

GIFTS OF GRACE
Five Aids for Inner Growth

Gleanings from the Works of
SRI AUROBINDO
and
THE MOTHER

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PREFACE

As commonly understood, Grace signifies what comes to one as a result of God's mercy or favour. In the deeper and wider sense in which the term is used in this book, Grace stands for the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-beneficent evolutionary Force which impels and guides human beings towards self-realisation. It is this Force, as the Mother once put it, that "does everything, is behind everything, organises everything, conducts everything, so that the march forward to the divine realisation may be as swift, as complete, as total and harmonious as possible, considering the circumstances of the world."¹ This compilation deals with five veritable gifts of Grace — that is, five of the most helpful agents of the evolutionary Force of Grace. These five potent aids for inner growth are: aspiration for progress, will for progress, faith and trust, difficulties and suffering, and the psychic being.

The reader may be surprised to see "difficulties and suffering" presented as a gift of Grace and an aid for inner growth. Our normal self, governed by the mental and vital (desire) nature, is apt to look upon difficulties and suffering as obstacles on the way. But according to the deeper view highlighted in this book, difficulties are opportunities for progress, and suffering is a door that leads to the discovery of our true self. As the Mother says:

Shocks and trials always come as a divine grace to show us the points in our being where we fall short and the movements in which we turn our back on our soul by listening to the clamour of our mental being and vital being.

If we know how to accept these spiritual blows with due humility, we are sure to cover a great distance at a single bound.²

The paramount importance of the psychic being as an aid for in-

1. The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1956*, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 8, p. 251.

2. The Mother, *Words of the Mother*, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 14, p. 235.

ner growth lies in the fact that the first three aids dealt with in this book — aspiration for progress, will for progress, and faith and trust — arise from the psychic being. And the fourth aid — difficulties and suffering — can be correctly understood and dealt with *only* by the psychic being. For, the psychic being is the seat and source of aspiration, will, and faith; and it is the divine element in the psychic being which enables one to turn difficulties and suffering into a blessing and a force for inner growth.

Many years ago, a senior sadhak of the Ashram asked the present writer the difference between the soul and the psychic being. It was somewhat surprising to be asked such a basic question by someone who was presumably well-read in the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, had lived in the Ashram for many years, and even had a voluminous correspondence with Sri Aurobindo. Such an instance brings home the need for study in order to clarify one's understanding. The Mother *once* gave this advice about an excellent method for studying Sri Aurobindo. She has written:

*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.*³

The Mother's advice about the way to study Sri Aurobindo applies perhaps even more to her own works, for they consist mostly of informal talks dealing with a wide variety of subjects rather than of systematic writings on specific subjects. This compilation is based on this method of study by subject.

Not everyone is called upon or motivated to undertake this kind of systematic study of subjects advised by the Mother. It is only for those who wish to have a better understanding of a given subject, either to meet an intellectual need or for a more effective practice of the teachings.

3. The Mother, *On Education*, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 12, p. 208.

The fifth aid dealt with in this compilation, the psychic being, was once described by the Mother as a "special help" to mankind "to lead it faster".⁴ The subject of the psychic being has been dealt with exclusively in two previous compilations by the present editor.⁵ Therefore, with some exceptions, texts contained in the two previous compilations have not been repeated here.

Concepts such as the soul and the psychic being — which refer to things which are not part of our ordinary consciousness and experience — call for some explanation for all of us. But many also find it difficult to understand even terms pertaining to *inner* states and movements — such as aspiration, will, and faith — which are part of their own consciousness. By way of illustration, a doctor friend had read Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, but had difficulty understanding the meaning of aspiration. (The first chapter in *The Life Divine* is titled "The Human Aspiration"!.) This friend was a college student when *The Life Divine* was first published, and he borrowed money in order to buy a copy of the book. Obviously, he experienced quite a strong aspiration for spiritual knowledge, and so experientially he knew what aspiration is, but intellectually he had difficulty understanding what aspiration means. Psychological or experiential states and movements such as aspiration, will and faith can be best understood by distinguishing them from other similar experiential states and movements with which one is already familiar. By distinguishing aspiration from desire, will from wish and desire, aspiration from will, faith from belief, etc., one can be led, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "from the known to the unknown".⁶ This cardinal principle of learning has served as a guide in selecting some of the passages on aspiration, will, faith and trust contained in this book.

The great majority of passages selected here are those which are likely to appeal to all seekers of inner growth, irrespective of

4. The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 9, p. 430.

5. *The Psychic Being and Emergence of the Psychic*, both published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 18, p. 617.

the path they may be following, though some passages will be meaningful primarily to practitioners of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

It should be borne in mind that reading a compilation is not the same as reading the original works. Passages compiled from diverse sources so as to throw light on different aspects of a particular subject can serve to give a better understanding of the subject, but excerpts from longer texts are apt to lose to some extent the consciousness that pervades the fuller texts from which they are drawn. This applies particularly to the thematic major works of Sri Aurobindo. It applies to some extent also to the diverse works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's letters on yoga from which the great majority of the passages in this compilation have been drawn. Therefore, ideally, a compilation such as this should be used as a supplement to the original works. One who has not read the original works would do well to look up and delve into them. To encourage this, references for all the quoted passages have been given at the end of the book. One who is familiar with the original works quoted in the compilation can use the compilation for a more focused study of a particular subject in order to gain a possibly clearer and fuller understanding of the subject.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this introduction is twofold. First, it is to highlight some of the salient ideas contained in each of the five sections of the book, thus providing a partial overview of the book. Secondly, it is to explain and clarify some of the concepts and ideas which might present some difficulty to the understanding. Interspersed throughout the introduction the reader will find some words within quotation marks followed by a number in parentheses. These words are quoted from passages in the book, the number in parentheses indicating the serial number of the passage from which the words have been quoted.

1. Aspiration for Progress

Progress — Law of Life

From a spiritual viewpoint, there are very few highly significant differences between an animal and a human being. One of the most important differences is that whereas the animal is satisfied to be what it is, the human being is "unlike the animal, aware of imperfection and limitation and feels that there is something to be attained beyond what he now is...." This "urge towards self-exceeding"¹ is at the basis of all aspiration for progress. Because of man's innate urge towards self-exceeding, progress is the "law of his life" (1). "The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die" (2).

Source of Aspiration

The seat and source of all aspiration, whether it is for outer or inner progress, is the psychic being, our innermost and true self. It is that part of our being which evolves from life to life. Earthly existence is meant for the progress of the psychic being towards its own self-discovery. Every experience helps the psychic being to

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCI, Vol. 19, p. 843.

2. *Ibid.*

saying, "Ah! In spite of all my effort it is beginning all over again", one begins to laugh and says, "Well, well! One hasn't yet seen the end of it. Look now, aren't you ridiculous, you know quite well that you are being ridiculous! Is it worthwhile getting angry?" One gives it this lesson cheerfully. And really, after a while it doesn't get angry again, it is quiet — and one relaxes one's attention. One thinks the difficulty has been overcome, one thinks a result has at last been reached: "My vital does not trouble me any longer, it does not get angry now, everything is going fine." And the next day, one loses one's temper. It is then one must be careful, it is then one must not say, "Here we are, it's no use, I shall never achieve anything, all my efforts are futile; all this is an illusion, it is impossible." On the contrary, one must say, "I wasn't vigilant enough." One must wait long, very long, before one can say, "Ah! It is done and finished." Sometimes one must wait for years, many years. . . .

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

begins again. And one laments, "I believed that it was over! I had succeeded and told myself, 'It is true that spiritual power has an action upon the body, it is true that something can be done', and there! it is not true. And yet it was a small thing, and I who want to conquer immortality! How will I succeed? . . . For years I have been free from this small thing and here it is beginning anew!" It is then that you must be careful.

You must arm yourself with an endless patience and endurance. You do a thing once, ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times if necessary, but you do it till it gets done. And not done only here and there, but everywhere and everywhere at the same time. This is the great problem one sets oneself. That is why, to those who come to tell me very light-heartedly, "I want to do yoga", I reply, "Think it over, one may do the yoga for a number of years without noticing the least result. But if you want to do it, you must persist and persist with such a will that you should be ready to do it for ten lifetimes, a hundred lifetimes if necessary, in order to succeed." I do not say it will be like that, but the *attitude* must be like that. Nothing must discourage you; for there are all the difficulties of ignorance of the different states of being, to which are added the endless malice and the unbounded cunning of the hostile forces in the world. . . . They are there, do you know why? They have been tolerated, do you know why? — simply to see how long one can last out and how great is the sincerity in one's action. For everything depends upon your sincerity. If you are truly sincere in your will, nothing will stop you, you will go right to the end, and if it is necessary for you to live a thousand years to do it, you will live a thousand years to do it.²⁸

— THE MOTHER

Mastery over the Mind

. . . the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body — for the yoga, and not for the yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master, — the mental

Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa, sāksī, anumantā, īśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis-ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least on a certain part of its movements; it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulses and desires; but to sit like the Tantric yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts, is less facile. Nevertheless, it can be done; all developed mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the Master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *sāmrājya*.

The yogi goes still farther; he is not only a master there, but even while in mind in a way, he gets out of it as it were, and stands above or quite back from it and free.⁸⁹ — SRI AUROBINDO

Tapasya of Work

In work too there is an austerity. It consists in not having any preferences and in doing everything one does with interest. For one who wants to grow in self-perfection, there are no great or small tasks, none that are important or unimportant; all are equally useful for one who aspires for progress and self-mastery. It is said that one only does well what one is interested in doing. This is true, but it is truer still that one can learn to find interest in everything one does, even in what appear to be the most insignificant chores. The

secret of this attainment lies in the urge towards self-perfection. Whatever occupation or task falls to your lot, you must do it with a will to progress; whatever one does, one must not only do it as best one can but strive to do it better and better in a constant effort for perfection. In this way everything without exception becomes interesting, from the most material chore to the most artistic and intellectual work. The scope for progress is infinite and can be applied to the smallest thing.⁹⁰ — THE MOTHER

Ego Is Only a Tool, Not the Real Worker

Always indeed, it is the higher Power that acts. Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force. It persists in applying to experience on a supernormal plane the ordinary terms of mentality which it applies to its normal experiences in the world. In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal will, wisdom, force, virtue the selective, formative, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and body. Enlightenment brings to us the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our supreme and integral Self, one with the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. Our limitations and distortions are our contribution to the working; the true power in it is the Divine's. When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation.⁹¹

— SRI AUROBINDO

Ego's Need to Claim Merit of Work

Mother, I don't understand "Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force."

... It can be put in very familiar terms.

The individual being, and particularly the mind in it, have an instinctive repulsion to admitting that it's another force than their own small personal one which does things. There is a kind of instinct which makes you feel absolutely convinced that the effort of aspiration, the will to progress are things belonging to you by your own right and, therefore, that you have all the merit.

From the man of art or of literature or of science, who produces something, studies something, and is absolutely convinced that it is he himself who is doing it, to the aspirant yogi who is convinced that it is the ardour of his own aspiration, his personal need for realisation which push him — if someone tells these people (I have had this experience), if someone tells them a little too soon, "Why, no, it is the Divine who aspires in you, it is the divine Force which produces in you . . .", they no longer do anything, they fall flat, it doesn't interest them at all any longer; they say, "Good, I have nothing to do then, let the Divine do it."

And this is what Sri Aurobindo means — that the mind is something so egoistic and so proud that if you take away from it the satisfaction it seeks, it no longer collaborates; nor the vital either. And as the physical is very obedient to the vital and the mind, it too collaborates no longer. Then one is before an inert mass which says, "Good, if it isn't I, well, let the Divine do what He likes, I am not going to do anything at all any more."

