes conscious. One must be very concentrated and very attentive, then one becomes conscious." (CWM 5: 387)

LXV—Egoism Can Blossom in *Dhyani*

1.

“As for the enormous development of egoism, that can come whatever one follows. I have seen it blossom in the *dhyānī* as well as in the worker; Krishnaprem says it does so in the bhakta. So it is evident that all soils are favourable to this Narcissus flower.” (CWSA 29: 209)

2.

“It is quite true that aspiration, rejection and the remembrance of the Mother and surrender to her and union with her consciousness are the main means of the sadhana. ... It is true also that to make the union with the Divine the cardinal aim and all the rest subsidiary and a consequence of it, not to seek progress, experiences, etc. for their own sake or for the sake of the ego is the proper attitude for the sadhak. It is true finally that meditation, vision and almost all else in the Yoga can be misused if the sadhak is self-centred, egoistic and obscure. But that does not mean that meditation, vision etc. are of no use and should be avoided in the sadhana.

The theory that once you remember the Mother always, everything you do flows from the Divine and therefore it does not matter what you do is rather a dangerous one. It may end by giving sanction instead of

rejection to many things that ought to go out of the nature.” (CWSA 32: 137–138)

LXVI—Meditation Is Not the Only Means of Sadhana

1.

“There is no opposition between work and sadhana. Work itself done in the right spirit is sadhana. Meditation is not the only means of sadhana. Work is one means; love and worship and surrender are another.” (CWSA 29: 209)

2.

“Most [of the sadhaks] are seeking realisation through meditation, through love and worship or through activity and work. Meditation and silence are not necessary for everyone; there are some, even among those spoken of by you and others as the most advanced sadhaks, who do their sadhana not through meditation, for which they have no turn, but through activity, work or creation supported or founded on love and bhakti. It is not the credo but the person who matters. We impose no credo; it is sufficient if there is an established and heart-felt relation between ourselves and the disciple.” (CWSA 29: 210)

3.

“But is not sitting down to meditation an indispensable discipline, and does it not give a more intense and concentrated union with the Divine?”

That may be. But a discipline in itself is not what we are seeking. What we are seeking is to be concentrated on the Divine in all that we do, at all times, in all our acts and in every movement. There are some here who have been told to meditate; but also there are others who have not been asked to do any meditation at all. But it must not be thought that they are not progressing. They too follow a discipline, but it is of another nature. To work, to act with devotion and an inner consecration is also a spiritual discipline. The final aim is to be in constant union with the Divine, not only in meditation but in all circumstances and in all the active life.

There are some who, when they are sitting in meditation, get into a state which they think very fine and delightful. They sit self-complacent in it and forget the world; but if they are disturbed, they come out of it angry and restless, because their meditation was interrupted. This is not a sign of spiritual progress or discipline. There are some people who act and seem to feel as if their meditation were a debt they have to pay to the Divine; they are like men who go to church once a week and think they have paid what they owe to God.” (CWM 3: 20–21)

4.

“Meditation is not indispensable. There are some who do not meditate and yet progress.” (CWSA 29: 301)

5.

"If meditation brings a headache, you should not meditate. It is a mistake to think that meditation is indispensable to the sadhana. There are so many who do not do it, but they are near to the Mother and progress as well as those who have long meditations.

The one thing necessary is to be turned to the Mother and that is all that is needed. Do not fear or be sad, but let the Mother do quietly her work in you and through you and all will be well." (CWSA 32: 301)

6.

"People say, 'As long as the lower nature is not fully purified, it is dangerous to do a lot of meditation. If one meditates too much before one has become purified by means of work, things might rise up from the lower nature and upset the sadhak. When the higher forces come down into a nature not sufficiently purified through work, it is difficult to bear the descent of the divine forces.'

It is not the descent of the higher or divine forces that upsets a sadhak, it is his acceptance of forces of falsehood through ambition, vanity, desire to be a great Yogi or an attachment to his experiences without regard to their truth or their source.

It is not well to spend the whole time or the greater part of the time in meditation unless one is very strong in

mind—for one gets into a habit of living in an inner world entirely and losing touch with external realities—this brings in a one sided inharmonious movement and may lead to disturbance of balance. To do both meditation and work and dedicate both to the Mother is the best thing.” (CWSA 32: 251)

7.

“X says that he cannot feel your presence during work as he can during meditation. He does not understand how work can help him.

He has to learn to consecrate his work and feel the Mother’s power working through it. A purely sedentary subjective realization is only a half realisation.” (CWSA 32: 251252)

8.

“You should not allow yourself to get upset by these small things. If when the movements you complain of come, you remain quiet and open to the Mother and call her, after a time you will find a change beginning to come in you. Meditation is not enough; think of the Mother and offer your work and action to her, that will help you better.” (CWSA 32: 303–304)

“One can have no fixed hours of meditation and yet be doing sadhana.” (CWSA 29: 300)

9.

“You say there are two categories of people: those who are asked to meditate and those who are not asked. How to know to which category one belongs?”

You are told.

So, can we ask you?

Certainly, I am here for that!” (CWM 4: 126)

10.

“To keep yourself occupied with music and writing is always good; for your nature finds there its inborn occupation and that helps to maintain the vital energy and keep the balance.

About sadhana I should like to ask you: why not do sadhana through your music? Surely meditation is not the only way of doing sadhana. Through your music bhakti and aspiration can grow and prepare the nature for realisation.

If moments of meditation and concentration come of themselves then it is all right; but there is no need to force it.” (CWM 12: 237)

LXVII—Only Meditation Makes One Unfit for Life

1.

“If one went to the Himalayas, the likelihood is that one would make oneself fit for inactive meditation and quite unfit for life and the Mother’s service—so in the next life the character would be like that. This is simply the influence of old ideas that have no application in this Yoga. It is here in the life near the Mother, in the work itself that one must become fit to be a perfect instrument of the Mother.” (CWSA 29: 246)

2.

“But this is not for lazy folk. It’s for people who like progress. Not for those who come and say, ‘Oh! I have worked hard in my life, now I want to rest, will you please give me a place in the Ashram?’ I tell them, ‘Not here. This is not a place for rest because you have worked hard, this is a place for working even harder than before.’ So, formerly, I used to send them to Ramana Maharshi [A sage of South India who left his body in April 1950. He founded a traditional ashram for meditation and contemplation.] : ‘Go there, you will enter into meditation and you will get rest.’ Now it is not possible, so I send them to the Himalayas; I tell them, ‘Go and sit before the eternal snows! That will do you good.’” (CWM 8: 21)

3.

“A man works according to his nature and cannot help doing work; but he can choose to what he shall direct his works, whether to his lower self or his higher, whether to desire or to God. The man who leaves the world behind him and sits on a mountain top or in an asram, has not therefore got rid of works. If nothing else he has to maintain his body, to eat, to walk, to move his limbs, to sit in *asan* and meditate; all this is work. And not only his bodyworks; his mind is far more active than his body. If he is not released from desire, his work will bind him and bear fruit in relation to himself and others. Even if he is released from desire, his body & mind are not free from Karma until he is able to get rid of them finally, and that will not be till his *prarabdhakarma* has worked itself out and the debts he has written against his name are wiped off. Even the greatest Yogi by his mere bodily presence in the world, is pouring out a stream of spiritual force on all sides; this action does not bind him, it is true, yet it is work and work which exercises a stupendous influence on others.”(CWSA 17: 206)

4.

“Renounce life, take refuge in the pure, unconditioned, dreamless Atman, mind will dissolve, the world will vanish from you as a dream vanishes & with the world its pain, its useless striving, its miserable joys, its ineffugable sorrow.’

That is an escape, but it is not the escape which the Seer of the Upanishad meditates for us. He holds to his point. 'All this is Brahman, the movement no less than the moving.' A few may escape by the wicket gates of the Buddhist & the Mayavadin. Not by denial of fundamental Vedantic truth is mankind intended to be saved." (CWSA 17: 399)

5.

"Retirement in the sense of all meditation without work is not suitable to this sadhana—it is one-sided and those who resort to it, unless they are very strong, often lose their balance." (CWSA 31: 341)

6.

"The Gita says Yoga is not for one who eats too much or sleeps too much, neither is it for one who does not eat or does not sleep, but if one eats and sleeps suitably—*yuktāhārī yuktanidrah*—then one can do it best. It is the same with everything else. How often have I said that excessive retirement was suspect to me and that to do nothing but meditate was a lopsided and therefore unsound sadhana." (CWSA 31: 437)

7.

"But it may happen that the artist after having reached a certain height where he is master of his art, has to stop

his work to proceed towards the transformation of his life.

Why? For the transformation of his life? Who has told you that? If you were doing manual work, there are any number of artisans who have had a wonderful conversion. There is the example of a shoe-maker who became one of the greatest Yogis of the world. It does not depend on what one does, happily! You have to sit in meditation, like that, with an orange robe on, under a tree, to be able to realise the Divine?

So I do not understand anything of what you say.”
(CWM 5: 83)

LXVIII—Meditation Is a Soul Power of the Brahmin

1.

“The turn is often towards the predominance of the intellectual element and the capacities which make for the seeking and finding of knowledge and an intellectual creation or formativeness and a preoccupation with ideas and the study of ideas or of life and the information and development of the reflective intelligence. According to the grade of the development there is produced successively the make and character of the man of active, open, inquiring intelligence, then the intellectual and, last, the thinker, sage, great mind of knowledge. The soul-powers which make their appearance by a considerable development of this temperament, personality, soul-type, are a mind of light more and more open to all ideas and knowledge and incomings of Truth; a hunger and passion for knowledge, for its growth in ourselves, for its communication to others, for its reign in the world, the reign of reason and right and truth and justice and, on a higher level of the harmony of our greater being, the reign of the spirit and its universal unity and light and love; a power of this light in the mind and will which makes all the life subject to reason and its right and truth or to the spirit and spiritual right and truth and subdues the lower members to their greater law; a poise in the temperament turned from the first to patience, steady musing and calm,

to reflection, to meditation, which dominates and quiets the turmoil of the will and passions and makes for high thinking and pure living, founds the self-governed sattwic mind, grows into a more and more mild, lofty, impersonalised and universalised personality. This is the ideal character and soul-power of the Brahmana, the priest of knowledge. ... These are stoppings short on the way or temporary exclusive concentrations, but a fullness of the divine soul and power of truth and knowledge in man is the perfection of this Dharma or Swabhava, the accomplished Brahminhood of the complete Brahmana.” (CWSA 24: 743–744)

LXIX—After Death the Psychic Being Enters into a Beatific Contemplation

1.

“And so, this material vital goes out but the other remains; and this higher vital is attacked by other dangers, simply that. And if it also disappears, the mind remains. But behind all this is the psychic being which nothing can touch, which is above all possible attacks, and it indeed is free to go where it wants. Usually—unless it has a special opportunity and has reached a state of complete development—it goes to rest in the psychic worlds. There it enters into a kind of beatific contemplation in which it remains, and this is an assimilation of all its experiences, and when it has finished assimilating them and resting, well, it starts preparing to come down again for a new life.”
(CWM 6: 56)

LXX—Work Is Indispensable Even When One Does Meditation

1.

“The growth out of the ordinary mind into the spiritual consciousness can be effected either by meditation, dedicated work or bhakti for the Divine. In our Yoga, which seeks not only a static peace or absorption but a dynamic spiritual action, work is indispensable.” (CWSA 29: 209–210)

2.

“The aim must be the Divine and the work can only be a means.” (CWSA 29: 212)

3.

“I mean by work action done for the Divine and more and more in union with the Divine—for the Divine alone and nothing else. Naturally that is not easy at the beginning, any more than deep meditation and luminous knowledge are easy or even true love and bhakti are easy. But like the others it has to be begun in the right spirit and attitude, with the right will in you, then all the rest will come.” (CWSA 29: 217)

4.

“There should be not only a general attitude, but each

work should be offered to the Mother so as to keep the attitude a living one all the time. There should be at the time of work no meditation, for that would withdraw the attention from the work, but there should be the constant memory of the One to whom you offer it. This is only a first process; for when you can have constantly the feeling of a calm being within concentrated in the sense of the Divine Presence while the surface mind does the work, or when you can begin to feel always that it is the Mother's force that is doing the work and you are only a channel or an instrument, then in place of memory there will have begun the automatic constant realisation of Yoga, divine union, in works." (CWSA 32: 247)

5.

"You seem to have written to X that there is a special force for the work and, if it is brought down, its action need not remain a separate thing from meditation. What is this special force for work?"

It is the Mother's force, naturally." (CWSA 32 : 245)

6.

"Those who do work for the Mother in all sincerity, are prepared by the work itself for the right consciousness even if they do not sit down for meditation or follow any particular practice of Yoga. It is not necessary to tell you

how to meditate; whatever is needful will come of itself if in your work and at all times you are sincere and keep yourself open to the Mother.” (CWSA 32: 247)

7.

“All attachment and self-indulgence are dangerous—attachment and self-indulgence in subjective experiences and remote ‘meditations’, pushing aside the Truth in objective life is as dangerous as any other. Draw back from these errors and get back into the true balance of the sadhana. If you want the psychic in the physical, you cannot get it by merely sitting in meditation and having abstract experiences; you can get it only by seeking it in physical life and action, by work for the Mother, obedience and surrender in work to the Mother who is present in her own body here.” (CWSA 32: 249–250)

8.

“If one works with an attitude of service and love, but does not meditate, will it not lead to stagnation from an inner standpoint? Many say, ‘We are doing Mother’s work and that is sufficient.’

If they do it in the right spirit, then it may be sufficient for them, as it will bring the rest—because of the spirit in which they do it. It is a matter of idiosyncrasy—there are some who cannot get anything by meditation, so that work or bhakti is their only resource.” (CWSA 32: 250)

9.

"I pray that I may feel the Mother's protection while working. I feel happy to work. I am not able to meditate every day, but as long as I am working I feel that the work itself is sadhana."

Work for the Mother done with the right concentration on her is as much a sadhana as meditation and inner experiences." (CWSA 32: 252)

10.

"It is not our experience that by meditation alone it is possible to change the nature, nor has retirement from outward activity and work much profited those who have tried it; in many cases it has been harmful. A certain amount of concentration, an inner aspiration in the heart and an opening of the consciousness to the Mother's presence there and to the descent from above are needed. But without action, without work the nature does not really change; it is there and by contact with men that there is the test of the change in the nature. As for the work one does, there is no higher or lower work; all work is the same provided it is offered to the Mother and done for her and in her power.

You have probably taken too much work on yourself by adding to the rest accounts, etc. That was not necessary. There is no reason why you should not do a

normal amount and have time and energy for meditation as well. If you wish, however, to change, Mother may consider it, though she does not just now see how to arrange.” (CWSA 32: 252)

11.

“This [*experience of the true attitude*] happens when the work is always associated with the Mother’s thought, done as an offering to her, with the call to do it through you. All ideas of ego, all association of egoistic feelings with the work must disappear. One begins to feel the Mother’s force doing the work; the psychic grows through a certain inner attitude behind the work and the adhar becomes open both to the psychic intuitions and influences from within and to the descent from above. Then the result of meditation can come through the work itself.” (CWSA 32: 253)

12.

“If I remember right, you wrote to me that work is only a means for the preparation of the spiritual life; otherwise it has no spiritual value.

[*Sri Aurobindo underlined ‘only’, put a question mark above it, and wrote:*] Lord God! when did I make this stupendous statement which destroys at one fell swoop the two volumes of the *Essays on the Gita* and all the seven volumes of the *Arya*? Work by itself is only a preparation,

LXX—Work Is Indispensable Even When One Does Meditation
so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing
Yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as
meditation is.” (CWSA 35: 744)

13.

*“There are some sadhaks here who think that everyone
should do Karmayoga only, without doing any meditation
at all.*

There are some who cannot meditate and progress
through work only. Each has his own nature. But to extend
one method to all is always an error.” (CWSA 35: 748)
(CWSA 29: 222)

14.