I knew people who had truly made a lot of progress, who were very close to the moment when one emerges into the truth of things, and who were held back simply by this. Because this need to be the source of the action, to have the merit of the effort, this need is so deeply rooted that they cannot take the last step. Sometimes it takes years. If they are told, "No, it isn't you, this energy

which is in you, this will which is in you, this knowledge which is in you, all this is the Divine; it is not what you call yourself"; this makes them so miserable that they can't do anything any more. That's what Sri Aurobindo wants to say in this sentence.⁹³

— THE MOTHER

Cutting the Knot of the Ego

How to cut it? Take a sword and strike it (*laughter*), when one becomes conscious of it. For usually one is not; we think it quite normal, what happens to us; and in fact it is very normal but we think it quite good also. So to begin with one must have a great clear-sightedness to become aware that one is enclosed in all these knots which hold one in bondage. And then, when one is aware that there's something altogether tightly closed in there — so tightly that one has tried in vain to move it — then one imagines one's will to be a very sharp sword-blade, and with all one's force one strikes a blow on this knot (imaginary, of course, one doesn't take up a sword in fact), and this produces a result. Of course you can do this work from the psychological point of view, discovering all the elements constituting this knot, the whole set of resistances, habits, preferences, of all that holds you narrowly closed in. So when you grow aware of this, you can concentrate and call the divine Force and the Grace and strike a good blow on this formation, these things so closely held, like that, that nothing can separate them. And at that moment you must resolve that you will no longer listen to these things, that you will listen only to the divine Consciousness and will do no other work except the divine work without worrying about personal results, free from all attachment, free from all preference, free from all wish for success, power, satisfaction, vanity, all this. . . . All this must disappear and you must see only the divine Will incarnated in your will and making you act. Then, in this way, you are cured.⁹³

— THE MOTHER

Having Personal Motives Indicates Need of Having an Ego

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

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

For example, it is not for a personal reason that you must want perfection, it is not for a personal reason that you must want union with the Divine, it is not for a personal reason that you must want the supramental transformation. If it is for your own good and for a personal reason, well, follow your path; I tell you, you will get there — after a certain number of lives. You see, there is a state in which one can't even understand how one can exist without a personal reason. So long as it is like that . . . If perchance I were suddenly to take away from you your personal consciousness and reason, you would exist no longer. So you must wait quietly till you can realise within yourself that this is not the true cause of things.⁹⁴

— THE MOTHER

How to Abolish Ego

How to abolish the ego? — First of all, you must want to do it, and there are very few people who want to. And that is exactly what they say, it is this justification of their way of being, "That is the way I am made, I can't do otherwise. And then, if I change this, if I change that or if I do without this thing or if I get rid of that other, I shall no longer exist!" And if one doesn't say this openly, one thinks it. And all these little desires, these little satisfactions, these little reactions, all these small ways of being, one clings to them, clings hard — one sticks to them, one doesn't want to let them go. I have seen hundreds of cases where someone's difficulty had been removed (with a particular power a certain difficulty had been removed), but after a few days he brought it back with enthusiasm. He said, "But without that I do not exist any longer!" I have known people who had been given mental silence almost spontaneously and who, after a day or two, came back frightened: "Have I become an idiot?" — for the mental machine was not working all the time. . . . You cannot imagine it, you don't know how very difficult it is to separate oneself from this little ego; how much it gets in the way though it is so small. It takes up so much room while being so microscopic. It is very difficult. One pushes it away in certain very obvious things; for example, if there is something good and someone rushes forward to make sure of having it first, even jostling his neighbour (this happens very frequently in ordinary life), then here one becomes quite aware that this is not very, very elegant, so one begins to suppress these crudities, one makes a big effort — and one becomes highly self-satisfied: "I am not selfish, I give what is good to others, I don't keep it for myself", and one begins to get puffed up. And so one is filled with a moral egoism which is much worse than physical egoism, for it is conscious of its superiority. And then there are those who have left everything, given up everything, who have left their families, distributed their belongings, gone into solitude, who live an ascetic life, and who are terribly conscious of their superiority, who look down at poor humanity from the height of their spiritual grandeur — and they have, these people, such a formidable ego that unless it is broken

into small bits, never, never will they see the Divine. So it is not such an easy task. It takes a lot of time. And I must tell you that even when the work is done, it must always be begun again.⁹⁵

— THE MOTHER

Putting into Practice

To put into practice the little you know is the best way to learn more; it is the most powerful means of advancing on the way — a little bit of really sincere practice. For example, not to do something that you know must not be done. When you have seen a weakness, a disability in your being, you must not allow it to happen again. When, if only for a moment, you have had the vision of what you must be, in an ardent aspiration, you must not — you must never forget to become that.

Some people are always complaining about their disabilities. But that doesn't lead you very far. If, once, you have truly seen your weaknesses and truly, sincerely understood, seen that you must not be like that — that's the end of complaining. Then there is the daily effort, the building up of the will, the vigilance of every moment — you must never allow a recognised mistake to renew itself. To err through ignorance, to err through unconsciousness, is obviously very unfortunate, but it can be put right. Whereas to go on making the same mistake, knowing that it must not be made, is an act of cowardice which we must not permit ourselves.

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

I say this because many people have made this remark to me, many. And it is always a way of justifying oneself: "Oh, we are doing what we can." It is not true. Because if you are sincere, once you have seen — as long as you have not seen, nothing can be said — but the moment you see is the moment when you receive the Grace, and once you have received the Grace, you no longer have the right to forget it.⁹⁶

— THE MOTHER

Difficulties of Character Do Not Reside in Us — They Circulate Everywhere

If you have a serious difficulty in your character, for example, the habit of losing your temper, and you decide: "I must not get angry again", it is very difficult, but if on the other hand, you tell yourself: "Anger is something which circulates through the whole world, it is not in me, it belongs to everybody; it wanders about here and there and if I close my door, it will not enter", it is much more easy. If you think: "It is my character, I am born like that", it becomes almost impossible. It is true there is something in your character which answers to this force of anger. All movements, all vibrations are general — they enter, they go out, they move about — but they rush upon you and enter into you only to the extent you leave the door in you open. And if you have, besides, some affinity with these forces, you may get angry without even knowing why. Everything is everywhere and it is arbitrary to draw limits.⁹⁷

— THE MOTHER

Right Attitude towards Wrong Inner Movements

Is it not dangerous to say, "My movements are not mine, I have not to think of them"?

Yes, evidently, if you say, "I can do nothing, that belongs to Nature, the movement has to follow its natural course", you do exactly what I have told you not to do, you make use of the Divine as a fine cloak to cover the satisfaction of your desires. But the opposite movement, "I am good for nothing because such an idea has crossed my mind" is equally wrong, isn't it?

Naturally, if an impulse happens to come to you which you do not want, the first thing to do is to will that it does not come again; but if, on the contrary, you do not sincerely want it to disappear, then keep it, but do not try to do yoga. You should not take the path unless you have resolved beforehand to overcome all difficulties. The decision must be sincere and complete. You will notice,

III

FAITH AND TRUST

Faith Precedes Knowledge

Faith is a thing that precedes knowledge, not comes after knowledge. It is a glimpse of a truth which the mind has not yet seized as knowledge.¹¹² — SRI AUROBINDO

Until we know the Truth (not mentally but by experience, by change of consciousness) we need the soul's faith to sustain us and hold on to the Truth — but when we live in the knowledge, this faith is changed into knowledge.

Of course I am speaking of direct spiritual knowledge. Mental knowledge cannot replace faith, so long as there is only mental knowledge, faith is still needed.¹¹³ — SRI AUROBINDO

... in all his effort here, but most of all in his effort towards the Unseen, mental man must perforce proceed by faith. When the realisation comes, the faith divinely fulfilled and completed will be transformed into an eternal flame of knowledge.¹¹⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith a Gift of Grace

Faith is certainly a gift given to us by the Divine Grace. It is like a door suddenly opening upon an eternal truth, through which we can see it, almost touch it.¹¹⁵ — THE MOTHER

Mother, on what does faith depend?

Probably on Divine Grace. Some people have it spontaneously. There are others who need to make a great effort to have it.¹¹⁶

— THE MOTHER

Faith and Related Terms

Faith — a dynamic entire belief and acceptance.

Belief — intellectual acceptance only.

Conviction — intellectual belief held on what seems to be good reasons.

Reliance — dependence on another for something, based on trust.

Trust — the feeling of sure expectation of another's help and reliance on his word, character, etc.

Confidence — the sense of security that goes with trust.¹¹⁷

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith, Belief, Confidence

I don't understand very clearly the difference between faith, belief and confidence.

But Sri Aurobindo has given the full explanation here*. If you don't understand, then ...

He has written "Faith is a feeling in the whole being."

The whole being, yes. Faith, that's the whole being at once. He says that belief is something that occurs in the head, that is purely mental; and confidence is quite different. Confidence — one can have confidence in life, trust in the Divine, trust in others, trust in one's own destiny, that is, one has the feeling that everything is going to help him, to do what he wants to do.

Faith is a certitude without any proof.¹¹⁸ — THE MOTHER

* "Faith is a feeling in the whole being, confidence means trust in a person or in the Divine or a feeling of surety about the result of one's seeking or endeavour." — Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*. (Ed.)

Faith and Trust

If one has faith in the Divine and also trust, what is the difference between faith and trust?

Faith is something much more integral — that is what Sri Aurobindo has written — much more integral than trust. You see, you have trust in the Divine, in the sense that you are convinced that all that comes from Him will always be the best for you: whatever His decision and whatever the experience He sends you or the circumstances in which He puts you, it will always be what is best for you. This is trust. But faith — that kind of unshakable certitude in the very existence of God — faith is something that seizes the whole being. It is not only mental, psychic or vital: it is the whole being, entirely, which has faith. Faith leads straight to experience.¹¹⁹

— THE MOTHER

Can't trust be total and entire?

Not necessarily. Well, there is a shade of difference — however, I don't know, it is not the same thing.

One has given oneself totally to the divine work, one has faith in it, not only in its possibility, but faith that it is *the* thing which is true and which must be, and one gives oneself entirely to it, without asking what will happen. And so, therein or thereon may be grafted a certitude, a confidence that one is capable of accomplishing it, that is, of participating in it and doing it because one has given oneself to it — a confidence that what one is going to do, what one wants to do, one will be able to do; that this realisation one wants to attain, one will attain. The first does not put any questions, does not think of the results: it gives itself entirely — it gives itself and then that's all. It is something that absorbs one completely. The other may be grafted upon it. Confidence says: "Yes, I shall participate, realise what I want to realise, I shall surely take part in this work." The other one has faith in the Divine, that it is the Divine who is all, and can do all, and does all . . . and who

is the only real existence — and one gives oneself entirely to this faith, to the Divine, that's all. One has faith in the existence of the Divine and gives oneself; and there can also be grafted upon this a trust that this relation one has with the Divine, this faith one has in the Divine, will work in such a way that all that happens to him — whatever it may be, all that happens to him — will not only be an expression of the divine will (that of course is understood) but also the best that could happen, that nothing better could have happened to him, since it is the Divine who is doing it for him. This attitude is not necessarily a part of faith, for faith does not question anything, it does not ask what the consequence of its self-giving will be — it gives itself, and — that's all; while confidence can come and say, "That's what the result will be." And this is an absolute fact, that is, the moment one gives oneself entirely to the Divine, without calculating, in a total faith, without bargaining of any kind — one gives oneself, and then, come what may! "That does not concern me, I just give myself" — automatically it will always be for you, in all circumstances, at every moment, the best that will happen . . . not the way you conceive of it (naturally, thought knows nothing), but in reality. Well, there is a part of the being which can become aware of this and have this confidence. This is something added on to faith which gives it more strength, a strength — how shall I put it? — of total acceptance and the best utilisation of what happens.¹²⁰

— THE MOTHER

Trust and Dynamic Faith

A dynamic faith and a great trust, aren't they the same thing?

Not necessarily. One should know of what stuff the faith and the trust are made. Because, for instance, if you live normally, under quite normal conditions — without having extravagant ideas and a depressing education — well, through all your youth and usually till you are about thirty, you have an absolute trust in life. If, for example, you are not surrounded by people who, as soon as you have a cold in the head, get into a flurry and rush to the doctor and

give you medicines, if you are in normal surroundings and happen to have something — an accident or a slight illness — there is this certainty in the body, this absolute trust that it will be all right: "It is nothing, it will pass off. It is sure to go. I shall be quite well tomorrow or in a few days. It will surely be cured" — whatever you may have caught. That is indeed the normal condition of the body. An absolute trust that all life lies before it and that all will be well. And this helps enormously. One gets cured nine times out of ten, one gets cured very quickly with this confidence: "It is nothing; what is it after all? Just an accident, it will pass off, it is nothing." And there are people who keep it for a very long time, a very long time, a kind of confidence — nothing can happen to them. Their life is all before them, fully, and nothing can happen to them. And what will happen to them is of no importance at all: all will be well, necessarily; they have the whole of life before them. Naturally, if you live in surroundings where there are morbid ideas and people pass their time recounting disastrous and catastrophic things, then you may think wrongly. And if you think wrongly, this reacts on your body. Otherwise, the body as it is can keep this confidence till the age of forty or fifty — it depends upon people — some know how to live a normal, balanced life. But the body is quite confident about its life. It is only if thought comes in and brings all kinds of morbid and unhealthy imaginations, as I said, that it changes everything. I have seen instances like that: children who had these little accidents one has when running and playing about: they did not even think about it. And it disappeared immediately. I have seen others whose family has drummed into them since the time they could understand, that everything is dangerous, that there are microbes everywhere, that one must be very careful, that the least wound may prove disastrous, that one must be altogether on one's guard and take great care that nothing serious happens. . . . So, they must have their wounds dressed, must be washed with disinfectants, and there they sit wondering: "What is going to happen to me? Oh! I may perhaps get tetanus, a septic fever. . . ." Naturally, in such cases one loses confidence in life and the body feels the effects keenly. Three-fourths of its resistance disappears. But normally, naturally, it is the body which knows that it

must remain healthy, and it knows it has the power to react. And if something happens, it tells this something: "It is nothing, it will go away, don't think about it, it is over"; and it does go.

That of course is absolute trust.

Now, you are speaking of "dynamic faith". Dynamic faith is something different. If one has within him faith in the divine grace, that the divine grace is watching over him, and that no matter what happens the divine grace is there, watching over him, one may keep this faith all one's life and always; and with this one can pass through all dangers, face all difficulties, and nothing stirs, for you have the faith and the divine grace is with you. It is an infinitely stronger, more conscious, more lasting force which does not depend upon the conditions of your physical build, does not depend upon anything except the divine grace alone, and hence it leans on the Truth and nothing can shake it. It is very different.¹²¹

— THE MOTHER

Faith — Reflection of a Hidden Knowledge

Faith in the heart is the obscure and often distorted reflection of a hidden knowledge.

The believer is often more plagued by doubt than the most inveterate sceptic. He persists because there is something subconscious in him which knows. That tolerates both his blind faith and twilit doubts and drives towards the revelation of that which it knows.¹²²

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith is spontaneous knowledge in the psychic.¹²³

— THE MOTHER

... faith is the very essence of the psychic being.¹²⁴

— THE MOTHER

Faith is a certitude which is not necessarily based on experience and knowledge.¹²⁵

— THE MOTHER

“Blind Faith”

Is it good to have a “blind faith” which neither questions nor reasons?

What men usually call blind faith is in fact what the Divine Grace sometimes gives to those whose intelligence is not developed enough to have true knowledge. So blind faith can be something very respectable, although it is of course clear that one who has true knowledge is in a far superior position.¹²⁶

— THE MOTHER

Reason gives me no basis for this faith, thou murmurest. Fool! if it did, faith would not be needed or demanded of thee.¹²⁷

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith — an Influence of the Spirit on the Soul

This *śraddhā* — the English word faith is inadequate to express it — is in reality an influence from the supreme Spirit and its light a message from our supramental being which is calling the lower nature to rise out of its petty present to a great self-becoming and self-exceeding. And that which receives the influence and answers to the call is not so much the intellect, the heart or the life mind, but the inner soul which better knows the truth of its own destiny and mission. The circumstances that provoke our first entry into the path are not the real index of the thing that is at work in us. There the intellect, the heart, or the desires of the life mind may take a prominent place, or even more fortuitous accidents and outward incentives; but if these are all, then there can be no surety of our fidelity to the call and our enduring perseverance in the Yoga. The intellect may abandon the idea that attracted it, the heart

weary or fail us, the desire of the life mind turn to other objectives. But outward circumstances are only a cover for the real workings of the spirit, and if it is the spirit that has been touched, the inward soul that has received the call, the *śraddhā* will remain firm and resist all attempts to defeat or slay it. It is not that the doubts of the intellect may not assail, the heart waver, the disappointed desire of the life mind sink down exhausted on the wayside. That is almost inevitable at times, perhaps often, especially with us, sons of an age of intellectuality and scepticism and a materialistic denial of spiritual truth which has not yet lifted its painted clouds from the face of the sun of a greater reality and is still opposed to the light of spiritual intuition and inmost experience. There will very possibly be many of those trying obscurations of which even the Vedic Rishis so often complained, “long exiles from the light”, and these may be so thick, the night on the soul may be so black that faith may seem utterly to have left us. But through it all the spirit within will be keeping its unseen hold and the soul will return with a new strength to its assurance which was only eclipsed and not extinguished, because extinguished it cannot be when once the inner self has known and made its resolution.* The Divine holds our hand through all and if he seems to let us fall, it is only to raise us higher. This saving return we shall experience so often that the denials of doubt will become eventually impossible and, when once the foundation of equality is firmly established and still more when the sun of the gnosis has risen, doubt itself will pass away because its cause and utility have ended.¹²⁸

— SRI AUROBINDO

To Be Unshakable, Faith Must Be Present in Every Part of the Being

There is only one faith, but it manifests in different parts of the being. I suppose that what the person you refer to calls “blind faith” is the faith in the heart, which needs no *reasons* to exist; but there

* *saṅkalpa, vyavasāya.*

knowing it; and at that moment this kind of trust, of faith comes in front like that and supports. This happens when one has momentary contacts with his psychic. For example, when you find yourself in a very great difficulty or a very great physical danger, and suddenly feel this, this force coming into you, the force of a faith, an absolute trust in the divine Grace which helps you. So it means that there is a conscious contact with one's psychic and it comes to help you — it is a special grace bestowed. ... That is, according to the part which is active or according to the necessity of the moment, it is here or there or there that suddenly you feel this trust which takes possession of you and guards you. It is like that.¹³⁹ — THE MOTHER

Three Stumbling Blocks of Faith without Trust

... if your faith is not made of a complete trust in the Divine, well, you may very easily remain under the impression that you have faith and yet be losing all trust in the divine Power or divine Goodness, or the Trust the Divine has in you. These are the three stumbling-blocks:

Those who have what they call an unshakable faith in the Divine, and say, "It is the Divine who is doing everything, who can do everything; all that happens in me, in others, everywhere, is the work of the Divine and the Divine alone", if they follow this with some kind of logic, after some time they will blame the Divine for all the most terrible wrongs which take place in the world and make of Him a real demon, cruel and frightful — if they have no trust.

Or again, they do have faith, but tell themselves. "Well, I have faith in the Divine, but this world, I see quite well what it's like! First of all, I suffer so much, don't I? I am very unhappy, far more unhappy than all my neighbours" — for one is always far more unhappy than all one's neighbours — "I am very unhappy and, truly, life is cruel to me. But then the Divine is divine, He is All-Goodness, All-Generosity, All-Harmony, so how is it that I am so unhappy? He must be powerless; otherwise being so good how

could He let me suffer so much?"

That is the second stumbling-block.

And the third: there are people who have what may be called a warped and excessive modesty or humility and who tell themselves, "Surely the Divine has thrown me out, I am good for nothing, He can do nothing with me, the only thing for me is to give up the game, for He finds me unworthy of Him!"

So, unless one adds to faith a total and complete trust in the Divine Grace, there will be difficulties. So both are necessary.¹⁴⁰

— THE MOTHER

Faith That Overcomes Fear

The third method [for conquering fear] is for those who have faith in a God, their God, and who have given themselves to him. They belong to him integrally; all the events of their lives are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely with calm submission but with gratitude, for they are convinced that whatever happens to them is always for their own good. They have a mystic trust in their God and in their personal relationship with him. They have made an absolute surrender of their will to his and feel his unvarying love and protection, wholly independent of the accidents of life and death. They have the constant experience of lying at the feet of their Beloved in an absolute self-surrender or of being cradled in his arms and enjoying a perfect security. There is no longer any room in their consciousness for fear, anxiety or torment; all that has been replaced by a calm and delightful bliss.¹⁴¹

— THE MOTHER

All That Happens Is for the Best

"Absolute faith — faith that what is for the best will happen, but also that if one can make oneself a true instrument, the fruit will be that which one's will guided by the Divine Light sees as the thing to be done — 'kartavyam karma.'"^{*}

^{*} Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*. (Ed.)

Faith that what happens is always for the best. We may for the moment not consider it as the best because we are ignorant and also blind, because we do not see the consequences of things and what will happen later. But we must keep the faith that if it is like that, if we rely on the Divine, if we give Him the full charge of ourselves, if we let Him decide everything for us, well, we must know that it is always what is best for us which happens. This is an absolute fact. To the extent to which you surrender, the best happens to you. This may not be in conformity with what you would like, your preference or desire, because these things are blind: it is the best from the spiritual point of view, the best for your progress, your development, your spiritual growth, your *true* life. It is always that. And you must keep this faith, because faith is the expression of a trust in the Divine and the full self-giving you make to the Divine. And when you make it, it is something absolutely marvellous. That's a fact, these are not just words, you understand, it is a fact. When you look back, all kinds of things which you did not understand when they happened to you, you realise as *just* the thing which was necessary in order to compel you to make the needed progress. *Always*, without exception. It is our blindness which prevents us from seeing it.¹⁴²

— THE MOTHER

Of one thing we must be convinced — all that happens is exactly what must happen in order to lead us and the world as quickly as possible to the goal — the union with the Divine and ultimately the manifestation of the Divine.

And this faith — sincere and constant — is at once our help and protection.¹⁴³

— THE MOTHER

Meaning of "All That Happens Is for the Best"

Life is for experience and growth and until one has learned one's lesson things go on happening that are the result of one's imperfect balance with Nature or inner imperfections. All that happens is for the best is true only if we see with the cosmic view that takes

in past and future development which is aided by ill fortune, as well as good fortune, by danger, death, suffering and calamity, as well as by happiness, success and victory. It is not true if it means that only things happen which are fortunate or obviously good for the person in the human sense.¹⁴⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

All Happens within the Working of the One Will

This faith we must have and develop to perfection that all things are the workings under the universal conditions of a supreme self-knowledge and wisdom, that nothing done in us or around us is in vain or without its appointed place and just significance, that all things are possible when the Ishwara as our supreme Self and Spirit takes up the action and that all that has been done before and all that he will do hereafter was and will be part of his infallible and foreseeing guidance and intended towards the fruition of our Yoga and our perfection and our life work. This faith will be more and more justified as the higher knowledge opens, we shall begin to see the great and small significances that escaped our limited mentality and faith will pass into knowledge. Then we shall see beyond the possibility of doubt that all happens within the working of the one Will and that that will was also wisdom because it develops always the true workings in life of the self and nature. The highest state of the assent, the *śraddhā* of the being will be when we feel the presence of the Ishwara and feel all our existence and consciousness and thought and will and action in his hand and consent in all things and with every part of our self and nature to the direct and immanent and occupying will of the Spirit.¹⁴⁵

— SRI AUROBINDO

Mental Faith Not Sufficient

Can mere faith create all, conquer all?