“For the sadhana, it is not true that some are here only
because they give money and others because they are
workers only. What is true is that there are many who can
prepare themselves only by work, their consciousness not
being yet ready for meditation of the more intense kind.
But even for those who can do intense meditation from the
beginning, sadhana by work is also necessary in this Yoga.
One cannot arrive at its goal by meditation alone. As for
your own capacity, it was evident when for a fairly long
period an active sadhana was proceeding within you.
Everybody’s capacity however is limited—little can be done
by one’s own strength alone. It is reliance on the Divine

Force, the Mother's Force and Light and openness to it that is the real capacity. This you had for a time, but as with many others it got clouded over by the coming up of the physical nature in its full force. This clouding happens to almost everybody at that stage, but it need not be lasting. If the physical consciousness resolves to open itself, then nothing more is needed for progress in the sadhana." (CWSA 35: 749–750)

15.

"It does not depend on sitting [to meditate]. Many don't sit. They become conscious by working." (CWSA 29: 222)

16.

"The work should not be diminished for that purpose [*meditation and japa*]. On the other hand it is not necessary for you to work all the time. If the work assigned to you is finished earlier, it does not matter about your not keeping the full office hours." (CWSA 29: 224)

17.

"If this arrangement [*in work*] gives no time for meditation—no time for going inside and establishing there the peace, wideness and joy in which you can meet the Divine inside and in work—it seems defective. What I meant is that it is not necessary either to work all the time or to intoxicate the brain by unrelieved meditation as some

do. The result of meditation can be obtained by work, but then you must be able or learn to live inwardly even in the work and to do all from within.” (CWSA 29: 224)

18.

“Sometimes when I am absorbed in meditation I see and feel that my physical being aspires through work. Then I see a sun manifesting in my physical with its brilliant light. All the gods and forces emanating from You are in this sun.

Yes, it is true that in and through work one can enter into contact with the sun of divine light and force.” (CWM 14: 298)

19.

“One can progress through meditation, but through work provided it is done in the right spirit one can progress ten times more.” (CWM 14: 299)

20.

“Then how is it [*meditation*] necessary for all, if some are asked not to do it? Much meditation is for those who can meditate much. It does not follow that because such meditation is good, therefore nobody should do anything else.” (CWSA 29: 301)

21.

“The Mother does not think that it is good to give up all work and only read and meditate. Work is part of the Yoga

and it gives the best opportunity for calling down the Presence, the Light and the Power into the vital and its activities; it increases also the field and the opportunity of surrender.

It is not enough to remember that the work is the Mother's—and the results also. You must learn to feel the Mother's force behind you and to open to the inspiration and the guidance. Always to remember by an effort of the mind is too difficult; but if you get into the consciousness in which you feel always the Mother's force in you or supporting you, that is the true thing." (CWSA 32: 247–248)

LXXI—Meditation and Works Have Their Place in Integral Yoga

1.

“The ignorance underlying this attitude [*that meditation is greater than work*] is in the assumption that one must necessarily do only work or only meditation. Either work is the means or meditation is the means, but both cannot be! I have never said, so far as I know, that meditation should not be done. To set up an open competition or a closed one between works and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have been declaring all along an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, works—light of consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the *Arya* all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge—both are equal.” (CWSA 29: 223–224)

2.

“It is because you showed an intention of doing the sadhana in full earnest that we considered it necessary to point out to you that it could not be done without work or by mere solitary meditation, for that is the nature of this sadhana. We did not impose any work on you, but left it to you to choose. You yourself suggested the kitchen work

LXXI—Meditation and Works Have Their Place in Integral Yoga and afterwards asked for an increase of it.” (CWSA 29: 239)

3.

“If you do your work as an offering which you lay in all sincerity at the feet of the Divine, work will do you as much good as meditation.” (CWM 16: 178)

4.

“*Sweet Mother,*

In this integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, work has a place of capital importance, doesn't it? This being the case, what place does meditation have?

Work does not go on twenty-four hours a day.

There is room for many other activities which have their purpose in an *integral* Yoga.” (CWM 16: 343)

5.

“Work done in the true spirit is meditation.” (CWM 14: 298)

6.

“You must do the work as an offering to the Divine and take it as part of your Sadhana.” (CWM 14: 297)

7.

“Dhyana and work are both helpful for this Yoga to those who can do both. Reading also can be made helpful.”
(CWSA 31: 62–63)

LXXII—No Amount of Meditation Can Replace Sincerity in the Service of the Divine

1.

"Sweet Mother,

X told me this morning, 'Do you see the plaster work done by Y? How nice it is! The work we have done is not so nice.' I replied: 'I know at least one reason. It is because you are not with the workmen all the time. This morning you were missing from your post from 9:30 to 10:30.' X said, 'But Y also takes off sometimes.'

I told you already that if someone refuses to be conscientious in his work, what can I do? It is true that the work suffers, but he suffers still more, for no amount of meditation can replace sincerity in the service of the Divine." (CWM 16: 27)

(About service to the Divine and meditation)

'Both are equally good. Nevertheless, through service one can attain a fuller realisation than through meditation alone." (CWM 14: 105)

LXXIII—Meditation Does Have an Effect on Work

1.

"Of course, he adds that setting apart time for meditation is for spiritual novices. You too wrote to me to meditate at least half an hour a day, if only to bring a greater concentration in the work.

It does bring the effects of meditation into work if one gives it a chance.

You know that meditations are not always successful.

You forget that with numbers of people they are successful.

Even if they were, how does this affect the whole day's work?

It doesn't, if one does not take care that it should do so—if one takes care, it can.

Is it something like charging a battery which goes on inducing an automatic current?

It is not exactly automatic. It can be easily spoilt or left to sink into the subconscious or otherwise wasted. But with

simple and steady practice and persistence it has the effect the Maharshi speaks of—he assumes, I suppose, such a practice. I am afraid your meditation is hardly simple or steady—too much *kasrat* and fighting with yourself.” (CWSA 35: 169)

2.

“Half an hour’s meditation in the day ought to be possible—if only to bring a concentrated habit into the consciousness which will help it, first to be less outward in work and, secondly, to develop a receptive tendency which can bear its fruits even in the work.” (CWSA 29: 224–225)

LXXIV—Only Work in Sadhana Helps Provided It Is Done in the Right Spirit

1.

“To say that one enters the stream of sadhana through work only is to say too much. One can enter it through meditation or bhakti also, but work is necessary to get into full stream and not drift away to one side and go circling there. Of course all work helps provided it is done in the right spirit.” (CWSA 29: 218)

2.

“If I intend to take literature as a work to be done for sadhana, I must read all good stories, novels, poems, dramas etc., must I not?”

No rule can be made, it differs with different people.

I felt that it will be a mistake to give up all that and to want to meditate all the time or to do only such things which do not hinder me from an inner concentration on you. I felt that all our faculties and capacities have to be given to you.

It is a question of the right consciousness—no unvarying mental rule can be made for these things.

All meditation and no work is not good and helpful to

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Right Spirit

sadhana, I have heard; I don't know if it is true.

Writing and reading absorb the mind and fill it with images and influences; if the images and influences are not of the right kind they naturally turn one away from the true consciousness. It is only if one has the true consciousness well established already that one can read or write anything whatever without losing it or without any other harm." (CWSA 27: 726–727)

LXXV—Students Who Want to Practise Meditation

1.

“Especially with this system, classes with a fixed time, with a fixed number of students, with a fixed teacher, and a fixed subject... you must be active while you are there.

It must be... If the students want to practise meditation, concentration, to try to come into... it is to come into contact with the intuitive plane, it is—instead of receiving a purely mental reply which is like that—to receive a reply from above which is a little luminous and living. But that habit should be acquired at home.” (CWM 12: 422)

2.

“How does one teach a student to think correctly?”

Mental capacity is developed in silent meditation.” (CWM 12: 140)

3.

“So, unless a question [question asked in a class after reading] immediately gives rise to an experience which can be expressed as a new formula, in my opinion it is always better to keep silent. Only when the question is living can it give rise to an experience which will be the occasion of a living teaching. And for a question to be alive, it must

answer an inner need for progress, a spontaneous need to progress on some plane or other—on the mental plane is the most usual way, but if by chance it answers an inner aspiration, a problem one is tackling and wants to solve, then the question becomes interesting and living and truly useful, and it can give rise to a vision, a perception on a higher plane, an experience in the consciousness which can make the formula new so that it carries a new power for realisation.

Apart from such cases I always feel that it is much better not to say anything and that a few minutes of meditation are always more useful.

What I read at the beginning ought to serve to canalise the thought, to direct and focus it on a particular problem or a set of ideas or a new possibility of understanding which comes from the passage read; and in fact it is almost like a subject of meditation suggested for the silence which follows the reading.

To speak for the sake of speaking is not at all interesting—there are schools for that! Not here.” (CWM 9: 114–115)

LXXVI—Sri Aurobindo Excludes a Life Fleeing into Exclusive Meditation

1.

“This is the Karmayoga as it is laid down in the Gita as I have developed it for the integral spiritual life. It is founded not on speculation and reasoning but on experience. It does not exclude meditation and it certainly does not exclude bhakti, for the self-offering to the Divine, the consecration of all oneself to the Divine which is the essence of this Karmayoga are essentially a movement of bhakti. Only it does exclude a life-fleeing exclusive meditation or an emotional bhakti shut up in its own inner dream taken as the whole movement of the Yoga. One may have hours of pure absorbed meditation or of the inner motionless adoration and ecstasy, but they are not the whole of the integral Yoga.” (CWSA 29: 218)

2.

“... he was always wanting to give up work, withdraw from all intercourse and spend all his time in meditation; but he did it as much as he could—result, collapse. C never asked permission and I cannot say what his retirement was like, but I hear he boasted that by his intense sadhana he had conquered sex not only for himself but all the sadhaks! He had to leave the Asram owing to his unconquerable attachment to his wife and child and he is there living the

family life and has produced another child—what a success for retirement. Where the retirement is helpful and fits the mind or the nature, we approve it, but in the face of these results how can you expect us to follow what the mind calls a consistent course and impose it as the right thing on everybody?" (CWSA 35: 679)

3.

"Do people who have advanced very far [those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace] come back to this plane [physical plane]?"

Yes; if there is a will in them to change this plane, then the more advanced they are, the surer they are to come back. And as for those who have the will of running away, even they, when they go over to the other side, may find that the flight was not of much use after all.

Do many remember that they have passed over and are back again?

When you reach a certain state of consciousness, you remember. It is not so difficult to touch this state partially for a short time; in deep meditation, in a dream or a vision one may have the feeling or the impression that he has lived this life before, had this realisation, known these

truths. But this is not a full realisation; to come to that, one must have attained to a permanent consciousness within us which is everlasting and holds together all our existences in past or present or future time.” (CWM 3: 25)

4.

“But the true salvation, the release by an inner renunciation of the ego and union with the Purushottama remains steady in whatever state, persists in this world or out of it or in whatever world or out of all world, is self-existent, *sarvathāvartamāno’pi*, and does not depend upon inaction or action. What then are the actions to be done? The thorough going ascetic answer, not noted by the Gita—it was perhaps not altogether current at the time—might be that solely begging, eating and meditation are to be permitted among voluntary activities and otherwise only the necessary actions of the body. But the more liberal and comprehensive solution was evidently to continue the three most sattwic activities, sacrifice, giving and askesis. And these certainly are to be done, says the Gita, for they purify the wise.” (CWSA 19: 495)

5.

“One can’t jump over this stage. One must first find one’s soul, this is absolutely indispensable, and identify oneself with it. Later one can come to the transformation. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere: ‘Our Yoga begins

where the others end.’ Usually yoga leads precisely to this identification, this union with the Divine—that is why it is called ‘yoga’. And when people reach this, well, they are at the end of their path and are satisfied. But Sri Aurobindo has written: we begin when they finish; you have found the Divine but instead of sitting down in contemplation and waiting for the Divine to take you out of your body which has become useless, on the contrary, with this consciousness you turn to the body and to life and begin the work of transformation—which is very hard labour. It’s here that he compares it with cutting one’s way through a virgin forest; because as nobody has done it before, one must make one’s path where there was none.” (CWM 7: 350–351)

6.

“Usually, those who become conscious of their psychic being expect that it will liberate them from vital and physical attractions and activities; they seek to escape from the world in order to live in the joy of contemplation of the Divine, and in the immutable peace of constant contact with Him. The attitude of those who want to practise Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga is quite different. When they have found their psychic being and are united with it, they ask it to turn its gaze towards the physical being in order to act on it with the knowledge that comes from the contact with the Divine, and to transform the body

so that it may be able to receive and manifest the divine consciousness and harmony.” (CWM 12: 46–47)

7.

“It has been noticed that most people who live alone in the forest become friendly with all the animals and plants around them; but it is not at all the fact of being all alone that gives you the power of entering into an inner contemplation and living in communion with the Supreme Truth. Perhaps it is easier, when by force of circumstance you have nothing else to do, but I am not convinced of it. One can always invent occupations and it seems to me, according to my experience of life, that if one succeeds in subduing one’s nature in the midst of difficulties, if one endeavours to be all alone within oneself with the eternal Presence, while keeping the same surroundings which the Grace has given us, the realisation which one obtains then is infinitely more true, more profound, more lasting.” (CWM 3: 276)

LXXVII—Why Sports in the Ashram Along with Meditation and Inner Experiences

1.

“Some, of course, might ask why any sports at all in an Ashram which ought to be concerned only with meditation and inner experiences and the escape from life into the Brahman; but that applies only to the ordinary kind of Ashram to which we have got accustomed and this is not that orthodox kind of Ashram. It includes life in Yoga, and once we admit life, we can include anything that we find useful for life’s ultimate and immediate purpose and not inconsistent with the works of the Spirit. After all, the orthodox Ashram came into being only after Brahman began to shun all connection with the world and the shadow of Buddhism stalked over all the land and Ashrams turned into monasteries. The old Ashrams were not entirely like that; the boys and young men who were brought up in them were trained in many things belonging to life; the son of Pururavas and Urvasie practised archery in the Ashram of a Rishi and became an expert bowman, and Karna became disciple of a great sage in order to acquire from him the use of powerful weapons. So there is no *a priori* ground why sports should be excluded from the life of an Ashram like ours where we are trying to equate life with the Spirit. Even table-tennis or football need not be rigorously excluded. But, putting all persiflage aside, my

point is that to play or not to play is a matter of choice and inclination, and it would be absurd for Mother to be displeased with you any more than with X for not caring to be a sportsman. So you need not have any apprehension on this score; that the Mother should be displeased with you for that is quite impossible. So the idea that the Mother wanted to punish you for anything done or not done or that she wished to draw far away from you or to be cold and distant was a misinterpretation without any real foundation since you have given no ground for it and there was nothing farther from her mind." (CWSA 35: 777)

2.

"Very few people understand this, and generally those who are against this outer discipline of sports, this concentration on the material realisation, are people who *completely* lack control over their physical being. And to realise the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo the control of one's body is a first *indispensable* step. Those who despise physical activities are people who won't be able to take a single step on the true path of integral yoga, unless they first get rid of their contempt. Control of the body in all its forms is an indispensable basis. A body which dominates you is an enemy, it is a disorder you cannot accept. It is the enlightened will in the mind which should govern the body, and not the body which should impose its law on the mind. When one knows that a thing is bad, one must be

capable of not doing it. When one wants something to be realised, one must be able to do it and not be stopped at every step by the body's inability or ill-will or lack of collaboration; and for that one must follow a physical discipline and become master in one's own home.

It is very fine to escape into meditation and from the height of one's so-called grandeur look down on material things, but one who is not master in his own home is a slave." (CWM 9: 82–83)

3.

"I believe I have already explained this to you once. If it were a question of leading what till today was considered the true spiritual life, that is, of giving up altogether all physical activities in order to unite with the supreme divine Reality and remain in this union, of leaving life and all outer expression and going away into Nirvana, into an identity which not only will no longer be expressed in the world, but which takes you *out* of the world completely, then it is obvious that all these gymnastics, whether physical, vital, sensory or mental, are absolutely useless, and that those people considered all this simply a waste of time and quite futile. But *for us* who want to realise almost the very opposite, that is, who, after having identified ourselves with the supreme Reality, want to make It descend into life and transform the world, if we offer to this Reality instruments which are refined, rich, developed, fully

conscious, the work of transformation will be more effective.