Yes, but it must be an integral faith and it must be absolute. And

it must be of the right kind, not merely a force of mental thought or will, but something more and deeper. The will put forth by the mind sets up opposite reactions and creates a resistance. You must have heard something of the method of Coué in healing diseases. He knew some secret of this power and utilised it with considerable effect; but he called it imagination and his method gave the faith he called up too mental a form. Mental faith is not sufficient; it must be completed and enforced by a vital and even a physical faith, a faith of the body. If you can create in yourself an integral force of this kind in all your being, then nothing can resist it; but you must reach down to the most subconscious, you must fix the faith in the very cells of the body.¹⁴⁶ — THE MOTHER

Sincere Trust Always Calls Forth an Answer

If one has the trust, does the help come automatically?

Even an atom of sincerity suffices, and it comes. And if, truly, one calls very sincerely (not just calling and at the same time saying, "We are going to see now if it is going to succeed" — that naturally is not a very good condition), but if one calls very sincerely and sincerely needs the answer, one waits and it *always* comes. And if one can silence one's mind and be a little quiet, one even perceives the coming of the help and what form it takes.¹⁴⁷ — THE MOTHER

Faith Innate in Everyone

Can one have faith through aspiration?

... One always has a tiny element of faith within oneself, whether it be faith in what one's parents have said or in the books one has studied. After all, all your education is based upon a faith of this kind. Those who have educated you have told you certain things. You had no means of checking, because you were too young and had no experience. But you have faith in what they told you and

you go forward on that faith. So everyone has a tiny bit of faith, and to increase it one can use one's aspiration.¹⁴⁸

— THE MOTHER

Utility and Necessity of Doubt

The enemy of faith is doubt, and yet doubt too is a utility and necessity, because man in his ignorance and in his progressive labour towards knowledge needs to be visited by doubt, otherwise he would remain obstinate in an ignorant belief and limited knowledge and unable to escape from his errors. This utility and necessity of doubt does not altogether disappear when we enter on the path of Yoga.¹⁴⁹ — SRI AUROBINDO

A Working Faith Indispensable

And while, therefore, we have to reject paralysing doubt or mere intellectual scepticism, the seeking intelligence has to be trained to admit a certain large questioning, an intellectual rectitude not satisfied with half-truths, mixtures of error or approximations and, most positive and helpful, a perfect readiness always to move forward from truths already held and accepted to the greater corrective, completing or transcending truths which at first it was unable or, it may be, disinclined to envisage. A working faith of the intellect is indispensable, not a superstitious, dogmatic or limiting credence attached to every temporary support or formula, but a large assent to the successive suggestions and steps of the Shakti, a faith fixed on realities, moving from the lesser to the completer realities and ready to throw down all scaffolding and keep only the large and growing structure.¹⁵⁰ — SRI AUROBINDO

And yet faith is necessary throughout and at every step because it is a needed assent of the soul and without this assent there can be no progress. Our faith must first be abiding in the essential truth

and principles of the Yoga, and even if this is clouded in the intellect, despondent in the heart, outwearied and exhausted by constant denial and failure in the desire of the vital mind, there must be something in the innermost soul which clings and returns to it, otherwise we may fall on the path or abandon it from weakness and inability to bear temporary defeat, disappointment, difficulty and peril. In the Yoga as in life it is the man who persists unwearyed to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds his faith justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible. And even a blind and ignorant faith is a better possession than the skeptical doubt which turns its back on our spiritual possibilities or the constant carping of the narrow pettily critical uncreative intellect, *asūyā*, which pursues our endeavour with a paralysing incertitude.¹⁵¹

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith and Patience — First Requisites in Yoga

In all Yogas the first requisites are faith and patience. The ardours of the heart and the violences of the eager will that seek to take the kingdom of heaven by storm can have miserable reactions if they disdain to support their vehemence on these humbler and quieter auxiliaries. And in the long and difficult integral Yoga there must be an integral faith and an unshakable patience.

It is difficult to acquire or to practise this faith and steadfastness on the rough and narrow path of Yoga because of the impatience of both heart and mind and the eager but faltering will of our rajasic nature. The vital nature of man hungers always for the fruit of its labour and, if the fruit appears to be denied or long delayed, he loses faith in the ideal and in the guidance. For his mind judges always by the appearance of things, since that is the first ingrained habit of the intellectual reason in which he so inordinately trusts. Nothing is easier for us than to accuse God in our hearts when we suffer long or stumble in the darkness or to abjure the ideal that we have set before us. For we say, "I have trusted to the

Highest and I am betrayed into suffering and sin and error." Or else, "I have staked my whole life on an idea which the stern facts of experience contradict and discourage. It would have been better to be as other men are who accept their limitations and walk on the firm ground of normal experience." In such moments — and they are sometimes frequent and long — all the higher experience is forgotten and the heart concentrates itself in its own bitterness. It is in these dark passages that it is possible to fall for good or to turn back from the divine labour.

If one has walked long and steadily in the path, the faith of the heart will remain under the fiercest adverse pressure; even if it is concealed or apparently overborne, it will take the first opportunity to re-emerge. For something higher than either heart or intellect upholds it in spite of the worst stumblings and through the most prolonged failure. But even to the experienced sadhaka such falterings or overcloudings bring a retardation of his progress and they are exceedingly dangerous to the novice. It is therefore necessary from the beginning to understand and accept the arduous difficulty of the path and to feel the need of a faith which to the intellect may seem blind, but yet is wiser than our reasoning intelligence. For this faith is a support from above; it is the brilliant shadow thrown by a secret light that exceeds the intellect and its data; it is the heart of a hidden knowledge that is not at the mercy of immediate appearances. Our faith, persevering, will be justified in its works and will be lifted and transfigured at last into the self-revelation of a divine knowledge. Always we must adhere to the injunction of the Gita, "Yoga must be continually applied with a heart free from despondent sinking." Always we must repeat to the doubting intellect the promise of the Master, "I will surely deliver thee from all sin and evil; do not grieve." At the end, the flickerings of faith will cease; for we shall see his face and feel always the Divine Presence.¹⁵²

— SRI AUROBINDO

Fundamental Faith in Yoga

The fundamental faith in yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after — nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that. So long as a man has that faith, he is marked for the spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life.

It is this faith that you need to develop — a faith which is in accordance with reason and common sense — that if the Divine exists and has called you to the Path, (as is evident), then there must be a Divine Guidance behind and through and in spite of all difficulties you will arrive. Not to listen to the hostile voices that suggest failure or to the voices of impatient, vital haste that echo them, not to believe that because great difficulties are there, there can be no success or that because the Divine has not yet shown himself he will never show himself, but to take the position that everyone takes when he fixes his mind on a great and difficult goal, "I will go on till I succeed — all difficulties notwithstanding." To which the believer in the Divine adds, "The Divine exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail. I will go on through everything till I find him."¹⁵³

— SRI AUROBINDO

Central Faith

I spoke of a strong central and, if possible, complete faith because your attitude seemed to be that you only cared for the full response — that is, realisation, the presence, regarding all else as quite unsatisfactory, — and your prayer was not bringing you that. But prayer in itself does not usually bring that at once — only if there is a burning faith at the centre or a complete faith in all the parts of the being. That does not mean that those whose faith is not so strong or surrender complete cannot arrive, but usually they have at first to go by small steps and to face the difficulties of their nature until by perseverance or tapasya they make a sufficient open-

ing. Even a faltering faith and a slow and partial surrender have their force and their result, otherwise only the rare few could do sadhana at all. What I mean by the central faith is a faith in the soul or the central being behind, a faith which is there even when the mind doubts and the vital despairs and the physical wants to collapse, and after the attack is over reappears and pushes on the path again. It may be strong and bright, it may be pale and in appearance weak, but if it persists each time in going on, it is the real thing. Fits of depression and darkness and despair are a tradition in the path of sadhana — in all yogas oriental or occidental they seem to have been the rule. I know all about them myself — but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose. That is why whenever they come in you or others I try to lift up before them the gospel of faith. If still they come, one has to get through them as soon as possible and get back into the sun.¹⁵⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

The perfect faith is an assent of the whole being to the truth seen by it or offered to its acceptance, and its central working is a faith of the soul in its own will to be and attain and become and its idea of self and things and its knowledge, of which the belief of the intellect, the heart's consent and the desire of the life mind to possess and realise are the outward figures. This soul faith, in some form of itself, is indispensable to the action of the being and without it man cannot move a single pace in life, much less take any step forward to a yet unrealised perfection. It is so central and essential a thing that the Gita can justly say of it that whatever is a man's *śraddhā*, that he is, *yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*, and, it may be added, whatever he has the faith to see as possible in himself and strive for, that he can create and become.¹⁵⁵

— SRI AUROBINDO

Two Kinds of Faith

There are two kinds of faith:

The faith that calls down the equanimity and the faith that calls down the realisation.

These two faiths correspond to two different aspects of the Divine.

There is the Transcendent Divine and there is the Cosmic Divine.

The Will of realisation is that of the Transcendent Divine.

The Cosmic Divine is what is concerned with the actual working out of things under the present circumstances. It is the Will of that Cosmic Divine which is manifested in each circumstance, each movement of this world.

The Cosmic Will is not, to our ordinary consciousness, something that acts as an independent power doing whatever it chooses; it works through all these beings, through the forces at play in the world and the law of these forces and their results — it is only when we open ourselves and get out of the ordinary consciousness that we can feel it intervening as an independent power and overriding the ordinary play of the forces.

Then too we can see that even in the play of the forces and in spite of their distortions the Cosmic Will is working towards the eventual realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The supramental Realisation is the Will of the Transcendent Divine which we have to work out. The circumstances under which we have to work it out are those of an inferior consciousness in which things can be distorted by our own ignorance, weaknesses and mistakes, and by the clash of conflicting forces. That is why faith and equanimity are indispensable.

We have to have the faith that in spite of our ignorance and errors and weaknesses and in spite of the attacks of hostile forces and in spite of any immediate appearance of failure the Divine Will is leading us, through every circumstance, towards the final Realisation. This faith will give us equanimity; it is a faith that accepts what happens, not definitively but as something that has to be gone through on the way. Once equanimity is established there

can be established too another kind of faith, supported by it, which can be made dynamic with something from the supramental consciousness and can overcome the present circumstances and determine what will happen and help to bring down the Realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The faith that goes to the Cosmic Divine is limited in the power of its action by the necessities of the play.

To get entirely free from these limitations one must reach the Transcendent Divine.¹⁵⁶

— SRI AUROBINDO

Indispensable Faith of the Integral Yoga

There is one kind of faith demanded as indispensable by the integral Yoga and that may be described as faith in God and the Shakti, faith in the presence and power of the Divine in us and the world, a faith that all in the world is the working of one divine Shakti, that all the steps of the Yoga, its strivings and sufferings and failures as well as its successes and satisfactions and victories are utilities and necessities of her workings and that by a firm and strong dependence on and a total self-surrender to the Divine and to his Shakti in us we can attain to oneness and freedom and victory and perfection.¹⁵⁷

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith in Oneself

The faith in the Shakti, as long as we are not aware of and filled with her presence, must necessarily be preceded or at least accompanied by a firm and virile faith in our own spiritual will and energy and our power to move successfully towards unity and freedom and perfection. Man is given faith in himself, his ideas and his powers that he may work and create and rise to greater things and in the end bring his strength as a worthy offering to the altar of the Spirit. This spirit, says the Scripture, is not to be won by the weak, *nāyam ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*. All paralysing self-distrust has to be discouraged, all doubt of our strength to

accomplish, for that is a false assent to impotence, an imagination of weakness and a denial of the omnipotence of the spirit. A present incapacity, however heavy may seem its pressure, is only a trial of faith and a temporary difficulty and to yield to the sense of inability is for the seeker of the integral Yoga a non-sense, for his object is a development of a perfection that is there already, latent in the being, because man carries the seed of the divine life in himself, in his own spirit, the possibility of success is involved and implied in the effort and victory is assured because behind is the call and guidance of an omnipotent power. At the same time this faith in oneself must be purified from all touch of rajasic egoism and spiritual pride. The Sadhaka should keep as much as possible in his mind the idea that his strength is not his own in the egoistic sense but that of the divine universal Shakti and whatever is egoistic in his use of it must be a cause of limitation and in the end an obstacle. The power of the divine universal Shakti which is behind our aspiration is illimitable, and when it is rightly called upon it cannot fail to pour itself into us and to remove whatever incapacity and obstacle, now or later; for the times and durations of our struggle while they depend at first, instrumentally and in part, on the strength of our faith and our endeavour, are yet eventually in the hands of the wisely determining secret Spirit, alone the Master of the Yoga, the Ishwara.¹⁵⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

Faith in One's Own Possibilities

Just as the strong wind has no hold upon a mighty rock, so Mara has no hold upon a man who does not live in pursuit of pleasure, who has good control of his senses, who knows how to moderate his appetite, who is endowed with unshakable faith and who wastes not his energies. [The Dhammapada]

What the Dhammapada means when it speaks of faith is not at all the belief in a dogma or a religion, it is not even faith in the teaching of the Master; it is faith in one's own possibilities, the certitude that whatever the difficulties, whatever the obstacles, whatever the

imperfections, even the negations in the being, one is born for the realisation and one will realise.

The will must never falter, the effort must be persevering and the faith unshakable. Then instead of spending years to realise what one has to realise, one can do it in a few months, sometimes even in a few days and, if there is sufficient intensity, in a few hours. That is to say, you can take a position within yourself and no bad will that attacks the realisation will have any more power over you than the storm has over a rock.

After that, the way is no longer difficult; it becomes extraordinarily interesting.¹⁵⁵

— THE MOTHER

Faith in One's Success

"To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith." How does it discourage the faith?*

The faith spoken about is faith in the divine Grace and the final success of the undertaking. You have begun the yoga and have faith that you will go through to the end of your yoga. But if you spend your time looking at all that prevents you from advancing, then finally you say, "Ah, I shall never succeed! It is not possible. If it goes on in this way, I shall never get there." So this is to lose one's faith. One must always keep the faith that one is sure to succeed.

Many people begin, and then after some time come and tell you, "Oh, I shall never be able to go through. I have too many difficulties." So this means not having faith. If one has started, one begins with the faith that one will reach the goal. Well, this faith should be kept till the very end. Keeping one's faith, one attains the end. But if in the middle of the road you turn back saying, "No, I can't", then, obviously you will not reach the end. Some people start on the way and then, after some time, they find it heavy-going, tiring, difficult, and also that they themselves, their legs,

* Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, (Ed.)

don't walk well, their feet begin to ache, etc. You see, they say, "Oh, it is very hard to go forward." So instead of saying, "I have started, I shall go through", which is the only thing to do, they stand there, stop there, lamenting and saying, "Oh, I shall never be able to succeed", and then they leave the path. So, obviously, if they leave the path, they will never succeed. This is to lose one's faith.

To keep one's faith is to say, "Good, I have difficulties but I am going on." Despair — that's what cuts off your legs, stops you, leaves you like this: "It is over, I can't go on any longer." It is indeed finished, and that's something which should not be allowed.

When you have started, you must go to the very end. Sometimes, you see, to people who come to me with enthusiasm I say, "Think a little, it is not an easy path, you will need time, you will need patience. You will need much endurance, much perseverance and courage and an untiring goodwill. Look and see if you are capable of having all this, and then start. But once you have started, it is finished, there is no going back any more; you must go to the very end."

Sometimes I tell them, I tell them that I give them a few days or a few months. There are some to whom I have given a few years for reflection. I told them, "Look well, be quite sure." But once they come and say, "Now I have decided, I want to start", it is good. Now, one must go on to the very end, whatever the cost; even if it is very difficult, one has to go to the very end.¹⁴⁰ — THE MOTHER

Standing Back with Confidence

It is much more difficult to stand back from the difficulty [of the lower nature], to look at it as something which does not concern you, which does not interest you, does not belong to you, which belongs to the world and not to you — but it is only by doing this that you can succeed. This demands a kind of liberation of spirit and a confidence in your inner being; you must believe that if you take the right attitude, it is the best that will happen to you; but if you are afraid when something unpleasant happens to you, then you can do nothing. You must have this confidence within you,

whatever the difficulty, whatever the obstacle. Most of the time, when something unpleasant happens, you say, "Is it going to increase? What other accident is yet going to happen!" and so on. You must tell yourself, "These things are not mine; they belong to the subconscious world; naturally I have nothing to do with them and if they come again to seize me, I am going to give a fight." Naturally you will answer that this is easy to say but difficult to do. But if truly you take this attitude of confidence, there is no difficulty that you will not be able to conquer. Anxiety makes the difficulty greater.¹⁶¹ — THE MOTHER

True Reason for Fear

Why does one feel afraid?

I suppose it is because one is egoistic.

There are three reasons. First, an excessive concern about one's security. Next, what one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling which is translated in the consciousness by fear. And above all, one doesn't have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. If you look into things sufficiently deeply, this is the true reason. There are people who do not even know that That exists, but one could tell them in other words, "You have no faith in your destiny" or "You know nothing about Grace" — anything whatever, you may put it as you like, but the root of the matter is a lack of trust. If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid.¹⁶² — THE MOTHER

Despair Comes from Lack of Faith

For some people events are always contrary to what they desire or aspire for or believe to be good for them. They often despair. Is this a necessity for their progress?

Despair is never a necessity for progress, it is always a sign of weak-

ness and *tamas*; it often indicates the presence of an adverse force, that is to say, a force that is purposely acting *against sadhana*.*

So, in all circumstances of life you must always be very careful to guard against despair. Besides, this habit of being sombre, morose, of despairing, does not truly depend on events, but on a lack of faith in the nature. One who has faith, even if only in himself, can face all difficulties, all circumstances, even the most adverse, without discouragement or despair. He fights like a man to the end. Natures that lack faith also lack *endurance and courage*.¹⁶³

— THE MOTHER

Personal Effort Indispensable for Preserving Faith

Can faith be increased by personal effort?

... As in everything else in the ascent of humanity, there is the necessity — especially at the beginning — of personal effort. It is possible that in some exceptional circumstances, for reasons which completely elude our intelligence, faith may come almost accidentally, quite unexpectedly, almost without ever having been solicited, but most frequently it is an answer to a yearning, a need, an *aspiration*, something in the being that is seeking and longing, even though not in a very conscious and systematic way. But in any case, when faith has been granted, when one has had this sudden inner illumination, in order to preserve it constantly in the active consciousness individual effort is altogether indispensable. One must *hold on* to one's faith, *will* one's faith; one must seek it, cultivate it, protect it.

In the human mind there is a morbid and deplorable habit of doubt, argument, scepticism. This is where human effort must be put in: the refusal to admit them, the refusal to listen to them and still *more the refusal to follow* them. No game is more dangerous than playing mentally with doubt and scepticism. They are not only enemies, they are terrible pitfalls, and once one falls into

* The practice of Yoga.

them, it becomes *tremendously* difficult to pull oneself out.

Some people think it is a very great mental elegance to play with ideas, to discuss them, to contradict their faith; they think that this gives them a very *superior attitude*, that in this way they are above "superstitions" and "ignorance"; but if you listen to suggestions of doubt and scepticism, *then* you fall into the grossest ignorance and stray away from the right path. *You enter into confusion, error*, a maze of contradictions. ... You are not always sure you will be able to get out of it. You go so far away from the inner truth that you lose sight of it and sometimes lose too all possible contact with your soul.

Certainly a personal effort is needed to preserve one's faith, to let it grow within. Later — much later — one day, looking back, we may see that everything that *happened*, even what seemed to us the worst, was a Divine Grace to make us advance on the way; and then we become aware that the personal effort too was a grace. But before reaching that point, one has to advance *much*, to struggle much, *sometimes* even to suffer a great deal.

To sit down in inert passivity and say, "If I am to have faith I shall have it, the Divine will give it to me", is an attitude of laziness, of unconsciousness and *almost of bad-will*.

For the inner flame to burn, one must feed it; one must watch over the fire, throw into it the fuel of all the errors one wants to get rid of, all that delays the progress, all that *darkens* the path. If one *doesn't feed* the fire, it smoulders under the ashes of one's unconsciousness and inertia, and then, not years but lives, centuries will pass before one reaches the goal.

One must watch over one's faith as one watches over the birth of something *infinitely* precious, and protect it very carefully from everything that can impair it.

In the ignorance and *darkness* of the beginning, faith is the most direct expression of the Divine Power which comes to fight and conquer.¹⁶⁴

— THE MOTHER

Increasing One's Faith

How can faith be increased?

Through aspiration, I suppose. Some have it spontaneously . . . You see, it is difficult to pray if one doesn't have faith, but if one can make prayer a means of increasing one's faith, or aspiring, having an aspiration, having an aspiration to have faith . . . Most of these qualities require an effort. If one does not have a thing and wants to have it, well, it needs great, great, great sustained efforts, a constant aspiration, an unflagging will, a sincerity at each moment; then one is sure, it will come one day — it can come in a second. There are people who have it, and then they have contrary movements which come and attack. These people, if their will is sincere, can shield their faith, repel the attacks. There are others who cultivate doubt because it is a kind of dilettantism — that, there's nothing more dangerous than that. It is as though one were letting the worm into the fruit: it eventually eats it up completely. This means that when a movement of this sort comes — it usually comes first into the mind — the first thing to do is to be very determined and refuse it. Surely one must not enjoy looking on just to see what is going to happen; that kind of curiosity is terribly dangerous.