And that is why instead of telling you when you are a little mite, to do (*laughing*) what those little children are asked to do, to sit still and enter or pretend to enter into meditation, instead of telling you that you must be in constant contemplation and totally indifferent to all things in the world, that you must have only one thought, to prepare yourself to receive the divine Grace, instead of that you are told, 'No, try to become developed and conscious beings who know things and have healthy, strong, agile bodies capable of doing exceptional things, an adequate will and a rich, supple, agile mind; these will be useful for the future realisation.'" (CWM 8: 365–366)

4.

"As for the rest, I think I need only repeat emphatically that there is no need for anyone to take up sports as indispensable for Yoga or for enjoying the Mother's affection and kindness. Yoga is its own object and has its own means and conditions; sport is something quite different as the Mother herself indicated to you through X when she said that the concentration practised on the playground was not meditation and was used for efficacy in the movements of the body and not for any purpose of Yoga." (CWSA 35: 779)

LXXVIII—Sri Aurobindo's Experiences of Meditation

1.

"It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. 'Sit in meditation,' he said, 'but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts *coming into it*, before they can enter throw them away from you till your mind is capable of entire silence.' I had never heard before of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think of either questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw a thought and then another thought coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free Intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought or a labourer in a thought-factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free too to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought empire." (CWSA 35: 244)

2.

"The first he had gained while meditating with the Maharashtrian Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, at Baroda in January 1908; it was the realisation of the silent spaceless

and timeless Brahman gained after a complete and abiding stillness of the whole consciousness and attended at first by an overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world, though this feeling disappeared after his second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore jail and of which he has spoken in his speech at Uttarpara. To the other two realisations, that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind, he was already on his way in his meditations in Alipore jail. Moreover, he had accepted from Lele as the principle of his sadhana to rely wholly on the Divine and his guidance alone both for his sadhana and for his outward actions. After that it was impossible for him to put himself under any other guidance and unnecessary to seek help from anyone. In fact Sri Aurobindo never took any formal initiation from anyone; he started his Sadhana on his own account by the practice of pranayama and never asked for help except from Lele." (CWSA36: 9495)

3.

"He went to the meeting almost in a mood of inexplicable vacancy. . . .

Not inexplicable certainly; it was the condition of silence of the mind to which he had come by his meditation for 3 days with Lele in Baroda and which he kept for many

months and indeed always thereafter, all activity proceeding on the surface; but at that time there was no activity on the surface. Lele told him to make namaskar to the audience and wait and speech would come to him from some other source than the mind. So in fact, the speech came, and ever since all speech, writing, thought and outward activity have so come to him from the same source above the brain-mind." (CWSA 36: 111)

4.

"In the jail he [Sri Aurobindo] spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. This he pursued even in the second interval when he had no opportunity of being alone and had to accustom himself to meditation amid general talk and laughter, the playing of games and much noise and disturbance; in the first and third periods he had full opportunity and used it to the full. In the Sessions Court the accused were confined in a large prisoners' cage and here during the whole day he remained absorbed in his meditation attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence." (CWSA 36: 60)

5.

"At Chandernagore he [Sri Aurobindo] plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took

him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910." (CWSA 36: 64)

6.

"What happened on the 24th November prepared the possibility of this descent [of Supramental] and on that day he retired into seclusion and entered into deep and powerful meditation." (CWSA 35: 273)

7.

Sources of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

"My philosophy was formed first by the study of the Upanishads and the Gita; the Veda came later. They were the basis of my first practice of Yoga; I tried to realise what I read in my spiritual experience and succeeded; in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy, not on ideas by themselves. I owed nothing in my philosophy to intellectual abstractions, ratiocination or dialectics; when I have used these means it was simply to explain my philosophy and justify it to the intellect of others. The other source of my philosophy was the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the plane of the Higher Mind when I reached that level; they [*the ideas from the Higher Mind*] came down in a mighty flood which swelled into a sea of direct Knowledge always translating itself into experience, or they were intuitions

starting from experience and leading to other intuitions and a corresponding experience. This source was exceedingly catholic and many-sided and all sorts of ideas came in which might have belonged to conflicting philosophies but they were here reconciled in a large synthetic whole.” (CWSA 36: 112)

8.

“I began my yoga in 1904 without a guru; in 1908 I received important help from a Mahratta yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana; but from that time till the Mother came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. My sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded on me from within. But in the jail I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads; these were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it, but there were no such happenings in connection with the Gita as are narrated in the book.” (CWSA 36: 98)

LXXIX—The Mother's Experience in Meditation

1.

(From a meditation written on the day after the Mother first saw Sri Aurobindo)

"It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent." 30 March 1914(CWM 13: 3)

2

"What does that black Kali do?"

Well, I believe she does fairly bad things! It is obvious that she takes a great pleasure in destruction.

That one—it was at the time of the First World War, the early days of the First War. I was here. I was staying in the house on Dupleix Street, Dupleix House. From the terrace of that house could be seen Sri Aurobindo's room, the one in the Guest House. Sri Aurobindo was staying

there. He had two rooms and the small terrace. And from the terrace of Dupleix House the terrace of the Guest House could be seen. I don't know if it can still be seen; that depends on the houses in between, but at that time it could. And I used to sit on the terrace to meditate every morning, facing Sri Aurobindo's room. That day I was in my room, but looking at Sri Aurobindo's room through a small window. I was in meditation but my eyes were open. I saw this Kali entering through my door; I asked her, 'What do you want?' And she was dancing, a truly savage dance. She told me, 'Paris is taken, Paris will be destroyed.' We used to have no news, it was just at the beginning of the war. I was in meditation. I turned towards her and told her, 'No, Paris will not be taken, Paris will be saved', quietly, just like this, but with a certain force. She made a face and went away. And the next day, we received the 'dispatch'. In those days there were no radios yet, we had telegraph messages, 'dispatches', which were proclaimed, posted on the gate of the Government House. We got the news that the Germans had been marching upon Paris, that Paris was not defended; the way was quite open, they had to advance only a few kilometres more and they would have entered the city. But when they saw that the road was clear, that there was nobody to oppose them, they felt convinced that it was an ambush, that a trap had been set for them. So they turned round and went back! (*Laughter*) And when the French armies saw that, naturally they gave

chase and caught them, and there was a battle. It was the decisive battle: they were stopped. Well, evidently it was that. It took this form: When I said to Kali, 'No', they were panic-stricken. They turned back. Otherwise, if they had continued to advance it would have been all over." (CWM 6: 68–69)

3

"One day—every day I used to meditate with Sri Aurobindo: he used to sit on one side of a table and I on the other, on the veranda—and one day in this way, in meditation, I entered (how to put it?...), I went up very high, entered very deep or came out of myself (well, whatever one may say does not express what happened, these are merely ways of speaking), I reached a place or a state of consciousness from which I told Sri Aurobindo just casually and quite simply: 'India is free.' It was in 1920. Then he put to me a question: 'How?' And I answered him: 'Without any fight, without a battle, without a revolution. The English themselves will leave, for the condition of the world will be such that they won't be able to do anything else except go away.'

It was *done*. I spoke in the future when he asked me the question, but there where I had seen, I said, India is free, it was a fact. Now, India was not free at that time: it was 1920. Yet it was there, it had been done. And it happened in 1947. That is to say, from the external

physical point of view I saw it twenty-seven years in advance. But it had been done.

Could you see Pakistan?

No, for the freedom could have come about without Pakistan. Indeed, if they had listened to Sri Aurobindo there would have been no Pakistan.

Well, externally it seems to take time, but in fact it is like that." (CWM 5: 188)

4

(Durga Puja 1955, Victory Day)

A verbal notation of the experience I transmitted during meditation.

The annual battle and victory of Durga symbolise the rhythmic intervention of the Supreme Divine Consciousness that periodically gives a new impetus to the universal progress." (CWM 15: 194)

(About the 'victory' referred to in the message for Durga Puja 1957, Victory Day)

"But this does not mean that it is not already won in principle." (CWM 15: 194)

5

EXPERIENCE OF 5 NOVEMBER 1958

New Year Message for 1959

At the very bottom of the inconscience most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling I struck upon an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless limitless Vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.

(Below is based on this message)

"Last evening in the class [Mother's weekly 'Wednesday class', held at the Ashram Playground] I noticed that the children, who had a whole week to prepare questions on the text we are reading, did not find a single one. A terrible somnolence! A total lack of interest! When I had finished my reading, I said to myself, 'But what is there in these brains that does not take interest in anything but their small personal affairs? After all, what is happening inside there, behind these forms?'

Then during the meditation, I began going down into the mental atmosphere of the people around me, in order to find there the small light, the thing that responds. And I was literally dragged down to the bottom, as if into a hole.

In this hole I saw what I am still seeing. I went down into a fissure, as it were, between two steep rocks, rocks made of something harder than basalt, black, metallic at

the same time, with edges so sharp that you had the impression that were you simply to touch them, you would be flayed. It was something that seemed to have no bottom and no end, and it became narrower and narrower like a funnel, so narrow that there was almost no room left even for the consciousness to pass. The bottom was invisible, a black hole, and that went down and down and down, without air, without light, only a kind of glimmer, like a reflection at the peak of the rocks, a glimmer that came from beyond, from something that could be the heavens, but something invisible. I continued to slide down the fissure and I saw the edges, the black rocks, cut with scissors, as it were, shining like a fresh cut, the edges so sharp that they were like knives. Here was one, there another, there another, everywhere, all around. And I was dragged, dragged, dragged down,—I went down, down, down and there was no end to it, it became more and more oppressive, stifling, suffocating.

Physically, the body followed, it participated in the experience. The hand that was on the arm of the chair slipped down, then the other hand, then the head bent down in an irresistible movement. Then I said to myself, 'But this must stop, for if it continues, my head will be down on the ground!' (The consciousness was elsewhere, but I was looking at my body from outside.) And I asked myself, 'But what is there at the bottom of this hole?'

Hardly had I formulated the question when it was as if I had touched a spring that was there at the very bottom of the hole, a spring I had not noticed yet, which acted at once with a tremendous force and at one bound shot me up straight into the air; I was cast out of the fissure into a limitless, formless vast which was infinitely comfortable—not exactly warm, but it gave a comfortable impression of inner warmth. After this painful enough descent, it was a kind of super-comfort, an ease, an ease at its maximum. And my body immediately followed the movement, the head at once became straight again. And I lived all this without objectifying it at all; I was not taking stock of what it was, I did not look for any explanation of what was happening; it was what it was, I lived it and that was all. The experience was absolutely spontaneous.

It was all-powerful, infinitely rich; it had no form at all, no limit—naturally I was identified with it and that is why I knew that it had neither limit nor form. It was as if—I say 'as if' because it could not be seen—as if this vast was made up of countless imperceptible points, points that did not occupy any place in space (there was no space, you see), points that were a deep warm gold; but this was only an impression, a translation. And all that was absolutely *living*, living with a power that seemed infinite. And yet it was immobile, with an immobility so perfect that it gave a feeling of eternity, but with an unbelievable inner intensity of movement and life—it was inner, self-contained—and

immobile, immobile in relation to the outside, if there was an outside. And it had a boundless life—it may be spoken of as infinite only by way of image—and an intensity, a strength, a force, a peace, the peace of eternity, a silence, a calm, a power capable of everything.

And I did not think it, I did not objectify it, I lived it comfortably, very comfortably. This lasted for a very long time—for the rest of the meditation.

It was as if that contained all the wealth of possibilities. And all that though it had no form, had the power to become forms.

After a moment I asked myself, 'What is this, to what does it correspond? Naturally I found out afterwards, and finally this morning I told myself, 'Well, it is just to give me my message for the coming year.'" Then 'I transcribed it—naturally, you cannot make a description, it is indescribable. It was a psychological phenomenon and the forms were nothing but a way of describing the psychological state to oneself. And this is what I noted, obviously in a mental way. I have described nothing, I have only stated a fact:

'At the very bottom of the inconscience most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling I struck upon an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless limitless Vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.'" (CWM 15: 361–363)

6

"Sri Aurobindo, immense and very concrete (in the subtle physical), was sitting over the whole compound during the meditation." 28 August 1962 (CWM 13: 12)

7

15 August 1967

"I took my seat, it was almost time, perhaps half a minute before, and all of a sudden, without preparation, like that, like a hammer blow: a descent so powerful—completely immobile —of something... It was as though Sri Aurobindo spoke to me at the same time (because the definition came at the same time as the experience: it was a vision that was not a vision, it was wholly concrete) and the word was: *golden peace*. But so strong! And then it did not move. During the whole half-hour, it did not move. It is something new that I had never felt before. I cannot say... It was perceived, but not like an objective vision. And spontaneously, other persons told me that as soon as they were seated for meditation (*gesture of massive descent*), something came down with a tremendous power, completely immobile, and a feeling of peace that they had never felt in their life.

Golden peace. And it is true, it gave the impression of the golden supramental light. But it was... a peace! Concrete, you know, not the negation of disorder and

activity, no: concrete, concrete peace. I did not want to stop. The time was over, still I remained two minutes, three minutes. When I stopped, it was gone. And it has made a great difference for the body—the body itself—such a difference that when it had gone, I felt quite uneasy, I needed half a minute to regain my equilibrium.

It came and it went away. It came for the meditation and then it went away. For more than half an hour, thirty-five minutes.

And in the evening, at the balcony, there was a crowd. I believe it was the biggest crowd that we have ever had: it spread out into all the streets; as far as I could see, the streets were full of people. Then I came out, and as I came out, there arose from this crowd like a... something between an imploring, a prayer and a protest about the condition the world is in, particularly this country. And that rose up in waves. I looked at it, and then (it was extremely insistent) I said to myself: 'It is not my day, it is Sri Aurobindo's day.' I went like this (*gesture of withdrawal*) and I put Sri Aurobindo in front. And when he was put in front, standing in front he simply said, simply: 'The Lord knows best what he is doing.' (*Mother laughs*) Immediately, I began to smile (I did not laugh, but I began to smile) and there came the same peace as in the morning.

There you are.

‘The Lord knows best what he is doing’, with his most perfect sense of humour. And immediately everything became calm.” (CWM 15: 403–404)

8

“She [the Mother] meditated with him [Chakrabarti] and they were able inwardly to meet each other with a .brief but living spiritual interchange. He told her that he had an extraordinary meditation which was entirely due to her, and she was aware of his state of consciousness and discovered in him a remarkable spiritual realisation and a considerable insight on the inner plane. It was the realisation of the Gita or part of it which he had built up in himself, peace, equanimity, the sense of the Divine within, and the atmosphere of peace was so strongly formed and living and real in him that he could convey it to others. On the other hand, he was externally a very worldly man, accepting the not very exalted outward personal life and surroundings he had as the milieu given him and not in the least wishing to change it. It was his theory that this was the teaching of the Gita—to feel Krishna within, to have the inner spiritual life and realisation,—the rest was the Lila and could be left as it was unless or until the Divine himself in the automatic movement of his play chose to change it.” (CWSA 32: 38-39)

9

"So, the body, the body has one prayer—and it is always the same:

Make me worthy of knowing Thee,
Make me worthy of serving Thee,
Make me worthy of being Thee.

I feel in myself a growing force... but it is of a new quality... in silence and in contemplation.

Nothing is impossible (*Mother opens her hands upward*).” (CWM 11: 330)

LXXX—The Divine's Sovereign Contemplation

1.

"How calm, noble and pure is the splendour of the Divine's contemplation." (CWM 14: 13)

2.

"In all there lacks the unchanging peace of the Divine's sovereign contemplation, and the calm vision of the Divine's immutable eternity." (CWM 14: 12)

3.

"Lord, give us the silence of Your contemplation, the silence rich with Your effective Presence." (CWM 16: 437)

LXXXI—Collective Meditations

1.

“As an exception, Mother gave this talk on a Thursday evening, before the collective meditation.

Before the meditation this evening I am going to say a few words to you, because several people have asked me the difference between a collective meditation and an individual meditation.

Individual meditation—I have already explained to you many times the different kinds of meditation that are possible and I won't begin to speak to you about that again.