It is perhaps more difficult for intellectuals to have faith than for those who are simple, sincere, who are straightforward, without intellectual complications. But I think that if an intellectual person has faith, then that becomes very powerful, a very powerful thing which can truly work miracles.¹⁶⁵ — THE MOTHER

IV**DIFFICULTIES AND SUFFERING**

The Secret behind Pain

Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors.¹⁶⁶

— Sri Aurobindo

All Difficulties, All Events a Gift from Grace

When, in your life, you meet with a hardship, take it as a Grace from the Lord and, indeed, it will become so.¹⁶⁷

— THE MOTHER

For those who have given themselves to the Divine each difficulty that confronts them is the assurance of a new progress and thus must be taken as a gift from the Grace.¹⁶⁸ — THE MOTHER

When difficulties besiege you, know that the Divine Grace is with you.¹⁶⁹

— THE MOTHER

In any case and whatever happens, always consider events as a gift from the Divine Grace which is leading you by swift paths towards the spiritual goal of your life.¹⁷⁰ — THE MOTHER

Effect of Things Depends upon the Attitude

There is a state in which one realises that the effect of things, circumstances, all the movements and actions of life on the consciousness depends almost exclusively upon one's attitude to these things. There is a moment when one becomes sufficiently conscious to realise that things in themselves are truly neither good nor bad: they are such only in relation to us; their effect on us depends absolutely upon the attitude we have towards them. The same thing, identically the same, if we take it as a gift of God, as a divine grace, as the result of the full Harmony, helps us to become more conscious, stronger, more true, while if we take it — exactly the very same circumstance — as a blow from fate, as a bad force wanting to affect us, this constricts us, weighs us down and takes away from us all consciousness and strength and harmony. And the circumstance in itself is exactly the same — of this, I wish all of you had this experience, for when you have it, you become master of yourself. Not only master of yourself but, in what concerns you, master of the circumstances of your life.¹⁷¹ — THE MOTHER

True Attitude in Illness

Are illnesses tests in the Yoga?

Tests? Not at all.

You are given an illness purposely to make you progress? Surely it is not like that. Actually, you may turn the thing round and say that there are people whose aspiration is so constant, whose goodwill so total that whatever happens to them they take as a trial on the path to make progress. I knew people who, whenever they fell ill, took that as a proof of the Divine Grace to help them to progress. They told themselves: it is a good sign, I am going to find out the cause of my illness and I shall make the necessary progress. I knew a few of this kind and they moved on magnificently. There are others, on the contrary, who, far from making use of the thing, let themselves fall flat on the ground. So much the worse for them.

But the true attitude when one is ill, is to say: "There is something that is not all right; I am going to see what it is." You must never think that the Divine has purposely sent an illness, for that would truly be a very undesirable Divine!¹⁷² — THE MOTHER

Each One Is Given the Most Favourable Conditions for Realisation

... for each one it is the best and most favourable conditions which are given. We were saying the other day that it is only his friends whom God treats with severity; you thought it was a joke, but it is true. It is only to those who are full of hope, who will pass through this purifying flame, that the conditions for attaining the maximum result are given. And the human mind is made in such a way that you may test this; when something extremely unpleasant happens to you, you may tell yourself, "Well, this proves I am worth the trouble of being given this difficulty, this proves there is something in me which can resist the difficulty", and you will notice that instead of tormenting yourself, you rejoice — you will be so happy and so strong that even the most unpleasant things will seem to you quite charming! This is a very easy experiment to make. Whatever the circumstance, if your mind is accustomed to look at it as something favourable, it will no longer be unpleasant for you. This is quite well known; as long as the mind refuses to accept a thing, struggles against it, tries to obstruct it, there are torments, difficulties, storms, inner struggles and all suffering. But the minute the mind says, "Good, this is what has to come, it is thus that it must happen", whatever happens, you are content. There are people who have acquired such control of their mind over their body that they feel nothing; I told you this the other day about certain mystics: if they think the suffering inflicted upon them is going to help them cross the stages in a moment and give them a sort of stepping-stone to attain the Realisation, the goal they have put before them, union with the Divine, they no longer feel the suffering at all. Their body is as it were galvanised by the mental conception. This has happened very often, it is a very

common experience among those who truly have enthusiasm. And after all, if one must for some reason or other leave one's body and take a new one, is it not better to make of one's death something magnificent, joyful, enthusiastic, than to make it a disgusting defeat? Those who cling on, who try by every possible means to delay the end even by a minute or two, who give you an example of frightful anguish, show that they are not conscious of their soul. ... After all, it is perhaps a means, isn't it? One can change this accident into a means; if one is conscious one can make a beautiful thing of it, a very beautiful thing, as of everything. And note, those who do not fear it, who are not anxious, who can die without any sordidness are those who never think about it, who are not haunted all the time by this "horror" facing them which they must escape and which they try to push as far away from them as they can. These, when the occasion comes, can lift their head, smile and say, "Here I am."

It is they who have the will to make the best possible use of their life, it is they who say, "I shall remain here as long as it is necessary, to the last second, and I shall not lose one moment to realise my goal"; these, when the necessity comes, put up the best show. Why? — It is very simple, because they live in their ideal, the truth of their ideal; because that is the real thing for them, the very reason of their being, and in all things they can see this ideal, this reason of existence, and never do they come down into the sordidness of material life.¹⁷³ — THE MOTHER

Everyone's Life is Appropriate to One's Total Development

You have been put upon earth, in a physical body, with a definite aim, which is to make this body as conscious as possible, make it the most perfect and most conscious instrument of the Divine. He has given you a certain amount of substance and of matter in all the domains — mental, vital and physical — in proportion to what He expects from you, and all the circumstances around you are also in proportion to what He expects of you, and those who

with their psychic being. If you want to speak about outer circumstances — I am not speaking of the character, that's quite different, but of outer circumstances — the people who have to struggle most and would have most reason to suffer are those who have a very developed psychic being.

First, the development of the psychic being has a double result which is concomitant. That is, with the development of the psychic being, the sensitivity of the being grows. And with the growth of sensitivity there is also the growth of the capacity for suffering; but there is the counterpart, that is, to the extent to which one is in relation with the psychic being, one faces the circumstances of life in an altogether different way and with a kind of inner freedom which makes one capable of withdrawing from a circumstance and not feeling the shock in the ordinary way. You can face the difficulty or outer things with calm, peace, and a sufficient inner knowledge not to be troubled. So, on one side you are more sensitive and on the other you have more strength to deal with the sensitivity.¹⁸⁷

— THE MOTHER

It Is One's Own Inner Being That Creates Outer Difficulties to Help Its Progress

... when you live in an ordinary consciousness, and to the extent you remain on a certain plane which is a combination of the most material mind, vital, physical, that is, the ordinary plane of life, you are subject to the determinism of this plane and it is this subjection to the determinism of this plane which puts you exactly in these conditions, for you have deep within you something which aspires for another life but doesn't yet know how to live that other life, and which pushes from inside in order to get the conditions necessary for this other life. These are inner conditions, they are not outer conditions. But this takes its support on outside obstacles in order to strengthen itself in its will to progress; and so, if you look at it from within, you can even say that it is you yourself who create the difficulties to help you to go forward.¹⁸⁸

— THE MOTHER

Difficulties Are Ordeals and Tests

All these difficulties should be faced in a more quiet and less egoistic spirit.

This yoga is a spiritual battle; its very attempt raises all sorts of adverse forces and one must be ready to face difficulties, sufferings, reverses of all sorts in a calm unflinching spirit.

The difficulties that come are ordeals and tests and if one meets them in the right spirit, one comes out stronger and spiritually purer and greater.

No misfortune can come, the adverse forces cannot touch or be victorious unless there is some defect in oneself, some impurity, weakness or, at the very least, ignorance. One should then seek out this weakness in oneself and correct it.

When there is an attack from the human instruments of adverse forces, one should try to overcome it not in a spirit of personal hatred or anger or wounded egoism, but with a calm spirit of strength and equanimity and a call to the Divine Force to act. Success or failure lies with the Divine.¹⁸⁹

— SRI AUROBINDO

When there is something in the nature that has to be got over, it is always drawing on itself incidents that put it to the test till the sadhak has overcome and is free. At least it is a thing that often happens especially if the person is making a sincere effort to overcome. One does not always know whether it is the hostiles who are trying to break the resolution or putting it to the test (for they claim the right to do it) or whether it is, let us say, the gods who are doing it so as to press and hasten the progress or insisting on the surety and thoroughness of the change aspired after. Perhaps it helps most when one can take it from the latter standpoint.¹⁹⁰

— SRI AUROBINDO

Difficulties Are for the Strong

The difficulties are for the strong, and help to make them stronger.¹⁹¹

— THE MOTHER

Our ordeals never exceed our capacity of resistance.¹⁹²

— THE MOTHER

Difficulties Are Always Blessings

Difficulties are always blessings if we know how to face them.¹⁹³

— THE MOTHER

Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.¹⁹⁴

— THE MOTHER

O Misfortune, blessed be thou; for through thee I have seen the face of my Lover. — Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*

If through misfortune one sees the face of God, then it is no longer misfortune, is it?

Obviously, far from being a misfortune, it is a blessing. And this is precisely what Sri Aurobindo means.

When things happen which are not what we expect, what we hope for, what we want, which are contrary to our desires, in our ignorance we call them misfortunes and lament. But if we were to become a little wiser and observe the deeper consequences of these very same events, we would find that they are leading us rapidly towards the Divine, the Beloved; whereas easy and pleasant circumstances encourage us to dally on the path, to stop along the way to pluck the flowers of pleasure which present themselves to us and which we are too weak or not sincere enough to reject

resolutely, so that our march forward is not delayed.

One must already be very strong, very far along the way, to be able to face success and the little enjoyments it brings without giving way. Those who can do this, those who are strong, do not run after success; they do not seek it, and accept it with indifference. For they know and appreciate the value of the lashes given by unhappiness and misfortune.

But ultimately the *true* attitude, the sign and proof that we are near the goal, is a perfect equality which enables us to accept success and failure, fortune and misfortune, happiness and sorrow with the same tranquil joy; for all these things become marvellous gifts that the Lord in his infinite solicitude showers upon us.¹⁹⁵

— THE MOTHER

Becoming Conscious of Inner Difficulties Is a Grace

The egoism, desires, faults of the nature are in everybody very much the same. But once one begins to be conscious of them and has the will to be free, then one has only to keep that will and there will be no real danger. For when one begins to be conscious in the way you have begun and something from within raises up all that was hidden, it means that the Mother's grace is on your nature and her force is working and your inner being is aiding the Mother's force to get rid of all these things. So you must not be sorrowful or discouraged or fear anything but look steadily at all that comes out and have the will that it should go completely and for ever. With the Mother's force working and the psychic being supporting the force, all *can be done* and all will surely be done.¹⁹⁶

— SRI AUROBINDO

When you want to make a progress, the difficulty you wished to conquer increases tenfold in importance and intensity in *your* consciousness. You have only to persevere. That is all; it will pass away.¹⁹⁷

— THE MOTHER

One is aware of one's difficulties only insofar as one can change them and at the moment when one can make the change.¹⁹⁸

— THE MOTHER

Surfacing of an Inner Difficulty Is a Call and an Opportunity

You are quite right — that is the way you must take it, that here is an opportunity given to you for overcoming this stumbling-block in the nature. When one does sadhana it is constantly seen that so long as there is an important defect somewhere, circumstances so happen that the occasion comes for the defect to rise until it is thrown out of the being. If one can take the coming of these circumstances clairvoyantly as a call and an opportunity for conquering the defect, then one can progress very quickly.¹⁹⁹

— SRI AUROBINDO

When some weakness comes up you should take it as an opportunity to know what is still to be done and call down the strength into that part. Despondency is not the right way to meet it.²⁰⁰

— SRI AUROBINDO

Trust in Grace Turns Difficulties into Opportunities

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

Opportunities for progress? Yes! Well, this is something quite obvious. You have made a big mistake, you are in great difficulty: then, if you have faith, if you have trust in the divine Grace, if you really rely on It, you will suddenly realise that it is a lesson, that your difficulty or mistake is nothing else but a lesson and that it comes to teach you to find within yourself what needs to be changed, and with this help of the divine Grace you will discover in yourself

what has to be changed. And you will change it. And so, from a difficulty you will have made great progress, taken a considerable leap forward. This, indeed, happens all the time. Only, you must be truly sincere, that is, rely on the Grace and let It work in you — not like this: one part of you asking to be helped and another resisting as much as it can, because it doesn't want to change . . . this is the difficulty.²⁰¹

— THE MOTHER

The Two Contradictory Natures

It very often happens that when there is an exceptional power like this in the nature, there is found in the exterior being some contrary element which opens it to a quite opposite influence. It is this that makes the endeavour after a spiritual life so often a difficult struggle: but the existence of this kind of contradiction even in an intense form does not make that life impossible. Doubt, struggle, efforts and failures, lapses, alternations of happy and unhappy or good and bad conditions, states of light and states of darkness are the common lot of human beings. They are not created by yoga or by the effort after perfection; only, in yoga one becomes conscious of their movements and their causes instead of feeling them blindly, and in the end one makes one's way out of them into a clearer and happier consciousness. The ordinary life remains to the last a series of troubles and struggles, but the sadhak of the yoga comes out of the trouble and struggle to a ground of fundamental serenity which superficial disturbances may still touch but cannot destroy, and, finally, all disturbance ceases altogether.

Even the experience which so alarms you, of states of consciousness in which you say and do things contrary to your true will, is not a reason for despair. It is a common experience in one form or another of all who try to rise above their ordinary nature. Not only those who practise yoga, but religious men and even those who seek only a moral control and self-improvement are confronted with this difficulty. And here again it is not the yoga or the effort after perfection that creates this condition, — there are contradictory elements in human nature and in every human

the consciousness free. This is what enables the realisation of the truth and gives aspiration its full power of accomplishment.

From a higher standpoint, this could be put in another way: it is this action, this luminous and liberating influence that is known as "spirit". All that opens to us the road to the supreme realities, pulls us out from the mud of the Ignorance in which we are stuck, opens the doors to us, shows us the path, leads us to where we have to go — this is what man has called "spirit". It is the atmosphere created by the Divine Grace in the universe to save it from the darkness into which it has fallen.

The soul is a kind of individual concentration of this Grace, its individual representative in the human being. The soul is something particular to humanity, it exists only in man. It is like a particular expression of the spirit in the human being. The beings of the other worlds do not have a soul, but they can live in the spirit. One might say that the soul is a delegation of the spirit in mankind, a special help to lead it faster. It is the soul that makes individual progress possible.²¹⁸

— THE MOTHER

In Essence Divine, the Psychic Grows through Evolution

I thought that the soul was perfect in its nature. I don't understand "the ascension of the soul towards the truth from which it springs".

The essence of the soul is divine, but the soul (the psychic being) grows through all the forms of evolution; it becomes more and more individualised and increasingly conscious of itself and its origin.²¹⁹

— THE MOTHER

It Is the Psychic which Makes the Human Being Exceptional

The psychic being is characteristic of man, and if one goes to the bottom of the matter, perhaps this is what gives man his superiority.²²⁰

— THE MOTHER

... if there were no psychic in Matter, it would not be able to have any direct contact with the Divine. And it is happily due to this psychic presence in Matter that the contact between Matter and the Divine can be direct and all human beings can be told, "You carry the Divine within you, and you have only to enter within yourself and you will find Him." It is something very particular to the human being or rather to the inhabitants of the earth. In the human being the psychic becomes more conscious, more formed, more conscious and more independent also. It is individualised in human beings. But it is a speciality of the earth. It is a direct infusion, special and redeeming, in the most inconscient and obscure Matter, so that it might once again awake through stages to the divine Consciousness, the divine Presence and finally to the Divine Himself. It is the presence of the psychic which makes man an exceptional being — I don't like to tell him this very much, because already he thinks too much of himself; he has such a high opinion of himself that it is not necessary to encourage him! But still, this is a fact — so much so that there are beings of other domains of the universe, those called by some people demigods and even gods, beings, for instance, of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, who are very eager to take a physical body on earth to have the experience of the psychic, for they don't have it. These beings certainly have many qualities that men don't, but they lack this divine presence which is altogether exceptional and exists only on the earth and nowhere else. All these inhabitants of the higher worlds, the Higher Mind, Overmind and other regions have no psychic being. Of course, the beings of the vital worlds don't have it either. But these latter don't regret it, they don't want it. There are only those

very rare ones, quite exceptional, who want to be converted, and for this they act without delay, they immediately take a physical body. The others don't want it; it is something which binds them and constrains them to a rule they do not want.

But it is a fact, so I am obliged to state that this is how it is, that it is an exceptional quality of the human being to carry within himself the psychic and, truly speaking, he does not take full advantage from it. He does not seem to consider this quality as something very, very desirable, from the way he treats this presence — exactly that! He prefers to it the ideas of his mind, prefers the desires of his vital being and the habits of his physical.²²¹

— THE MOTHER

... all those beings who have never had an earthly existence — gods or demons, invisible beings and powers — do not possess what the Divine has put into man: the psychic being. And this psychic being gives to man true love, charity, compassion, a deep kindness, which compensate for all his external defects.

In the gods there is no fault because they live according to their own nature, spontaneously and without constraint: as gods, it is their manner of being. But if you take a higher point of view, if you have a higher vision, a vision of the whole, you see that they lack certain qualities that are exclusively human. By his capacity of love and self-giving, man can have as much power as the gods and even more, when he is not egoistic, when he has surmounted his egoism.

If he fulfils the required condition, man is nearer to the Supreme than the gods are. He can be nearer. He is not so automatically, but he has the power to be so, the potentiality.²²²

— THE MOTHER

The Psychic Supports the Growth of the Physical, Vital, Mental Being

Mother, here Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the psychic behind supporting all". What does this mean?*

Well, yes, the psychic is behind the whole organisation, this triple organisation of human life and consciousness, the psychic is behind and supports it by its consciousness which is an immortal one. It is because of the psychic that we have so clear a sense of continuity. Otherwise if you compare what you now are with what you were when you were three, obviously you couldn't recognise yourself in any way, either physically or vitally or mentally. There is no resemblance of any kind. But behind there is the psychic which supports the development, the growth of the being and gives this continuity of consciousness, makes one feel that he is the same being even while being absolutely different, absolutely different. If later one observes himself sufficiently, he can see that the things he understood and could do at that time are things which seem to him absolutely inconceivable now, and that he could never do a similar thing because he is no longer that person at all. And yet, because within there was the psychic consciousness which is immortal, one has the feeling that it is always the same being which was there and continues to be there and will continue to be there with more or less progressive and more or less conscious changes.²²³

— THE MOTHER

Consciousness of the Divine Presence

The Divine is constantly present in the psychic being and the latter is quite conscious of this.²²⁴

— THE MOTHER

Mother, if the psychic always feels the Divine Presence, why does the human being cry and lament the lack of this Presence?

* Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*. (Ed.)

... it is because the contact between the outer consciousness and the psychic consciousness is not well established. He in whom this contact is well established is always happy.²²⁵ — THE MOTHER

Two Forms of the Central Being — Jivatman and Psychic Being

The phrase "central being" in our yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms — above, it is Jivatman, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes, — below, it is the psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life. The Jivatman is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the Child, the Son of God, the Bhakta; it is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember the distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatar or lose balance like Hridaya with Ramakrishna.²²⁶ — SRI AUROBINDO

The word Jiva has two meanings in the Sanskritic tongues — "living creatures"* and the spirit individualised and upholding the living being in its evolution from birth to birth. In the latter sense the full term is Jivatma — the Atman, spirit or eternal self of the living being. It is spoken of figuratively by the Gita as "an eternal portion of the Divine" — but the word fragmentation (used

* In Bengal when one is about to kill a small animal, people often protest saying, "Don't kill — it is Krishna's jiva (his living creature)."

by you) is too strong, it could be applicable to the forms, but not to the spirit in them. Moreover the multiple Divine is an eternal reality antecedent to the creation here. An elaborate description of the Jivatma would be: "the multiple Divine manifested here as the individualised self or spirit of the created being." The Jivatma in its essence does not change or evolve, its essence stands above the personal evolution; within the evolution itself it is represented by the evolving psychic being which supports all the rest of the nature.²²⁷ — SRI AUROBINDO

The central being is the being which presides over the different births one after the other, but is itself unborn, for it does not descend into the being but is above it — it holds together the mental, vital and physical being and all the various parts of the personality and it controls the life either through the mental being and the mental thought and will or through the psychic, whichever may happen to be most in front or most powerful in nature. If it does not exercise its control, then the consciousness is in great disorder and every part of the personality acts for itself so that there is no coherence in the thought, feeling or action.

The psychic is not above but behind — its seat is behind the heart, its power is not knowledge but an essential or spiritual feeling — it has the clearest sense of the Truth and a sort of inherent perception of it which is of the nature of soul-perception and soul-feeling. It is our inmost being and supports all the others, mental, vital, physical, but it is also much veiled by them and has to act upon them as an influence rather than by its sovereign right of direct action; its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development or by yoga.²²⁸

— SRI AUROBINDO

True Individual Self — Truth of the Being

The psychic is the delegate of this Divine in the earth life, for the growth on earth. But the part of the central being which is identi-

fied with the Divine remains identified with the Divine and does not change. Even during life it is identified with the Divine, and after death it remains what it was in life, for it this makes no difference. It is the psychic being which has alternations of experience and assimilation, experience and assimilation. But the Jivatman is in the Divine and remains in the Divine, and doesn't move from there; and it is not progressive. It is in the Divine, it is identified with the Divine, it remains identified with the Divine, not separated. It makes no difference to it, whether there is an earthly body or not.

Then, Sweet Mother, is everyone's central being the same?

No, for we are told that it is identified in multiplicity. It is the eternal truth of each being. From one point of view they are identical, from another they are multiple, because the truth of each being is an individual truth, but it is identified with the Divine. It is outside the manifestation but it is the origin of the manifestation. It is a unity which is not a uniformity.²²⁹

— THE MOTHER

Sweet Mother, the true self and the psychic are the same thing?

No. The true self is what is also called the truth of the being. It is the divine element which is your individual reality. It is the divine element which makes you a separate individuality, and it is at the same time a fragment of the one Being and naturally the one Being itself; that is, while being a particular aspect which makes you an individual, it is an integral part of the One which makes you only an objectivisation of the One.

This is the true self. The psychic being is a terrestrial formation. It is human beings who have a psychic being which has been developed upon earth and by earthly life and which is a projection of the divine Consciousness into Matter to awaken Matter out of its inertia so that it takes the path back to the Divine.

But in certain cases the true self is found in the psychic being, that is, it dwells in the psychic being — but not always.

There is always a divine Presence in the psychic being, but it is the divine Presence which was at the origin of the psychic formation, it is an emanation from the divine Consciousness; whereas the true self is not a terrestrial formation. It precedes the terrestrial formation.²³⁰

— THE MOTHER

Psychic Being — One's Eternal Self and True Individuality

It [the psychic being] is the seat of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Self in the individual being. It is a centre of light and truth and knowledge and beauty and harmony which the Divine Self in each of you creates by his presence, little by little; it is influenced, formed and moved by the Divine Consciousness of which it is a part and parcel. It is in each of you the deep inner being which you have to find in order that you may come in contact with the Divine in you. It is the intermediary between the Divine Consciousness and your external consciousness; it is the builder of the inner life, it is that which manifests in the outer nature the order and rule of the Divine Will. If you become aware in your outer consciousness of the psychic being within you and unite with it, you can find the pure Eternal Consciousness and live in it; instead of being moved by the Ignorance as the human being constantly is, you grow aware of the presence of an eternal light and knowledge within you, and to it you surrender and are integrally consecrated to it and moved by it in all things.