But collective meditations have been practised in all ages for different reasons, in different ways and with different motives. What may be called a collective meditation is a group of people who gather together for a definite purpose; for example, in all ages it has been a practice to gather for prayers. Naturally in the Churches, it is a sort of collective meditation but even outside the Churches, some people have organised collective meditations for group prayer. These prayers are of two different kinds.

From the beginning of human history, it is known that certain groups of people would meet to express a certain common state of soul: some to sing together the

praise of God, hymns, thanksgiving, to express adoration, thankfulness, gratitude, and to praise God; others—and there are historical examples of this —a certain number of people gathered together for a common invocation, for instance, to ask God for something, and this was done all together, united, in the hope that this invocation, this prayer, this asking would carry more weight. There have been some very famous instances. A very old one occurred in 1000 A.D. when some prophets had announced that it was the end of the world and everywhere people gathered together to offer common prayers and ask that the world may not come to an end (!) or anyway, for it to be protected. Much more recently, in modern times, when King George of England was dying of pneumonia, people assembled in England, not only in the churches but even in the streets in front of the royal palace, to offer prayers and ask God to cure him. It so happened that he recovered, and they believed that it was their prayers.... That is, of course, the most external form, I could say the most worldly, of group meditation.

In all initiatory groups, in all the spiritual schools of ancient times, group meditation was always practised and in that case the motive was quite different. They assembled for a collective progress, to open together to a force, a light, an influence, and... this is more or less what we want to try to do.

However, there are two methods, and this is what I

am going to explain to you. In both cases, one must practise as one does in individual meditation, that is, sit in a position at once comfortable enough for one to be able to keep it and yet not too comfortable for one to fall asleep in it! And then you do what I had asked you to do while I used to go for the distribution over there, that is, prepare for the meditation, try to become calm and silent; not only to avoid chattering outwardly, but to try to silence your mind and gather your consciousness which is dispersed in all the thoughts you have and your preoccupations; to gather it, bring it back within yourself as completely as possible and concentrate it here, in the region of the heart, near the solar plexus, so that all the active energies in the head and all that keeps the brain running, may be brought back and concentrated here. This can be done in a few seconds, it can take a few minutes: that depends on each one. Well, this is a preparatory attitude. And then, once this is done—or done as well as you can do it—you may take two attitudes, that is, an active attitude or a passive attitude.” (CWM 9: 37–38)

2.

“What I call an active attitude is to concentrate on—I shall put it in general terms—on the person who is directing the meditation, with the will to open and receive from him what he intends to give you or the force with which he wants to put you into contact. That is active, for here there is a will

at work and an active concentration to open yourself to someone, a concentration on someone.

The other one, the passive one is simply this: to be concentrated as I have told you, then you open yourself as one opens a door; you see, you have a door here (*gesture at the level of the heart*) and once you are concentrated, you open the door and stay like this (*gesture of immobility*). Or else, you may take another image, as if it were a book, and you open your book very wide with its pages completely blank, that is, quite silent, and you stay like that waiting for what is going to happen.

These are the two attitudes. You may take one or the other, according to the day, the occasion, or you may adopt one of them, out of preference, if it helps you more. Both are effective and can have equally good results.

And so, now, for our special case, I shall tell you what I am trying to do.... It will soon be a year since, one Wednesday, we had the manifestation of the supramental force. Since then, it has been working very actively, even while very few people are aware of it! but still I thought the time had come for—how to put it?—for us to help it a little in its work by making an effort of receptivity.

Of course, it does not work only in the Ashram, it is working in the whole world and in all places where there is some receptivity this Force is at work, and I must say the Ashram hasn't an exclusive receptivity in the world, the monopoly of receptivity. But since it so happens that all of

us here more or less know what has taken place, well, I hope that individually each person is doing his best to benefit by the occasion; but collectively we can do something, that is, try to unify a ground, to produce a particularly fertile soil to obtain collectively the maximum receptivity and to have as little wastage as possible of time and energies.

So now, you have been told in a general way what we want to try to do and you have only to... to do it." (CWM 9: 39–40)

3.

"An acquaintance has written a letter asking for the Mother's permission to join our group meditation here.

Is he practising Yoga—does he do meditation by himself? It would as a rule be better if people tried by themselves first and joined the collective meditation only when they had begun to have experiences or some kind of opening.

This is not an absolute rule, however. If the other sadhaks find no inconvenience, he may come as a trial and see if it helps him, and if the others find it does not disturb the harmony of the atmosphere or bring in any inertia, he can continue." (CWSA 35: 818)

4.

"(1) It is not advisable to sit with others; for if any force is brought down, it may very easily be a mixed force. The

difficulties in his nature may be prematurely raised and he may add to them the difficulties of those with whom he sits.

(2) Indications given by letter may not be rightly grasped or rightly practised; even if mentally understood, they may not be very helpful. The important thing is to open to the Influence. That indeed was the reason why in the old systems personal initiation by the Guru was considered indispensable. The best thing will be for him to come here for a short time, say in November (the 24th) and receive the direct touch and influence.

(3) Meanwhile he can try to prepare himself by personal meditation if he likes. The method is to quiet the mind and, in order to do so, to concentrate on an aspiration for faith in the Divine Power, peace and calm in the mind, single-minded sincerity in the heart, and a conscious opening to the Light and Truth and Power.” (CWSA 35: 817–818)

5.

“My little X,

It is impossible to meditate with another person without *receiving something of the vibrations emanating from him*, just as one cannot enter a place without breathing the air that is there.

When someone has a harmful atmosphere and a bad influence (I warned you of this), one must be careful, while

meditating, not to put oneself into a state of receptivity with that atmosphere!

It is not wrong, but it is an act of ignorance. And needless to say, it cannot prevent you from being my little X or stop my arms from surrounding and protecting you.” (CWM 17: 195)

6.

Meditation at Aspiration (Auroville)

“They want to have a meditation at the same time and with the same programme as the Ashram. The necessary information should be given to X.

Don't you think that the two collective 'meditations' that we are trying to have in Aspiration—on Thursday and Sunday at the same hours as the Ashram—are the minimum of inner discipline that our Aspiration should give to itself?

These rare moments of silence and the effort to concentrate together—if not to meditate—are they not an opportunity to receive your force and to open ourselves a little more to you and to Sri Aurobindo, helping to form our collective soul?

Without any wish to impose anything on anybody from outside, is not this elementary discipline, however, necessary in the beginning?

Concentrating together is indeed a very good thing and helps you to become conscious. But it cannot be imposed. I advise you and them to organise this moment of silence daily for all those who want to participate, but without imposing anything on the others. It is not compulsory but it is good.” (CWM 13: 237–238)

7.

“The Mother does not think that a group movement of that kind could be effective for the purpose or produce any serious impression on the welter of strong blind forces that are now at work in the world. It can only be a mental ripple on the surface like so many other mental idealistic efforts of the day. All these suffer from the fundamental defect that they work within the existing plan of things with no superior force that can dominate their disharmonies or oblige them to transform themselves by any irresistible compulsion of Light from above. Even if the meditation of these groups became less mental, that defect would not disappear. Individuals among them might rise to the spiritual heights just above mind, others might be helped to rise nearer towards them; but nothing fundamental would change in the world as a whole.” (CWSA 35: 818–819)

8.

“There are many varying conditions in which you may meditate and all have their effect upon the forces brought

in or brought down and on their working. If you sit alone, it is your own inner and outer condition that matters. If you sit with others, the general condition is of primary importance. But in either case the conditions will always vary and the forces that answer will never be twice the same. A united concentration rightly done can be a great force. There is an old saying that if twelve sincere persons unite their will and their aspiration and call the Divine, the Divine is bound to manifest. But the will must be one-pointed, the aspiration sincere. For those who make the attempt can be united in inertia or even in mistaken or perverse desire, and the result is then likely to be disastrous." (CWM 3: 98)

9.

"There is also the collectivity formed by individuals who have gathered together around an ideal or a teaching or an action they want to carry out, and who have an organising link between them, the link of the same purpose, the same will and the same faith. These can gather in a methodical manner to practice common prayer and meditation, and if their aim is high, their organisation good, their ideal powerful, through their prayers or meditations these groups can have a considerable effect on world events or on their own inner development and collective progress. These groups are necessarily far superior to others, but they don't have the blind strength

of the mobs, the collective action of the crowd. They replace this vehemence, this intensity by the strength of a deliberate and conscious organisation.

At all times there have been on earth groups organised in this way. Some of them have had a historical life, a historical action in the world, but as a rule they have not succeeded better with the crowd, the mass, than exceptional individuals. They have always been suspected and subjected to attacks, persecutions, and often they have also been dissolved in a very brutal, obscure and ignorant way.... There were those semi-religious, semi-chivalric groups, gathered around a belief or rather a creed, with a definite aim, which have had a very interesting history in the world. And certainly, they have done much for collective progress through their individual effort.

There is an ideal organisation which, if fully realised, could create a kind of very powerful unity, composed of elements all having the same aim and the same will and with enough inner development to be able to give a very coherent body to this inner oneness of purpose, motive, aspiration and action.

At all times centres of initiation have tried this, more or less successfully, and this is always mentioned in all occult traditions as an extremely powerful means of action.

If the collective unit could attain the same cohesion as the individual unit, it would multiply the strength and action of the individual.

Usually, if several individuals are brought together, the collective quality of the group is much lower than the individual value of each person taken separately, but with a sufficiently conscious and coordinated organisation, it would be possible, on the contrary, to *multiply* the power of individual action.” (CWM 9: 369–370)

10.

“Next with regard to the hostile manifestations which I observe to be of a very low vital and physico-vital character. I may observe that although there is a real force behind them many of them are not of a real character, that is to say, the faces seen and touches felt were not, in all cases, of real vital beings but only forms suggested and created out of the stuff of your own surrounding vital atmosphere and can easily be dismissed by refusing to accept their reality or to admit their formation. It may be that some particular person in your group opened the way for them but they need not necessarily have had such a personal cause. The real cause may have been the coming together in meditation of so many yet undeveloped people carrying with them a very mixed atmosphere. When that happens or even when there is a general meditation, a *chakra*, hostile forces are attracted and try to break in.

There ought to be someone in the group who during the meditation protects the circle. If the meditation is of a psychic character the protection must be psychic on the vital plane. Mirra's experience is that the protection must take the form of a white light constantly kept round the circle. But even this is not enough as the forces will attack constantly and try to find a gap in the protection; there must therefore be round the white light a covering of dense purple light sufficiently opaque for these beings not to be able to see through it. It is not sufficient to have this light in the mental or psychic levels. It must be brought down into the vital and fill it, because it is in the vital that there is the attack. Further, nobody must go out of his body during the meditation (I mean the vital being must not go out, the mental can always do it) or psychically out of the circle. But there is one thing that must be noticed."(CWSA 36: 339–340)

11.

NOTICE

1. Those who are waiting for the Pranam before the Mother comes down, should remain quiet and silent so that all who wish to prepare themselves by concentration may be able to do so and the right atmosphere may be created for the Meditation.

2. No one should come out or go in from the time the Meditation has begun up to its ending.

3. Laughing, whispering or talk should not be indulged in in the Pranam hall while the Pranam is going on.

4. No one should look upon the Pranam either as a formal routine or an obligatory ceremony or think himself under any compulsion to come there. The object of the Pranam is not that sadhaks should offer a formal or a ritual daily homage to the Mother, but that the sadhaks may receive along with the Mother's blessing whatever spiritual help or influence they are in a condition to receive and assimilate. It is important to maintain a quiet and collected atmosphere favourable for that purpose." 11 August, 1934 Sri Aurobindo (CWSA 36: 538)

LXXXII—Gnostic Collectivity

1.

“As opposed to this [artificial way of human collectivity], Sri Aurobindo tells us that a true community—what he calls a gnostic or supramental community—can exist only on the basis of the inner realisation of each of its members, each one realising his real, concrete unity and identity with all the other members of the community, that is, each one should feel not like just one member united in some way with all the others, but all as one, within himself. For each one the others must be himself as much as his own body, and not mentally and artificially, but by a fact of consciousness, by an inner realisation.

(Silence)

That means that before hoping to realise this gnostic collectivity, each one should first become—or at least begin to become— a gnostic being. This is obvious; the individual work should go on ahead and the collective work should follow; but it so happens that spontaneously, without any arbitrary intervention of the will, the individual progress is controlled, so to speak, or held back by the collective state. Between the individual and the collectivity there is an interdependence from which one can't totally free oneself, granting that one tries. And even a person who tried in his

yoga to liberate himself totally from the terrestrial and human state of consciousness, would be tied down, in his subconscious at least, to the state of the mass, which acts as a brake and actually *pulls* backwards. One can try to go much faster, try to drop all the weight of attachments and responsibilities, but despite everything, the realisation, even of one who is at the very summit and is the very first in the evolutionary march, is dependent on the realisation of the whole, dependent on the state of the terrestrial collectivity. And that indeed *pulls* one back, to such an extent that at times one must wait for centuries for the Earth to be ready, in order to be able to realise what is to be realised.

And that is why Sri Aurobindo also says, somewhere else, that a double movement is necessary, and that the effort for individual progress and realisation should be combined with an effort to try to uplift the whole mass and enable it to make the progress that's indispensable for the greater progress of the individual: a mass-progress, it could be called, which would allow the individual to take one more step forward.

And now, I shall tell you that this is why I thought it would be useful to have some group meditations, in order to work on the creation of a common atmosphere that's a little more organised than... my big hotel of last night!

So, the best use one can make of these meditations—which are gradually becoming more frequent

since now we are also going to replace the 'distributions' by short meditations—is to go within, into the depths of one's being, as far as one can go, and find the place where one can feel, perceive and perhaps even create an atmosphere of unity in which a force for order and organisation will be able to put each element in its place and make a new coordinated world arise out of the present chaos." (CWM 9: 142–143)

LXXXIII—The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth Took Place During the Meditation on Wednesday

1.

29 February 1956

During the common meditation on Wednesday

"This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that '*the time has come*', and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow." (CWM 15: 94) (CWM 15: 188)

LXXXIV—Meditation in Auroville

1.

Meditation in Matrimandir

“So this Centre is like a small island and on it is what we called at first the ‘Matrimandir’—which I always see as a very big room, absolutely bare, receiving a light that comes from above, arranged in such a way that the light from above would be concentrated on one place where there would be... whatever we want to put as the centre of the city. At first, we had thought of Sri Aurobindo’s symbol, but we can put whatever we want. Like that, with a ray of light striking it all the time, which turns, turns, turns... with the sun, you understand. If that is properly done, it will be very good. And then underneath, so that people can sit and meditate, or simply rest, nothing, nothing, except something comfortable underneath so that they can sit without getting tired, probably with some pillars, which would serve as back-rests at the same time. Something like that. And that is what I always see. And the room should be high, so that the sun can enter as a ray, according to the time of day, and strike the centre which will be there. If that is done, it will be very good.” (CWM 13: 277)

2.

“It will be a tower with twelve facets, each facet

represents a month of the year; and up above, the roof of the tower will be like this (*gesture indicating a roof which slopes upwards from the sides to the centre*).

And then, inside, there will be twelve columns. The walls and then twelve columns. And right at the centre, on the floor, there is my symbol, and above it four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, joined to form a square, and above that... a globe. If possible, a globe made of transparent material, and with or without light inside, but the sun should strike the globe; then according to the month, the time, it will be from here, from there, from there (*gesture indicating the movement of the sun*). You understand? There will always be an opening with a ray. Not a diffused light: a ray which strikes, which should strike. It will require some technical knowledge to be able to carry it out, and that is why I want to make a design with an engineer.

And then, there will be no windows or lights inside. It will always be in a kind of clear half-light, day and night—by day with the sun, by night with artificial light. And on the floor, nothing, just a floor like this one (*in Mother's room*). That is to say, first wood (wood or something else), then a sort of rubber foam, thick, very soft, and then a carpet. A carpet everywhere, everywhere except at the centre. And people will be able to sit everywhere. And the twelve columns are for people who need support for their backs!

And then, people will not come for a regular meditation or anything of that kind (but the inner organisation will be made afterwards): it will be a place for concentration. Not everyone will be able to come; there will be a time in the week or a time in the day (I don't know) when visitors will be allowed to come, but anyway, no mixture. A fixed time or a fixed day for showing people around, and the rest of time only for those who are... serious—serious, sincere, who want to learn to concentrate.

So I think that is good. It was there (*gesture upward*). I still see it when I speak of it—I *see*. As I see it, it is very beautiful, it is really very beautiful... a sort of half-light: one can see, but it is *very* tranquil. And then, very clear and very bright rays of light (the spotlight, the artificial light, must be rather golden, it must not be cold—that will depend on the spotlight) onto the symbol. A globe made of a plastic material or... I don't know.

Crystal?

If it is possible, yes. For the small temple the globe will not need to be very big: if it were as big as this (*about thirty centimetres*) it would be good. But for the big temple it will have to be big." (CWM 13: 281–282)

3.

"And it must be able to hold from a hundred to two

hundred people. And then, to support the roof there will be twelve columns inside (not outside), and right at the centre, well, the object of concentration.... And with the collaboration of the sun, all the year round the sun should enter as rays: no diffusion, an arrangement must be made so that it can enter as rays. Then according to the time of day and the month of the year, the ray will turn (there will be an arrangement up above) and the ray will be directed onto the centre. At the centre there will be the symbol of Sri Aurobindo, supporting a globe. A globe which we shall try to make from something transparent like crystal or... A big globe. And then, people will be allowed in to concentrate—(*Mother laughs*) to learn to concentrate! No fixed meditations, none of all that, but they must stay there in silence, in silence and concentration.

C: It is very beautiful.

But the place is absolutely... as simple as possible. And the floor in such a way that people are comfortable, so that they don't have to think that it hurts them here or it hurts them there!

C: It is very beautiful.

And in the middle, on the floor, my symbol. At the centre of my symbol we will put, in four parts, like a square, four

symbols of Sri Aurobindo, upright, supporting a transparent globe. That has been seen.

So I am going to have some small plans prepared by an engineer, simple ones, to show, and then I will show you when it is ready. So. And then we will see. The walls will probably have to be of concrete.” (CWM 13: 285)

4.

“It will be a small building [in Auroville], not a big one, with only a meditation room downstairs, but with columns and probably a circular shape. I say probably, because I am leaving that for B to decide. Upstairs, the first floor will be a room and the roof will be a covered terrace. You know the ancient Indo-Moghul miniatures, with palaces where there are terraces with small roofs supported by columns? You know those old miniatures? Hundreds of them have come into my hands.... But this pavilion is very, very beautiful, a small pavilion like this, with a roof on a terrace, and low walls with couches against them to sit on, to meditate in the open air in the evening, at night. And below, downstairs, at ground-level, a meditation room, simply—something quite bare. There would probably be at the far end something which would be a living light, perhaps the symbol in living light, a constant light. Otherwise, a very peaceful, very silent place.” (CWM 13: 252–253)

LXXXV—Can One Appreciate Indian Art by Meditative Dwelling

1.

“And in fact to start from the physical details and their synthesis appears to me quite the wrong way to look at an Indian work of art. The orthodox style of Western criticism seems to be to dwell scrutinisingly on the technique, on form, on the obvious story of the form, and then pass to some appreciation of beautiful or impressive emotion and idea. It is only in some deeper and more sensitive minds that we get beyond that depth into profounder things. A criticism of that kind applied to Indian art leaves it barren or poor of significance. Here the only right way is to get at once through a total intuitive or revelatory impression or by some meditative dwelling on the whole, *dhyāna* in the technical Indian term, to the spiritual meaning and atmosphere, make ourselves one with that as completely as possible, and then only the helpful meaning and value of all the rest comes out with a complete and revealing force. For here it is the spirit that carries the form, while in most Western art it is the form that carries whatever there may be of spirit. The striking phrase of Epictetus recurs to the mind in which he describes man as a little soul carrying a corpse, *psucharion e ibastazon nekron*. The more ordinary Western outlook is upon animate matter carrying in its life a modicum of soul. But the seeing of the Indian

mind and of Indian art is that of a great, a limitless self and spirit, *mahān ātmā*, which carries to us in the sea of its presence a living shape of itself, small in comparison to its own infinity, but yet sufficient by the power that informs this symbol to support some aspect of that infinite's self-expression." (CWSA 20: 271)

2.

"This method of interpretation applies, however different the construction and the nature of the rendering, to all Dravidian architecture, not only to the mighty temples of far-spread fame, but to unknown roadside shrines in small towns, which are only a slighter execution of the same theme, a satisfied suggestion here, but the greater buildings a grandiose fulfilled aspiration. The architectural language of the north is of a different kind, there is another basic style; but here too the same spiritual, meditative, intuitive method has to be used and we get at the same result, an aesthetic interpretation or suggestion of the one spiritual experience, one in all its complexity and diversity, which founds the unity of the infinite variations of Indian spirituality and religious feeling and the realised union of the human self with the Divine. This is the unity too of all the creations of this hieratic art. ... We find the same thing in looking at this architecture." (CWSA 20: 278)

3.

"The divine self in us is its theme, the body made a form of the soul is its idea and its secret. And therefore in front of this art it is not enough to look at it and respond with the aesthetic eye and the imagination, but we must look also into the form for what it carries and even through and behind it to pursue the profound suggestion it gives into its own infinite. The religious or hieratic side of Indian sculpture is intimately connected with the spiritual experiences of Indian meditation and adoration,—those deep things of our self-discovery which our critic calls contemptuously Yogic hallucinations,—soul realisation is its method of creation and soul realisation must be the way of our response and understanding. And even with the figures of human beings or groups it is still a like inner aim and vision which governs the labour of the sculptor. The statue of a king or a saint is not meant merely to give the idea of a king or saint or to portray some dramatic action or to be a character portrait in stone, but to embody rather a soul state or experience or deeper soul quality, as for instance, not the outward emotion, but the inner soul-side of rapt ecstasy of adoration and God-vision in the saint or the devotee before the presence of the worshipped deity. This is the character of the task the Indian sculptor set before his effort and it is according to his success in that and not by the absence of something else, some quality or some intention foreign to his mind and contrary to his design,

that we have to judge of his achievement and his labour.”
(CWSA 20: 290–291)

4.

“Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few true artists; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of yogic discipline, for by it he enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds. A manlike Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else. And he was, if not the greatest, at least one of the greatest painters,—although his art did not stop at painting alone.”
(CWM 3: 110)

5.

“A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in

loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. That is why the Japanese with their fine sense in these things,—a sense which modern Europe with her assault of crowded art galleries and over-pictured walls seems to have quite lost, though perhaps I am wrong, and those are the right conditions for display of European art,—have put their temples and their Buddhas as often as possible away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life, but keep them by preference in such a way that their undisputed suggestion can sink into the mind in its finer moments or apart where they can go and look at them in a treasured secrecy when the soul is at leisure from life. That is an indication of the utmost value pointing to the nature of the appeal made by Eastern art and the right way and mood for looking at its creations." (CWSA 20: 271–272)

LXXXVI—One Cannot Get into the True Supermind Except in Some Kind of Trance or Samadhi

1.

“What you call supramental overmind is still overmind—not a part of the true Supermind. One cannot get into the true Supermind (except in some kind of trance or Samadhi) unless one has first objectivised the overmind Truth in life, speech, action, external knowledge and not only experienced it in meditation and inner experience.” (CWSA 28: 154)

LXXXVII—Famous Places of Worship Have Black Vital Spiders

2.

“In all religious monuments, in monuments considered the most... well, as belonging to the highest religion, whether in France or any other country or Japan—it was never the same temples or churches nor the same gods, and yet my experience was everywhere almost the same, with very small differences—I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable—in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people’s devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this thing. But they had their faith which could change that evil thing into something good in them; they had their faith. ... very few people, very few, an insignificant number, go to church or

temple with a true religious feeling, that is, not to pray and beg for something from God but to offer themselves, give thanks, aspire, give themselves. There is hardly one in a million who does that. So they do not have the power of changing the atmosphere. Perhaps when they are there, they manage to get across, break through and go somewhere and touch something divine. But the large majority of people who go only because of superstition, egoism and self-interest, create an atmosphere of this kind, and that is what you breathe in when you go to a church or temple. Only, as you go there with a very good feeling, you tell yourself, 'Oh, what a quiet place for meditation!'

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. ... And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon. Besides, in the invisible world hardly any beings love to be worshipped, except those of the vital. These, as I said, are quite pleased by it. And then, it gives them importance. They are puffed up with pride and feel very happy, and when they can get

LXXXVII—Famous Places of Worship Have Black Vital Spiders
a herd of people to worship them they are quite satisfied.”
(CWM 6: 194–195)

LXXXVIII—Hitler in Meditation Invoked the Emanation of the Lord of the Nations Who Is the Lord of Falsehood

1.

"Hitler was simply a man, and as a man he was very weak-minded, very sentimental—he had the conscience of a petty workman (some said of a petty shoemaker), in any case of a little workman or a little school-master, something like that, a very small conscience, and extremely sentimental, what is called in French 'fleur bleue', very weak.

But he was possessed. He was rather mediocre by nature, very mediocre. He was a medium, a very good medium—the thing took hold of him, besides, during spiritism séances. It was at that moment that he was seized by those fits which were described as epileptic. They were not epileptic: they were attacks of possession. It was thus that he had a kind of power, which however was not very great. But when he wanted to know something from that power, he went away to his castle, and there, in 'meditation', there truly he invoked very intensely what he called his 'god', his supreme god, who was the Lord of the Nations. And everything seemed to him magnificent. It was a being... it was small—it appeared to him all in silver armour, with a silver helmet and golden plume! It was magnificent! And a light so dazzling that hardly could the

LXXXVIII—Hitler in Meditation Invoked the Emanation of the Lord of the Nations Who Is the Lord of Falsehood eyes see and bear that blaze. Naturally it did not appear physically—Hitler was a medium, he saw. He had a sort of clairvoyance. And it was at such times that he had his fits: he rolled on the ground, he drivelled, bit the carpet, it was frightful, the state he was in. The people around him knew it. Well, that being is the 'Lord of the Nations'. And it is not even the Lord of the Nations in its origin, it is an emanation of the Lord of the Nations, and a very powerful emanation." (CWM 5: 377)

2.

"But the one who does the greatest harm is the "Lord of Falsehood". He it is indeed who is the biggest obstacle in the universe, this constant negation of the truth. And he has a very strong hold on the terrestrial world, on the material world. Besides, here (on the earth), those who see him, see him as an absolutely marvellous, splendid being. He entitles himself the "Lord of the Nations", and he appears formidable, luminous, powerful, very impressive.... Historically, he was the inspirer of certain heads of State, and he proclaims himself the Lord of the Nations because it is he who governs the peoples. He is evidently, at the source, the supreme organiser of these last two wars. It was on that occasion that he manifested himself as the Lord of the Nations. And he declared, besides, that he would never be converted. And he knows that his end will come—naturally, he will try to make it as

LXXXVIII—Hitler in Meditation Invoked the Emanation of the Lord
of the Nations Who Is the Lord of Falsehood
late as possible. And he declared that he would destroy all
he could before being destroyed.... We may expect all
possible catastrophes.” (CWM 5: 375–376)

LXXXIX—The Sadhana of Integral Yoga

1.

“The sadhana of this Yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart, and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.” (CWSA 29: 20)

2.

“The Asram is not a religious association. Those who are here come from all religions and some are of no religion. There is no creed or set of dogmas, no governing religious body; there are only the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and certain psychological practices of concentration and meditation, etc., for the enlarging of the consciousness, receptivity to the Truth, mastery over the desires, the discovery of the divine self and consciousness concealed within each human being, a higher evolution of the nature.” (CWSA 36: 531)

3.

“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." (CWM 14: 33–34) (CWM 13: 107–108)

4.

"Can one gain as much profit (I mean spiritually) from writing poems, etc. as from devoting one's time to sadhana—meditation, etc. In other words, can literary activity be taken as part of one's sadhana?"

Any activity can be taken as part of the sadhana if it is offered to the Divine or done with the consciousness or

faith that it is done by the Divine Power. That is the important point.” (CWSA 27: 711)

5.

“We have, however, conceived as the aim of an integral Yoga something more complex and less exclusive—less exclusively positive of the highest condition of the soul, less exclusively negative of its divine radiations. We must aim indeed at the Highest, the Source of all, the Transcendent but not to the exclusion of that which it transcends, rather as the source of an established experience and supreme state of the soul which shall transform all other states and remould our consciousness of the world into the form of its secret Truth. We do not seek to excise from our being all consciousness of the universe, but to realise God, Truth and Self in the universe as well as transcendent of it. We shall seek therefore not only the Ineffable, but also His manifestation as infinite being, consciousness and bliss embracing the universe and at play in it. For that triune infinity is His supreme manifestation and that we shall aspire to know, to share in and to become; and since we seek to realise this Trinity not only in itself but in its cosmic play, we shall aspire also to knowledge of and participation in the universal divine Truth, Knowledge, Will, Love which are His secondary manifestation, His divine becoming. With this too we shall aspire to identify ourselves, towards this too we shall strive to rise and, when the period of effort is

passed, allow it by our renunciation of all egoism to draw us up into itself in our being and to descend into us and embrace us in all our becoming. This not only as a means of approach and passage to His supreme transcendence, but as the condition, even when we possess and are possessed by the Transcendent, of a divine life in the manifestation of the cosmos.” (CWSA 23: 320)

6.

Broad Lines of the Sadhana

“The basis of life here is wholly spiritual. An inner discipline is given, but it is on broad lines allowing each individual the necessary freedom for his nature and temperament to grow and change spontaneously. Broadly, the sadhana consists of a progressive surrender of oneself—inward and based upon it the outward also—to the Guru, to the Divine; meditation, concentration, work, service—all these are means for a self-gathering in all one’s movements with the sole aim of delivering oneself into the hands of a Higher Power for being worked on and led towards the Goal. The Mother guides, helps each according to his nature and need, and, where necessary, herself intervenes with her Power enabling the sadhak to withstand the rigours and demands of the Path. She has placed herself—with all the Love, Peace, Knowledge and Consciousness that she is—at the disposal of every aspiring soul that looks for help.” (CWSA 32: 332)

XC—The Absolute Surrender Must Be Not Only an Experience in Meditation

1.

“It depends on what is meant by absolute surrender—the experience of it in some part of the being or the fact of it in all parts of the being. The former may easily come at any time; it is the latter that takes time to complete.” (CWSA 29: 73)

2.

“The absolute surrender must be not only an experience in meditation, but a fact governing all the life, all the thoughts, feelings, actions. Till then the use of one’s own will and effort is necessary, but an effort in which also there is the spirit of surrender, calling in the Force to support the will and effort and undisturbed by success or failure. When the Force takes up the sadhana, then indeed effort may cease, but still there will be the necessity of the constant assent of the being and a vigilance so that one may not admit a false Force at any point.” (CWSA 29: 73–74)

3.

“The quiet mind one gets through meditation is indeed of short duration, for as soon as you come out from meditation you come out at the same time from the quietness of mind. The true lasting quietness in the vital and the physical as well as in the mind comes from a

complete consecration to the Divine; for when you can no more call anything, not even yourself, yours, when everything, including your body, sensations, feelings and thoughts, belongs to the Divine, the Divine takes the entire responsibility of all and you have nothing more to worry about.” (CWM 14: 100)

4.

“How should we come out of the physical consciousness which keeps us preoccupied all the time and exclusively with physical circumstances?”

There is a considerable number of ways.

There are intellectual ways, ways which may be called sentimental, artistic ways and spiritual ways. And generally, it is preferable for each one to take the way that is easiest for him, for if one wants to begin straight away with the most difficult, one comes to nothing at all. And here we always come back to the same thing, to what Sri Aurobindo describes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: it is the way of knowledge or the way of devotion or the way of works. But the way of works is precisely the one which keeps you in physical life and makes you find your liberation in it; and perhaps this is the most effective way of all but also the most difficult.

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 recommended 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)

5.

“A sincere consecration of all you are and all you do is for the sadhana much more effective than meditation.” (CWM 14: 100)

XCI—Surrender Is Illimitable in Potency

1.

“If this attitude of perfect self-surrender can be even imperfectly established, all necessity of Yogic *kriyā* inevitably ceases. For then God himself in us becomes the sadhaka and the siddha and his divine power works in us, not by our artificial processes, but by a working of Nature which is perfectly informed, all-searching and infallibly efficient. Even the most powerful Rajayogicsaṁyama, the most developed *prāṇāyāma*, the most strenuous meditation, the most ecstatic Bhakti, the most self-denying action, mighty as they are and efficacious, are comparatively weak in their results when set beside this supreme working. For those are all limited to a certain extent by our capacity, but this is illimitable in potency because it is God’s capacity. It is only limited by his will which knows what is best for the world and for each of us in the world and apart from it.” (CWSA 13: 74)

XCII—Some Imagine That the Sign of Spiritual Life Is the Capacity to Meditate

1.

“Some imagine that the sign of spiritual life is the capacity to sit in a corner and meditate! That is a very, very common idea. I do not want to be severe, but most people who make much of their capacity for meditation—I do not think they meditate even for one minute out of one hour. ... Those who talk about it and think that this gives them a superiority over other human beings, you may be sure, are most of the time in a state of complete inertia.” (CWM 4: 103–104)

2.

“I do not see what answer you can give to your uncle that would satisfy him, as he is evidently living in the mentality of the past and would not readily understand anything about spiritual evolution, the supermind and the Divine Manifestation in life and matter. You can perhaps tell him casually that it is not our hope to transform suddenly the whole human race. Your object is precisely to lead a higher life away from the ordinary world, only it is not solitary; there is a collective side to it and a side, not only of meditation, but of work, action and creation. There is nothing in this that is impossible.” (CWSA 28: 272)

3.

“Because of the false ideas prevalent in the world, we don’t usually see the two things together, spiritual mastery and material mastery, and so one is always incomplete without the other; but this is exactly what we want to do and what Sri Aurobindo is going to explain: if the two are combined, the result can reach a perfection that’s unthinkable for the ordinary human mind, and this is what we want to attempt.

As he [Sri Aurobindo] goes on to say—we shall probably read it next time —first one has to fight against a formidable mass of stupid prejudices which create an irreconcilable antagonism between material and spiritual life. And it is something so deep-rooted in human consciousness that it is very difficult to eradicate it, even in those who think they have understood Sri Aurobindo’s teaching! And many people said, when for altogether different reasons I began to hold meditations again, ‘Ah! At last! We are returning to spiritual life....’ This was indeed what prevented me from holding them for a long time. It was in order not to encourage this stupidity. But for other reasons it was necessary to do it and so I did. So long as this foolishness is not uprooted from human consciousness, the supramental force will always find it considerably difficult not to be engulfed in the obscurity of a human thought which understands nothing. That’s all. All the same, we shall succeed.

XCII—Some Imagine That the Sign of Spiritual Life Is the Capacity
to Meditate

I chose this book, *The Supramental Manifestation*, in order to have the opportunity of putting you into contact with a truth expressed in an almost combative form, in order to fight against this old division, this total lack of understanding of the eternal Truth.

And perhaps, when we have finished reading it, I shall be able to tell you why we have started the meditations again—but certainly not ‘to return to spiritual life’!

And it is so deep-rooted. Oh! Even those who outwardly profess to understand—when they think of the spiritual life, they immediately think of meditation.” (CWM 9: 88–89)

XCIII—Wrong Idea of Spirituality

1.

"This confusion meets us at every point and in all sorts of forms whose common error is to ignore the essence and core of the matter. The Western intellect presents us with the strivings of the mind, life, emotions, passions, moral will and tells us these are the real spiritual things, man's highest aim and endeavour and all else is vain mysticism, asceticism, evasion of life. It appears that the lined and ravaged face of a Greek bust of Homer is a thousand times more spiritual than the empty calm or the ecstatic smile of the Buddha! We are told by others that to care for the family and carry out our social and domestic duties, to be a good man, a perfect citizen, patriot, worker for the community, to serve mankind are the real things far more spiritual than to sit in idle meditation seeking for some remote and invisible transcendental Reality—or unreality. Philanthropy, altruism, service, selfless labour for humankind, these are the spiritual summits. True selflessness lies there, to sacrifice or offer one's life to the good of others, to the community, to the race. To seek one's own inner spiritual growth, to draw back from ordinary life in order to reach something beyond, to search after the Divine above humanity is mere egoism, not true spirituality, but an aberration, a misdirection of the will and life.

All that might be admirable and true—as certainly all the things thus eulogised have their place in the human evolution, if the premiss on which it were founded were true—that the seeking for something behind, something beyond, something of which the evolution of mind, life and body was only a veil or a preparation is an illusion and a chimaera. But if these things are real, if the seeking is a lasting and major drive in Nature, then all these objections and recommendations are futile. For this drive will fulfil itself, this hidden reality will draw and draw us till we achieve it. Those who feel its call, cannot do otherwise than follow and strive, even if need be leave all else for it, hold all other greatness, splendour, nobility, beauty as cheaper minor things compared with this other Light and Greatness and Beauty of which they have had the vision, the intimation, the formless attraction or else the passing touch or glimpse.” (CWSA 28: 426)

2.

“You said that X was ‘doing mischief’ with the children, because in your mind the idea of sadhana is associated with quietness, stillness and meditation, but the more you stay here the more you will have to realise that it is not only in meditation that one can reach the Divine consciousness, you will learn that one can remain in contact with the Divine even while playing or doing gymnastics or walking or doing anything; at every

moment, you should remember the Divine and try to remain in the Divine consciousness.” (CWM 14: 48)

3.

“Naturally, this occult knowledge or this experience is not very frequent in the world, because in those who do not have a developed inner life, there are veritable gaps between the external consciousness and the inmost consciousness; the linking states of being are missing and they have to be constructed. So when people enter there for the first time, they are bewildered, they have the impression they have fallen into the night, into nothingness, into non-being! ...

Thus, when people are asked to meditate or told to go within, to enter into themselves, they are in agony—naturally! They have the impression that they are vanishing. And with reason: there is nothing, no consciousness!

These things that appear to us quite natural and evident, are, for people who know nothing, wild imagination. If, for example, you transplant these experiences or this knowledge to the West, well, unless you have been frequenting the circles of occultists, they stare at you with open eyes. And when you have turned your back, they hasten to say, ‘These people are cranks!’ ” (CWM 15: 359–360)

XCIV —Exceptional Cat That Meditated

1.

"I knew animals which aspired to become human beings, but they were living with human beings. Cats and dogs, for example, which lived in a close intimacy with human beings, truly had an aspiration. I had a cat which was very, very unhappy for being a cat, it wanted to be a man. It had an untimely death. It used to meditate, it certainly did a kind of sadhana of its own, and when it left, even a portion of its vital being reincarnated in a human being. The little psychic element that was at the centre of the being went directly into a man, but even what was conscious in the vital of the cat went into a human being. But these are rather exceptional cases." (CWM 5: 227–228)

2.

"In those days, I had the habit of holding a meditation in the room where Sri Aurobindo slept (the room A uses now) and it was regularly the same people who came; everything was arranged. But there was an armchair in which this very cat always settled beforehand—it did not wait for anyone to get into the chair, it got in first itself! And regularly it went into a trance! It was not sleeping, it was not in the pose cats take when sleeping: it was in a trance, it used to start up, it certainly had visions. And it let out little sounds. It was in a profound trance. It

remained thus for hours together. And when it came out from that state, it refused to eat. It was awakened and given food, but it refused: it went back to its chair and fell again into a trance! This was becoming very dangerous for a little cat.... But this was not an ordinary cat.” (CWM 4: 238)

3.

“These animals which are extraordinary like this one, after death do they come back in a human body?”

Ah!

...

This one [cat] was admirable ... during its illness and I was taking care of it as of a child. And it always expressed a kind of aspiration. There was a time before it fell ill... we used to have in those days meditation in a room of the Library House, in the room there—Sri Aurobindo’s own room—and we used to sit on the floor. And there was an armchair in a corner, and when we gathered for the meditation this cat came every time and settled in the armchair and literally it entered into a trance, it had movements of trance; it did not sleep, it was not asleep, it was truly in a trance; it gave signs of that and had astonishing movements, as when animals dream; and it didn’t want to come out from it, it refused to come out, it remained in it for hours. But it never came in until we were

beginning the meditation. It settled there and remained there through out the meditation. We indeed had finished but it remained, and it was only when I went to take it, called it in a particular way, brought it back into its body, that it consented to go away; otherwise no matter who came and called it, it did not move. Well, this cat always had a great aspiration, a kind of aspiration to become a human being; and in fact, when it left its body it entered a human body. Only it was a very tiny part of the consciousness, you see, of the human being; it was like the opposite movement from that of the woman with the other cat. But this one was a cat which leaped over many births, so to say, many psychic stages to enter into contact with a human body. It was a simple enough human body, but still, all the same...

There is a difference in the development of a cat and of a human being...

It happens... I think these are exceptional cases, but still it happens." (CWM 7: 98–99)

XCV—Other Quotations on Meditation

1.

14 August 1957

“This evening, instead of answering questions, I would like us to meditate on the remembrance of Sri Aurobindo, on the way to keep it alive in us and on the gratitude we owe him for all that he has done and is still doing in his ever luminous, living and active consciousness for this great realisation which he came not only to announce to the Earth but also to realise, and which he continues to realise.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of his birth, an eternal birth in the history of the universe.” (CWM 9: 172)

2.

“For a long time meditations used to take place in the Ashram building. Then, as the number of disciples increased and sports gained importance, these meditations were replaced by collective ‘concentrations’ at the Ashram Playground.” (CWM 4: 105)

3.

“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.” (CWM 4: 106)

4.

“The concentration we have here and the meditation we used to have in the past, are they the same?”

No, I told you this the other day, the concentration we have now is the opposite of meditation. In the common

meditation we used to have, I tried to unify the consciousness of all who were present and to lift it in an aspiration towards higher regions; it was a movement of ascent, of aspiration—whereas what we do here, in concentration, is a movement of descent. Instead of an aspiration which rises up, what is required is a receptivity which opens so that the Force may enter into you. There are many ways of doing this; each one according to his particular nature should find out the best method. What is asked here is a receptive offering, not of the body or the mind or the vital, of a piece of your being, but of your entire being. No other thing is asked of you, only to *open* yourself; the rest of the work I undertake.

In the meditation there I wanted each one to kindle in himself a flame of aspiration and to rise up as high as possible.” (CWM 4: 122)

5.

“Naturally, both are necessary; but the morning meditation, all who had a good will could join it at any stage of their development, while here the rule is that only those who really want the perfection of their physical body can come, not those who want to escape from life, escape from themselves, escape from their body to enter into the heights. That is why in the beginning the selection was very strict—it is widening little by little, with profit, I hope. We wanted only those who had truly taken it into their head

that they wished to perfect their physical body, who understood that their body had its own value and who sought to perfect it, who wanted to try to make it a receptacle of a higher truth, not an old rag one throws aside saying, 'Do not bother me!' On the contrary, to take it up and make of it the best possible instrument, to make it grow, to perfect it as much as it will lend itself to the process." (CWM 4: 123)

6.

"In silent meditation, should not one make oneself completely empty? But, then, how can it depend on the one who meditates?"

I think there is a confusion between silence in the mind and the complete emptiness in the being, they are two very different things. Besides, I don't see very well how one can make oneself completely empty—one would not exist any longer!" (CWM 4: 281)

7.

"The mistake humanity makes is that it always hangs on to what is behind it and wants to perpetuate the past indefinitely. These things must be used at the time when they are useful. For there is a history of *each* individual development; you may pass through stages in which these disciplines have their momentary utility, but when you

have gone beyond that moment you ought to enter into something else and see that historically it was useful but now is so no longer. Certainly, to those who have reached, for instance, a certain state of development and mental control, I won't say, 'Read the Dhammapada and meditate on it'; it would be a waste of time. I give it to those who have not gone beyond the stage where it is necessary. But always man takes upon his shoulders an interminable burden. He does not want to drop anything of the past and he stoops more and more under the weight of a useless accumulation." (CWM 9: 198–199)

8.

"Buddha retired from the world, sat down in meditation and discovered a way out of earthly suffering and misery, out of all this illness and death and desire and sin and hunger. He saw a Truth which he endeavoured to express and communicate to the disciples and followers who gathered around him. But even before he was dead, his teaching had already begun to be twisted and distorted. It was only after his disappearance that Buddhism as a full-fledged religion reared its head founded upon what the Buddha is supposed to have said and on the supposed significance of these reported sayings. But soon too, because the disciples and the disciples' disciples could not agree on what the Master had said or what he meant by his utterances, there grew up a host of sects and sub-sects

in the body of the parent religion—a Southern Path, a Northern Path, a Far Eastern Path, each of them claiming to be the only, the original, the undefiled doctrine of the Buddha. The same fate overtook the teaching of the Christ; that too came to be made in the same way into a set and organised religion. It is often said that, if Jesus came back, he would not be able to recognise what he taught in the forms that have been imposed on it, and if Buddha were to come back and see what has been made of his teaching, he would immediately run back discouraged to Nirvana! All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it.” (CWM 3: 76–77)

9.

“We shall take the last text. It is an interesting one [From the Dhammapada].

‘It is neither by moral precepts and observances, nor by a wide knowledge, nor by practising meditation, nor by a solitary life, nor by thinking’, that one attains the true bliss; it is by getting rid of all desires. Certainly it is not easy to get rid of all desires, it sometimes needs a whole lifetime. But to tell the truth, it seems to be a very negative way, although at a certain stage of development, it is a discipline which it is very useful, even indispensable to

practise, if one does not want to deceive oneself. Because at first you begin by getting rid of the major desires, those that are most obvious and trouble you so much that you cannot even have any illusions about them; then come subtler desires that take the form of things that have to be done, that are necessary, even at times of commands from within, and it requires time and much sincerity to discover and overcome them; at last it seems as if you had done away with these wretched desires in the material world, in external things, in the world of feelings, in the emotions and sentiments, in the mental world as regards ideas, and then you find them again in the spiritual world, and there they are far more dangerous, more subtle, more penetrating and much more invisible and covered by such a saintly appearance that one dare not call them desires.” (CWM 3: 267–268)

10.

“To try to solve this problem ascetics used to go away into forests and sit under a tree; there, of course, they had not to fear any contagion from other human beings. But it is very difficult to go to the very end of this resolution, for it quickly gets known that a saint is sitting under a tree in meditation, and immediately everybody rushes there! Not only does he not escape from the difficulty, but he increases it, for there is not a thing more dangerous than to teach others. You know just a little and you begin to

teach others, and you are immediately compelled to say more than you know, because people put questions to you which you cannot answer, unless you are a hero of silence. In the world, those who want to pass themselves off as spiritual teachers—when people come and ask them something they do not know, they invent it. Therefore, if in your inner discipline you begin to pretend, you may be sure of falling into the worst hole—of all things pretence is the most ruinous. In the world you may perhaps pass for what you are not, for people allow themselves to be easily deceived, and that will not lead you to a catastrophe (although if you exaggerate, it always leads to a catastrophe), but in the spiritual world, you don't have to deal with human beings, you have to deal with the Divine; it is impossible for you to pretend that you are this or that, for the Divine knows better than you, doesn't He? He knows what you are and it is not what you will say which will influence Him." (CWM 4: 75–76)

11.

"Mother, I see that mosquitos are biting You in the evening during meditation. Would you allow me to drive them away with a fan?"

No, the movement of the fan would be even more bothersome than the mosquitos." (CWM 17: 169)

12.

"Sri Aurobindo and I think it would be wiser for you to wait another week before coming to pranam. And the meditation twice a day will be possible only when you no longer feel any weakness at all, because at the moment there are many people and the physical atmosphere is rather heavy to breathe.

So we ask you to be patient a little longer, to allow your material strength time to return. Our help and protection are with you for that.

Very affectionately.(CWM 17: 191)

13.

"Mother,

There is one Mahesh Yogi who has become very popular in Europe. He started a Yoga University and now he is starting an international city—evidently he copies you. He has made a graph of meditation. I send it to you. It seems it is transcendental!

Everything and anything can be an instrument for the Supreme Wisdom to prepare the earth in view of the new creation!...

Blessings." (CWM 17: 309)

14.

"Sweet Mother,

I ardently pray to You to pull me out of this condition of bad health and make me progress integrally. You know that my soul's only aspiration is to love You and serve You. Make me physically active in Your service.

You have been and still remain a faithful servitor. Do not worry: if your body is no longer fit for physical work, take advantage of all the time at your disposal to develop your inner consciousness and unite more and more consciously with the Divine.

Reading, meditation, contemplation, self-giving, in silence and concentration, to the Divine who is always present to hear you and guide you." (CWM 17: 349–350)

15.

"X says that he wants to take up this path and has been doing sadhana (meditation etc.). But his wife comes in the way of his sadhana by insisting that he shall not deny her sex-life. He prays for guidance. Should he break with her in the interest of sadhana? Or is there any other way out?"

No advice can be given, except to be sincere and follow the inner guidance.

I see no legitimation of sexual intercourse (from the point of view of sadhana) unless it is in view to have children." (CWM 17: 395)

16.

"No, my dear child, I am sure I didn't tell you that you wanted to hide something from me. When you started crying under the pressure I was putting on you in meditation to calm the restlessness of your mind and vital, I thought that it might relieve you to tell me the cause of your sorrow, and when you didn't reply, I simply asked whether you wanted to speak, so as not to insist unnecessarily. You were mistaken if you thought I was showing displeasure.

Unfortunately, for some time now you have closed up inside yourself, and that is why I cannot help you as much as I would like to.

Affectionately." (CWM 16: 95)

17.

"My sweet beloved Mother, I read in the Conversations: 'Concentration alone will lead you to this goal.' Should one increase the time of meditation?"

Concentration does not mean meditation; on the contrary, concentration is a state one must be in continuously, whatever the outer activity. By concentration I mean that all the energy, all the will, all the aspiration must be turned only towards the Divine and His integral realisation in our consciousness." (CWM 16: 177–178)

18.

"To keep constantly a concentrated and in-gathered attitude is more important than having fixed hours of meditation." (CWM 16: 178)

19.

"It would have been better to have sat in my chair and thought about the moonlight playing upon the water.

Or, better still, not to have thought at all but contemplated the Divine Grace." (CWM 16: 178)

20.

*"A fifteen-year-old girl asked: 'What is Truth?'
I answered: 'The Will of the Supreme Lord.'"*

It is a subject for contemplative meditation." (CWM 16: 438)

21.

"When you give us a subject for meditation, what should we do about it? Keep thinking of it?"

"Keep your thought focussed upon it in a concentrated way." (CWM 14: 53)

22.

"And when no subject is given, is it enough to concentrate on your Presence in the heart-centre? Should we avoid a formulated prayer?"

Yes, concentration on the Presence is enough." (CWM 14: 53)

23.

"It is always better to control an experience of this kind rather than to be controlled by it. I mean that the experience in itself is good and useful, but it must come when we want it to come and not at any time when it chooses to come. It seems to me that it is better to allow this experience to come only when you are quietly at home or during meditation. When you are at work it is always better to remain fully aware of your body and its actions." (CWM 14: 54)

24.

"We sat together in silence for a few minutes, enjoying the company of our soul, and we witnessed the gates of Eternity opening wide before us." (CWM 14: 143)

25.

(Message for 'Meditations on Savitri', an exhibition of paintings by an Ashram artist, drawn in collaboration with the Mother)

“The importance of Savitri is immense.

Its subject is universal. Its revelation is prophetic.

The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted.

Take all the time necessary to see this exhibition. It will be a happy compensation for the feverish haste men put now in all they do.” (CWM 13: 25)

26.

“Of course it is bad to complain against anybody. But what X thinks is not correct. If you always remained in meditation, then and then only could you say that you see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. But when you are in the field of work, you have to give me the information. Don’t sit down to judge. Be like a mirror and give the correct image of what you see. It is possible your mirror may be defective, but that is my business and I shall see to it. You have to do your best, to give a correct image according to your light.” (CWM 13: 183)

27.

“Mother,

A college student who seems to be eager to come out of the ordinary life has been writing to me often. He writes very frankly. He says that he tries to meditate on your photograph, but recently he has begun to feel a strong boy-and-girl-like attraction for you. He wants my advice.

It may be that the photo is an ancient one. He must take one of the latest photographs.

Otherwise he must pull up the sensation and offer it in the heart centre.” (CWM 17: 324)

28.

“X is a poor man who comes here practically every week, meditates near the Samadhi and offers money very regularly. He feels the Mother’s Presence and guidance. But every time he gets a good spiritual experience, something bad happens in the domestic or professional sphere. Yesterday, for instance, he came across a quotation saying that if one goes deep into the heart one can find Mother there; immediately he felt Mother there in a sitting posture. But a little afterwards his youngest child was nearly caught under a bus, and a couple of hours later his eldest son had a big fall from a wall. He is bewildered because such things happen with regularity. He prays for Thy blessings.

Whatever happens is the effect of the Grace and the best that could happen spiritually.

Love and blessings.”(CWM 17: 401)

29.

“The sadhak recounted his conversation with Mr. Z, a local French official. The conversation ends.)

Mr. Z: I have heard that Sri Aurobindo can communicate at a distance. Is it true?

Sadhak: That is nothing. He isn't interested in occult powers; it isn't His aim.

Mr. Z: But even so, can He communicate with someone in Calcutta?

Sadhak: Yes, if the other person is receptive. Suppose I have difficulties in my work. There is no way of communicating with Mother. I can't find the solution. I concentrate on Mother, ask Her to guide me and find the solution. This is not unusual. It has happened several times.

Mr. Z: Does Sri Aurobindo give talks?

Sadhak: No, we meditate with Mother.

Mr. Z: On what do you meditate?

Sadhak: Each one on his own aspiration, and Mother guides us. She gives us experiences and revelations.

Mr. Z: You don't say!

Sadhak: Yes, we are not all under a hallucination!

Mr. Z: Are you sure it isn't a hallucination?

(The Mother underlined most of the remarks above in red pencil.)

It would have been better not to say the things I have marked in red pencil. This falls under the 'powers' that it would be better not to mention. Either the person you are speaking to does not understand at all and takes you for a fool suffering from hallucinations, or else he understands and then *gets frightened*, which is always dangerous.

If someone asks you about Sri Aurobindo's *powers*, it is always better to say: 'I don't know. He doesn't tell us about these things.'

And don't speak about me unless it is *unavoidable*. I am putting a copy of the *Conversations* in the tray for Mr. Z." (CWM 16:35)

30.

"The first question is whether the before and the after are purely physical and vital or in some way, and more predominantly, mental and spiritual. If Matter were the principle of the universe, as the materialist alleges, if the truth of things were to be found in the first formula arrived at by Bhrigu, son of Varuna, when he meditated upon the eternal Brahman, 'Matter is the Eternal, for from Matter all beings are born and by Matter all beings exist and to Matter

all beings depart and return,' then no farther questioning would be possible." (CWSA 22: 772)

31.

"This is He—God universal, but also God transcendent—the Lila-maya Krishna who transcends His lila. Therefore the Upanishads everywhere insist not upon mere Existence, like the later Advaitin, but on the sole Existent; and they speak continually on the Brahman as the creator, Master, enjoyer of the worlds, by meditating on whom we shall attain to perfect liberation. Neither Buddha nor Jada Bharata are the true guides & fulfillers of our destiny; it is Yajñavalkya, it is Janaka, most of all, it is Krishna son of Devaki who takes us most surely & entirely into the presence & into the being of the Eternal." (CWSA 17: 408)

32.

"We see then that Shankara has practically transmuted or replaced Buddha's vague & undefined Nirvana by this actionless & peaceful Atman, the śhānta-kriyā śacchidananda, substituted for Buddha's false world of subjective sensations a false world of erroneous ideas starting from the original self-deception of duality, and accepting Buddha's law of karma as applicable only to this false world and Buddha's means of escape by an ultimate act of knowledge, substituted knowledge of real self for Buddha's knowledge of non-self as the essence of that act

& the true culmination of inner experience & meditative reason. Shankara like Buddha refuses to explain or discuss how active consciousness came at all to exist on the surface of a sole Self-existence which is in its very being shanta and inactive; he drives, like Buddha, straight at the actual fact of our bondage, the practical cause of bondage and the most direct path of escape from the bondage.” (CWSA 17: 498–499)

33.

“Wordsworth, meditative, inward, concentrated in his thought, is more often able by force of brooding to bring out the voice of his greater self, but flags constantly, brings in a heavier music surrounding his few great clear tones, drowns his genius at last in a desolate sea of platitude. Neither arrives at that amplitude of achievement which might have been theirs in a more fortunate time, if ready forms had been given to them, or if they had lived in the stimulating atmosphere of a contemporary culture harmonious with their personality.” (CWSA 26: 131)

34.

About Victorian Poets

“There is a void of the true sincerity of poetic vision at the heart of the original conception and no amount of craft and skill in language or descriptive detail and picture can cure that original deficiency. The poet has no meditative, no

emotional or impassioned, no close or revealing grasp on life, and on the other hand no deep interpretative idea, and without one or other of these things narrative poetry of the modern kind cannot succeed; it becomes a body without soul or life-breath. Even when Tennyson confines himself to the poetic modern tale without these disguises or any motive but the ethically pointed telling, he arrives at the same result, a richly coloured triviality.” (CWSA 26: 153)

35.

“Arnold is a third considerable Victorian poet of the epoch, ... There is a return to the true classic style of poetry in the simplicity and straightforward directness of his diction and turn of thought that brings us back to the way of the earlier poets and gives a certain seriousness and power which we do not find in the over-consciousness and the too studied simplicity or elaborate carefulness and purposeful artistry of the other poets of the time. This imparts a note of depth and sincerity to his passion and his pathos, a character of high seriousness to his reflection and meditative thought, a greatness and strength to his moments of height and elevated force which raise him above the ordinary levels around him and create an impression of the truest poetry, the most genuine in poetic value, if not in effect the greatest of this Victorian age. His simplicity is a true thing and not the overstudied false simplicity of Tennyson; ...” (CWSA 26: 158)

36.

"We may get some idea of the limitations of the form by one or two examples from the poetry of Carpenter I find quoted by Mr. Cousins in his essay. Carpenter with a poetic faculty of a high order, a prophet of democracy and of the Self, like Whitman, but of a higher more spiritual truth of the Self, has like him found it impossible to restrain the largeness of his vision and personality in the bonds of metrical poetry. In both we see that the prophet and thinker predominate over the poet and artist. Less rough and great than the epic voice from the other side of the ocean, his poetry has a more harmonious, limpid and meditative fullness. But the lesser abundance of force and drive makes us feel more the limitations of his form. The thought is not only great, but poetically great and satisfying, the expression as form of thought is noble and admirable, but we miss the subtler rhythmic uplift of the poetic enthusiasm which is given to minds of much less power by the inspiring cadence and the ordered measures of the poetic spirit, *chandas*." (CWSA 26: 168–169)

37.

"Beyond all analysis or set provision of means that is the constant attempt to which poetry must move, if this new realm is to open to its footsteps, not to suit the metre to the intellectual or even the emotional sense or to cast it in the moulds of life, but to seize some sound, some

intonation of the voice of the soul, the lyric or the epic *chandas* or the large or simple measures of its meditation and creation, which, as the old Vedic theory would say, initiate, roll out and support all the steps of the universe. This intoned music in which the outer form becomes an external subtle means and suggestion, but the building power is other and brings in a spiritual accompaniment which is the real thing we have to listen to, opens at least one line on which we can arrive at that greater hearing whose wave can bring with it the inspiring word of a higher vision. For the musical tone of the older poetry is the simply sensuous, the emotional, the thought or the life tone with the spiritual cadence as the result of some strong intensity of these things, but here is some beginning of a direct spiritual intonation." (CWSA 26: 182)

38.

"The lyrical impulse is the original and spontaneous creator of the poetic form, song the first discovery of the possibility of a higher because a rhythmic intensity of self-expression. It wells out from the intensity of touch and the spiritualised emotion of a more delicate or a deeper and more penetrating sight and feeling in the experience, captures and sustains the inevitable cadences of its joy or its attraction, sets the subtle measure of its feeling and keeps it by the magic of its steps in sound vibrating on the inner strings and psychic fibres. The lyric is a moment of

heightened soul experience, sometimes brief in a lightness of aerial rapture, in a poignant ecstasy of pain, of joy or of mingled emotion or in a swift graver exaltation, sometimes prolonged and repeating or varying the same note, sometimes linking itself in a sustained succession to other moments that start from it or are suggested by its central motive. It is at first a music of simple melodies coming out of itself to which the spirit listens with pleasure and makes eternal by it the charm of self-discovery or of reminiscence. And the lyrical spirit may rest satisfied with these clear spontaneities of song or else it may prefer to weight its steps with thought and turn to a meditative movement or, great-winged, assume an epic elevation, or lyricise the successive moments of an action, or utter the responses of heart to heart, mind to mind, soul to soul, move between suggestions and counter-suggestions of mood and idea and feeling and devise a lyrical seed or concentration of drama." (CWSA 26: 277)

39.

"I have known individuals whose mind was much more developed than the rest of the being, they had understood very well (almost too well); they sat down to meditate and all their energy was gone, all vitality evaporated into a kind of peace, not unpleasant, but very still. There is no more need to do anything, no longer any need to move, one dreams.... Under a tree, arms crossed, one leaves the

Divine to do everything for oneself, even feeding you if you need it. This is perhaps very well, but this shows that the instrument is not ready; it is not really at the service of the Divine, it is at the service of the ego, and when the ego is taken away, it does nothing any longer. Therefore, so long as one lives in the ego this illusion is necessary to make you act; it is necessary to keep up action until one is completely transformed or, in any case, till the true consciousness is established." (CWM 4; 280–281)

40.

"Sri Aurobindo cannot undertake to guide you as your Guru, for the reason that he takes as disciples only those who follow his special path of Yoga; your experiences follow a different line. In his Yoga there may be an occasional current in the spine as in other nerve channels or different parts of the body, but no awakening of the Kundalini in this particular and powerful fashion. There is only a quiet uprising of the consciousness from the lower centres to join the spiritual consciousness above and a descent of the Divine Force from above which does its own working the mind and body—the manner and stages varying in each sadhak. A perfect confidence in the Divine Mother and a vigilance to repel all wrong suggestions and influences is the main law of this Yoga. Your opening having once been so powerful on the more usual Tantric lines (even without your own will intervening), it is hardly

probable that it could now change easily to other lines—any such effort might create a serious disturbance. In speaking of a competent Guru Sri Aurobindo meant one who had himself practised this opening of the centres and become siddha in that line of Yoga. It should not be impossible to find one—when one has the call for the Guru, the Guru sooner or later comes. Meanwhile to put away fear and have confidence in the Divine working is indispensable—but no effort should be made to force the pace by concentrated meditation unless you have a guide whom you can trust—a clear guidance from within or a guide from without. The inspiration about the Ida nadi and the subsequent waking of the Shakti show that there was an intervention at a critical moment and that the call to it whenever needed is likely to be effective.

In the experiences proper related in your first letter there is absolutely nothing that should have disturbed you—all was quite normal, the usual experiences of the Yogin at such a juncture and very good and powerful, such as do not come except by the grace of the Divine. Probably the opening came after slow invisible preparation as a result of the meditation on the lotus at the top of the head; for that is always an invitation to the Kundalini to awake or for the lower consciousness to rise and meet the higher. The disturbing factor came with the feeling of discomfort in the heart due to some resistance in the physical being which is very often felt and can be overcome by the

working of the Force itself and the fear that came afterwards in the seats of the vital Nature, heart, navel etc. But that was no part of the experience, it was an interference by a wrong reaction from the lower or exterior consciousness. If you had not allowed yourself to be disturbed, probably nothing untoward would have disturbed the process. One must not get frightened by unusual states or movements or experiences, the Yogi must be fearless, *abhiñ*; it is absurd to have a fear because one can control one's states; that is a power very much to be desired and welcomed in Yoga." (CWSA 29: 462–463)

41.

“When I was asleep in the Ignorance, I came to a place of meditation full of holy men and I found their company wearisome and the place a prison; when I awoke, God took me to a prison and turned it into a place of meditation and His trysting-ground.’ Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 428)

Is Sri Aurobindo speaking here of his own experience in prison during his political life?

Yes. Sri Aurobindo is referring here to his experience in Alipore jail.

But what is interesting in this aphorism is the contrast he points out between the material prison where only his

body was confined, while his spirit, unfettered by social conventions and prejudice, free from all preconceived ideas and all doctrinaire limitations, had a direct and conscious contact with the Divine and a first revelation of the integral Yoga; and, on the other hand, the mental prison of narrow rules which excludes life and within which people often confine themselves when they renounce ordinary existence in order to devote themselves to a spiritual life based on traditional dogmatic ideas.

So Sri Aurobindo is here, as always, the champion of the real freedom beyond all rules and limitations, the total freedom of perfect union with the supreme and eternal Truth.” (CWM 10: 68–69)

42.

“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 practice 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)

43.

"Sweet Mother, is it possible for the mother and father to give birth to... to ask for the soul they want?"

To ask? For that they must have an occult knowledge which they don't usually have. But anyway, what is possible is that instead of doing the thing like an animal driven by instinct or desire and most of the time, without even wanting it, they do it at will, with an aspiration, putting themselves in a state of aspiration and almost of prayer, so that the being they are going to form may be one fit to embody a soul which they *can* call down to incarnate in that form. I knew people—not many, this does not often happen, but still I knew some who chose special circumstances, prepared themselves through special concentration and meditation and aspiration and sought to bring down, into the body they were going to form, an exceptional being." (CWM 8: 200)

44.

"How can one awaken his Yoga-shakti?"

It depends on this: when one thinks that it is the most important thing in his life. That's all.

Some people sit in meditation, concentrate on the base of the vertebral column and want it very much to awake, but that's not enough. It is when truly it becomes the most important thing in one's life, when all the rest seems to have lost all taste, all interest, all importance, when one feels within that one is born for this, that one is here upon earth for this, and that it is the only thing that truly counts, then that's enough.

One can concentrate on the different centres; but sometimes one concentrates for so long, with so much effort, and has no result. And then one day something shakes you, you feel that you are going to lose your footing, you have to cling on to something; then you cling within yourself to the idea of union with the Divine, the idea of the divine Presence, the idea of the transformation of the consciousness, and you aspire, you want, you try to organise your feelings, movements, impulses around this. And it comes." (CWM 7: 208)

45.

"If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of

what realisation is. For, first, we see that he had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his meditation, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem 'A slumber did my spirit seal,' where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, 'rolled round in its diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees.' Exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature and we have the elements of the Yogic knowledge. But all this experience is only the vestibule to that suprasensuous, supramental realisation of the Transcendent who is beyond all His aspects, and the final summit of knowledge can only be attained by entering into the superconscient and there merging all other experience into a supernal unity with the Ineffable. That is the culmination of all divine knowing; that also is the source of all divine delight and divine living." (CWSA 23: 306)

46.

"We have the idea of concentrating our activities and joining ourselves more closely to the Pondicherry Ashram by starting a lodge someplace in Gujarat where we can meet at least once a month."

No 'Lodge' or formal society; these methods are not suitable for this sadhana. If they like to meet or meditate together of their own accord and without starting any fixed association or propaganda, that is another matter." (CWSA 35: 814)

47.

"I may say however that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it was so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money from X or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile X's seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principle on which it is built and use to which it is turned. I have

done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoraṁ karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes farther and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine.” (CWSA 29: 248–249) (CWSA 35: 769–770)

48.

“Is it possible to receive the Mother’s influence at a distance, for instance at the time of Pranam? Sometimes when I did not come for the morning meditation I felt the atmosphere of the meditation hall wherever I was.

It is possible to receive, but not in the same way. There is an element, a touch on the physical consciousness that is wanting.” (CWSA 32: 554)

49.

“The Mother’s prohibition is only against sadhaks being there and prostrating when visitors are in the Reception

Room. This room was originally meant for the reception of people from outside and the photo was put there to be shown to visitors who could not see me. The permission was at first given to one sadhak or another to sit and meditate there and afterwards it has become a common practice to go and make pranam, but it was understood that the sadhaks should not be there when there were visits. This rule has not been observed and people have used it as a place of public worship. It was this that was disapproved of by the Mother.

There is no restriction in this Yoga to inward worship and meditation only. As it is a Yoga for the whole being, not for the inner being only, no such restriction could be intended. Old forms of the different religions may fall away, but absence of all forms is not a rule of the sadhana.” (CWSA 35: 703–704)

50.

“When she saw you from the window on the terrace on your last visit, she herself said to A.G., This is a man I can change. *But he is not yet ready*”. But it was your mind that interfered when you thought it was necessary to sit in meditation with her in order to receive what she has to give. There is no such condition for her spiritual or psychic action and influence.

It is true that she was not mixing with the sadhaks at that time, partly because they themselves were not

ready to take the right relation and receive her influence, partly because the difficulties of the physical plane made it necessary for her to retire from all direct contact with anyone, as distinct from an indirect contact through A.G. Always however she was acting with him on the psychic and vital levels to do whatever might be possible at the time. All that is needed to receive a direct touch from her is to take the right relation to her, to be open and to enter her atmosphere. The most ordinary meeting or talk with her on the physical plane is quite enough for the purpose. Only the sadhaka must be ready; otherwise he may not receive the impulse or may not be able to fulfil it or bear its pressure.

Also it will be a mistake if you make too rigid a separation between A.G and Mira. Both influences are necessary for the complete development of the sadhana. The work of the two together can alone bring down the supramental Truth into the physical plane.” (CWSA 36: 328–329)

51.

“He should now without interrupting his higher psychic development give more attention to a self-controlled meditation and mental enlargement. In one letter he speaks of interrupting the reading of ‘Arya’ from the fear of growing too intellectual. This was an erroneous suggestion of his own mind. Let him by all means read and

study these things. Of course in this kind of mental enlargement and self-controlled meditation there are dangers and likelihood of mistakes as in all the rest of Yoga. But I think it is what he needs at the present stage. The progress would be slow but it is likely to be more safe, and he can resume the full psychic development when the necessary conditions can be provided. He should also turn his will towards mental and vital purification. (CWSA 36: 339)

52.

"There is no reason why your present condition should be more than a passing phase, unless you yourself choose that it should be otherwise. If it is the imposition' of the rule of Karmayoga on you that is the cause of your doubts, it is unjustified, because there is no imposition or compulsion, and you need only work if you wish to do so; if you think that by sitting in meditation only you will best progress, you are free to do it." (CWSA 28: 343)

53.

"Your unwillingness to come to the Pranam because that would interrupt some subjective experience is altogether out of place. No experience in formal meditation, not a hundred experiences together can be worth the touch of the Mother in the Pranam. If you had the psychic being in front in the physical or even in the heart and the vital, you

would feel that at once. Moreover, these experiences are not supramental as you seem to imagine.” (CWSA 32: 249)

54.

“Yesterday I went with X and Y for an outing. We bought plantains from the market and ate them. After our return I began to feel out of sorts and by the time of meditation the body appeared to be weak and a little feverish. Was my going out and eating plantains inadvisable?”

It is better to let the Mother know when you go far out like that so that it may be with her protection that you go. The eating of plantains from the bazaar was indeed a mistake—Mother has several times warned against it and X knows that. The body often becomes sensitive at a certain stage of the Yoga, but there should at the same time be the development of a higher Force which will protect and push back all attacks upon it.” (CWSA 32: 306)

55.

“An inner (soul) relation means that one feels the Mother’s presence, is turned to her at all times, is aware of her force moving, guiding, helping, is full of love for her and always feels a great nearness whether one is physically near her or not—this relation takes up the mind, vital and inner physical till one feels one’s mind close to the Mother’s mind, one’s vital in harmony with hers, one’s very physical

consciousness full of her. These are all the elements of the inner union, not only in the spirit and self but in the nature.

I do not recollect what I had written, but this is the inner close relation as opposed to an outer relation which consists only in how one meets her on the external physical plane. It is quite possible—and actual—to have this inner close relation even if physically one sees her only at pranam and meditation and once a year perhaps on the birthday.” (CWSA 32: 454)

56.

“The Mother did not say Yes [*to giving a personal interview*]. Nothing could be worse for you than your making your condition depend on your physically seeing the Mother whenever you wanted it. It would create altogether a wrong relation. It must depend on an inner nearness to the Mother, on your always being able to receive her force so as to throw away both desire and illness. That is the true basis of the union with the Mother. Otherwise, all the help you can receive you get at Pranam and the evening meditation. For the rest, for the Mother calling you for a personal interview, you must leave that to her. Her time is already filled up and she is overburdened with work day and night,—if she has to make farther time for everybody who wants to see her whenever they want it, things would become quite impossible.” (CWSA 32: 523)

57.

"It seems as if at the time of meditation, the atmosphere of the Meditation Hall extends to all the Asram houses.

It is natural that it should be so as the Mother when she concentrates on the inner work is accustomed spontaneously to spread her consciousness over the whole Asram. So to anyone who is sensitive, it must be felt anywhere in the Asram, though perhaps more strongly in the nearer houses on an occasion like the evening meditation." (CWSA 32: 528)

58.

"Today during the meditation with the Mother, I felt that I could receive her help easily and naturally, without the least effort or strain. Does this mean that something in the being naturally becomes quiet by her physical presence?"

It is not by the physical presence but by the Mother's concentration at the time of Meditation which brings the quiet to those who can receive it." (CWSA 32: 529)

59.

"People here became very enthusiastic about that book by Evans-Wentz. But I think their reading of it may be a bit uncritical. They found many things in it that are similar to

our yoga, but they may be missing whatever defects or misrepresentations the book may contain.

Somebody sent me some extracts about ways of meditation which were good. There are elements in most Yogas which enter into this one, so it is not surprising if there is something in Buddhism also. But such notions as a Higher Evolution beyond Nirvana seem to me not genuinely Buddhistic, unless of course there is some offshoot of Buddhism which developed something so interpreted by the author. I never heard of it as part of Buddha's teachings—he always spoke of Nirvana as the goal and refused to discuss metaphysically what it might be." (CWSA 35: 317–318)

60.

Thinking with ideas

"Sweet Mother,

You have asked the teachers 'to think with ideas instead of with words'. You have also said that later on you will ask them to think with experiences. Will you throw some light on these three ways of thinking?

Our house has a very high tower; at the very top of this tower there is a bright and bare room, the last before we emerge into the open air, into the full light.

Sometimes, when we are free to do so, we climb up to this bright room, and there, if we remain very quiet, one

or more visitors come to call on us; some are tall, others small, some single, others in groups; all are bright and graceful.

Usually, in our joy at their arrival and our haste to welcome them, we lose our tranquillity and come galloping down to rush into the great hall that forms the base of the tower and is the storeroom of words. Here, more or less excited, we select, reject, assemble, combine, disarrange, rearrange all the words in our reach, in an attempt to portray this or that visitor who has come to us. But most often, the picture we succeed in making of our visitor is more like a caricature than a portrait.

And yet if we were wiser, we would remain up above, at the summit of the tower, quite calm, in joyful contemplation. Then, after a certain length of time, we would see the visitors themselves slowly, gracefully, calmly descend, without losing anything of their elegance or beauty and, as they cross the storeroom of words, clothe themselves effortlessly, automatically, with the words needed to make themselves perceptible even in the material house.

This is what I call thinking with ideas.

When this process is no longer mysterious to you, I shall explain what is meant by thinking with experiences.”
(CWM 16: 242–243) (CWM 12: 185–186)

61.

PLAY The Ascent to Truth

ASCETIC

"I have something important to communicate to you. Will you kindly listen to me, both of you? In the course of our ascent I have discovered my true being, my true Self. I have become one with the Eternal and nothing else exists for me, nothing else is necessary. All that is not That is illusory, worthless. So I consider that I have reached the end of the path. (*He gestures towards the plateau on the left.*) And here is a sublime and solitary spot, a place that is truly favourable to the life I shall lead from now on. I shall live here in perfect contemplation, far from earth and men, free at last from the need to live." (CWM 12: 508–509)

62.

"Ignorance is dispelled by a growing consciousness; what you need is consciousness and always more consciousness, a consciousness pure, simple and luminous. In the light of this perfected consciousness, things appear as they are and not as they want to appear. It is like a screen faithfully recording all things as they pass. You see there what is luminous and what is dark, what is straight and what is crooked. Your consciousness becomes a screen or mirror; but this is when you are in a state of contemplation, a mere

observer; when you are active, it is like a searchlight. You have only to turn it on, if you want to see luminously and examine penetratingly anything in any place.

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)

63.

“They are like so many outer frames or forms of manifestation offered for the approval and the choice of That which wants to manifest—but at the side of the daring constructor stands the loving and docile child who, in an ardent aspiration towards the Supreme Principle of Truth, softly murmurs: ‘Lord, I am ignorant of Thy Will in its entirety, I construct events which are commensurate with my paltry individual limitations and which probably fit very badly into the immensity of Thy plan. But Thou knowest that they are nothing but fleeting constructions which are dissolved as soon as they are created and which in no way mar the purity of the mental mirror ready to reflect at each moment the appropriate transcription of what Thou willest

the integral instrument to execute.’ And then the whole being, in a vast and luminous and objectless ecstasy, ceases to be ‘a being’ and becomes the Boundless. And in the silence of contemplation the mentality knows that all these diverse constructions which present themselves to it are part of a whole which will be given to it to manifest progressively, perhaps through the medium of several bodily instruments. And the simultaneous vision of That which is and that which is becoming takes hold of this consciousness and does not leave it for many hours, hours ever more frequent and lasting.” (CWM 2: 141–142)

64.

“You forget that men differ in nature and therefore each will approach the sadhana in his own way—one through work, one through bhakti, one through meditation and knowledge—and those who are capable of it through all together. You are perfectly justified in following your own way, whatever may be the theories of others—but let them follow theirs. In the end all can converge together towards the same goal.” (CWSA 29: 208)

65.

“A year’s seclusion and meditation in the Alipore jail no doubt worked a great transformation in Sri Aurobindo. . . . Once again—now as ever—‘service’ was Sri Aurobindo’s urge to action.

The idea was 'work' for the country, for the world, finally for the Divine, nishkama karma, rather than an ideal of service." (CWSA 36: 85)

66.

"Well, it happens—and this is very interesting—that there is a region like that, a region which... how to put it?... which is the negation of all that exists. Behind all the planes of being, even behind the physical, there is a Nirvana. We use the word Nirvana because it is easier, but we can say, 'There is an impersonal Divine behind the physical, behind the mind, behind the vital, behind all the regions of being; behind, beyond.' (We are obliged to express ourselves in some sort of way.) It is not necessarily more subtle, it's something else, something absolutely different; that is, in a meditation, for example, if you meditate on Nirvana you can remain in a region of your mind and by a certain concentration produce a kind of reversal of your consciousness and find yourself suddenly in something which is Nirvana, nonexistence; and yet in the ascent of your consciousness you have not gone beyond the mind.

One can have a little understanding of these things if one knows the multiplicity of dimensions, if one has understood this principle. First of all you are taught the fourth dimension. If you have understood that principle, of the dimensions, you can understand this. For example, as I said, you don't need to exteriorize yourself to go from

one plane to another, when going to the most subtle planes to pass from the last most subtle plane to what we call Nirvana—to express it somehow. It is not necessary. You can, through a kind of interiorisation and by passing into another dimension or other dimensions... you can find in any domain whatever of your being this non-existence.” (CWM 7: 244–245)

67.

“The present arrangement about the morning Meditation is for so long as the Mother has need of rest. It is not intended as a permanent arrangement. Only, if the sadhaks really want the Pranam to continue as before, they should make a better use of it. Many spend the time looking at what the Mother is doing, whom she smiles on, whom she pats or how she blesses people and gossip about it afterwards—most take it as a routine. All that is a wrong spirit and it puts a great strain on the Mother who has to fight all the time against the wrong forces this wrong attitude brings into the atmosphere.” (CWSA 32: 561–562)

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