For your psychic being is that part of you which is already given to the Divine. It is its influence gradually spreading from within towards the most outward and material boundaries of your consciousness that will bring about the transformation of your entire nature. There can be no obscurity here; it is the luminous part in you. Most people are unconscious of this psychic part within them; the effort of Yoga is to make you conscious of it, so that the process of your transformation, instead of a slow labour extending through centuries, can be pressed into one life or even a few years.

The psychic being is that which persists after death, because it is your eternal self; it is this that carries the consciousness forward from life to life.

The psychic being is the real individuality of the true and divine individual within you. For your individuality means your special mode of expression and your psychic being is a special aspect of the one Divine Consciousness that has taken shape in you. But in the psychic consciousness there is not that sense of division between the individual and the universal consciousness which affects the other parts of your nature. You are conscious there that your individuality is your own line of expression, but at the same time you know too that it is an expression objectifying the one universal consciousness. It is as though you had taken a portion out of yourself and put it in front of you and there were a mutual look and play of movement between the two. This duality was necessary in order to create and establish the objectivised relation and to enjoy it; but in your psychic being the separation that sharpens the duality is seen to be an illusion, an appearance and nothing more.²³¹

— THE MOTHER

Psychic Being and Inner Being

It is not the psychic being which, you feel, gives you the intuitions of things to be or warns you against the results of certain actions; that is some part of the inner being, sometimes the inner mental, sometimes the inner vital, sometimes, it may be, the inner or subtle physical Purusha. The inner being — inner mind, inner vital, inner or subtle physical — knows much that is unknown to the outer mind, the outer vital, the outer physical, for it is in a more direct contact with the secret forces of Nature. The psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege.²³²

— SRI AUROBINDO

The Psychic to Be Distinguished from Certain Mimicking Parts of the Being

*"If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this Yoga can be done . . ."** Why has he said "the inmost soul"? Is there a superficial soul?

It is because this inmost soul, that is, the central psychic being, influences the superficial parts of the consciousness (superficial in comparison with it: mental parts, vital parts). The purest mind, the highest vital, the emotive being — the soul influences them, influences them to an extent where one has the impression of entering into contact with it through these parts of the being. So people take these parts for the soul and that is why he says "the inmost soul", that is, the central soul, the real soul.

For very often, when one touches certain parts of the mind which are under the psychic influence and full of light and the joy of that light, or when one touches certain very pure and very high parts of the emotive being which has the most generous, most unselfish emotions, one also has the impression of being in contact with one's soul. But this is not the true soul, it is not the soul in its very essence. These are parts of the being under its influence and manifesting something of it. So, very often people enter into contact with these parts and this gives them illuminations, great joy, revelations, and they feel they have found their soul. But it is only the part of the being under its influence, one part or another, for . . . Exactly what happens is that one touches these things, has experiences, and then it gets veiled, and one wonders, "How is it that I touched my soul and now have fallen back into this state of ignorance and inconstancy?" But that's because one had not touched one's soul, one had touched those parts of the being which are under the influence of the soul and manifest something of it, but are not it.

I have already said many times that when one enters conscious-

* Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*. (Ed.)

ly into contact with one's soul and the union is established, it is over, it can no longer be undone, it is something permanent, constant, which resists everything, and which, at any moment whatever, if referred to can be found; whereas the other things — one can have very fine experiences, and then it gets veiled again, and one tells oneself, "How does that happen? I saw my soul and now I don't find it any more!" It was not the soul *one* had seen. And these things are very beautiful and give you very impressive experiences, but this is not the contact with the psychic being itself.

The contact with the psychic being is definitive, and it is about this that I say, when people ask, "Do I have a contact with my psychic being?", "Your question itself proves that you don't have it!"²³³

— THE MOTHER

Conscience Not a Voice of the Soul

Sri Aurobindo says that the voice of the ordinary conscience is not the voice of the soul. What is it then?

The voice of the ordinary conscience is an ethical voice, a moral voice which distinguishes between good and evil, encourages us to do good and forbids us to do evil. This voice is very useful in ordinary life, until one is able to become conscious of one's psychic being and allow oneself to be entirely guided by it — in other words, to rise above ordinary humanity, free oneself from all egoism and become a conscious instrument of the Divine Will. The soul itself, being a portion of the Divine, is above all moral and ethical notions; it bathes in the Divine Light and manifests it, but it can truly govern the whole being only when the ego has been dissolved.²³⁴

— THE MOTHER

The Psychic Is Always Pure

In everybody, is the psychic always pure or has it to be made pure?

It is always pure. But it is either more or less individualised and independent in its action. What is psychic in the being is always pure, by its very definition, for it is that part of the being which is in contact with the Divine and expresses the truth of the being. But this may be like a spark in the darkness of the being or it may be a being of light, conscious, fully formed and independent. There are all the gradations between the two.²³⁵

— THE MOTHER

Aspiration and Will for Progress Come from the Psychic

Fundamentally, without this kind of inner will of the psychic being, I believe human beings would be quite dismal, dull, they would have an altogether animal life. Every gleam of aspiration is always the expression of a psychic influence. Without the presence of the psychic, without the psychic influence, there would never be any sense of progress or any will for progress.²³⁶

— THE MOTHER

... it is in this centre [the heart], in this region of the being that you find the will to progress, the force of purification, and the most intense and effective aspiration. The aspiration that comes from the heart is much more effective than that from the head.²³⁷

— THE MOTHER

Will of the Psychic

Is it the psychic will which wants the being to be identified with the Divine?

Yes, surely. It is the will of the psychic. It is also the very reason of its existence. It is for that it is there. For example, in the mind certain activities (and even at times in the physical and vital) certain activities awaken to the influence of the psychic without even knowing it. That is why those parts adhere to it and begin to aspire

In the psychic? Yes, you have even the consciousness of all the lives you have lived. When you enter into contact with the psychic you become conscious of all the lives you have lived, it keeps the absolutely living memory of all the events in which the psychic took part — not the whole life, not that one can tell little stories to oneself: that first one was a monkey and then later something a little higher, and so on, the cave-man . . . no, no stories like that. But all the events of former lives in which the psychic participated are preserved, and when one enters into conscious contact with his psychic being this can be called up like a sort of cinema. But it has no continuity except in lives in which the psychic is absolutely conscious, active, permanently active, that is, constantly associated with the consciousness; so naturally, being constantly associated with the consciousness, it consciously remembers everything that has happened in the real life of the person, and the memories — when one follows these things — the memories of his psychic being are more and more coordinated and closer and closer to what could be a physical memory if there were one, in any case of all the intellectual and emotional elements of life, and of some physical events when it was possible for this being to manifest in the outer consciousness; then, at these moments, the whole set of physical circumstances in which one was is kept absolutely intact in the consciousness.²⁶³

— THE MOTHER

The Psychic — Real Cause of Turning to the Spiritual Life

It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the yoga.²⁶⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

Grace Guides Life through the Psychic

Mother, is the orientation of an individual's life directed by the psychic?

Yes. Absolutely unconsciously for the individual, most of the time; but it is the psychic which organises his existence — only in what may be called the main lines, because for intervening in the details there would have to be a conscious union between the outer being, that is, the vital and physical being, and the psychic being, but usually this does not exist. So externally, in the details . . . for example, there was someone who in deep perplexity said to me, "Well, if it is the psychic being or rather the Divine in the psychic who directs our life, is it He who decides the number of pieces of sugar I put in my tea-cup?" That was the question, verbatim. So the answer had to be, "No, because it is not a detailed intervention of this kind."

It is as when you push your fist into a heap of iron filings or saw-dust, all the infinitesimal little elements of the iron filings or saw-dust are organised to take on the form of your fist, but they do not do this either deliberately or consciously. It is through the work of the consciousness which pushes that this kind of thing happens. There is no decision that each element is going to be exactly in this place, like that; it is the effect of the energy which has pushed the fist that organises the elements. But that's how it is. There is the psychic consciousness at work in life, organising all the circumstances of your life but not with a deliberate choice of the details; and in fact very few things are deliberate and conscious in the organisation of the physical life of human beings.²⁶⁵

— THE MOTHER

Can there be some parts which serve the Divine without our being aware of it?

Yes, yes. In fact there are some which not only always seek the Divine but have an intense aspiration, and one is not aware of

them. The psychic being is like that, and it is always there. But one becomes aware of it only very rarely. It is so veiled, you see. I spoke a while ago of the outer crust. It is really like a crust. It is something hard, thick, without any transparency, which lets no vibrations pass, and one lives so constantly inside this that one is not even aware that there is something else. But there is, there is indeed right in the depths of the being — specially of those who are predestined, that's understood, but still — a being which not only presides over one's destiny, not only aspires for identification with the Divine, but has the power to govern the circumstances of life and, in fact, to organise them in spite of the outer will which very often revolts and does not want the circumstances as this inner consciousness — which is fully clear-sighted — has organised them. And it is only much later, when one becomes aware of it and looks back at his life, that one realises that all this was wonderfully organised with a complete clear-sightedness of what was necessary, in order to lead him there, just where he had to go.

Most often the things which you took for accidents or misfortunes or even tragedies or even for the blows of fate, for attacks of the adverse forces, all this, almost all without any exception, was a marvellously perspicacious and admirably executed plan to lead you just where you had to go by the shortest road.

Of course this is not always absolute, because it depends on the importance of the individual in relation to the importance of the surrounding circumstances. That is why I said at the beginning: every predestined being. What I mean by "predestined" is a being who has come down upon earth to accomplish a precise mission and who, naturally, will be helped in the accomplishment of this mission. It may be a very modest mission but it is a precise one that he has to accomplish upon earth. Well, all these beings . . . their life is organised in this way; but ninety-nine and a half per cent are not aware of it, and they revolt or lament or . . . And then, above all, they pity themselves greatly and lament their own difficulties, their own miseries, their own sufferings, and caress themselves gently: "Oh, my poor little one, how unhappy you are!" But it is their inner being which has done everything.²⁶⁶

— THE MOTHER

It is usually the psychic which guides the being. One knows nothing about it because one is not conscious of it but usually it is that which guides the being. If one is very attentive, one becomes aware of it. But the majority of men haven't the least idea of it. For instance, when they have decided, in their outer ignorance, to do something, and instead of their being able to do it, all the circumstances are so organised that they do something else, they start shouting, storming, flying into a rage against fate, saying (that depends on what they believe, their beliefs) that Nature is wicked or their destiny baleful or God unjust, or . . . no matter what (it depends on what they believe). Whilst most of the time it is just the very circumstance which was most favourable for their inner development. And naturally, if you ask the psychic to help you to fashion a pleasant life for yourself, to earn money, have children who will be the pride of the family, etc., well, the psychic will not help you. But it will create for you all the circumstances necessary to awaken something in you so that the need of union with the Divine may be born in your consciousness. At times you have made fine plans, and if they had succeeded, you would have been more and more encrusted in your outer ignorance, your stupid little ambition and your aimless activity. Whilst if you receive a good shock, and the post you coveted is denied to you, the plan you made is shattered, and you find yourself completely thwarted, then, sometimes this opposition opens to you a door on something truer and deeper. And when you are a little awake and look back, if you are in the least sincere, you say: "Ah! it wasn't I who was right — it was Nature or the divine Grace or my psychic being who did it." It is the psychic being which organised that.²⁶⁷

— THE MOTHER

Some people say there is something outside their own will that organises their whole life, that puts them in the required condition, that attracts favourable circumstances or people, that arranges everything outside them, so to say. In their outer consciousness, perhaps they wanted something and worked for it, but something else came. Well, after some years, they realise that this is what

really had to happen. You may know nothing of the existence of a psychic being within you and yet be guided by it. For, in order to become aware of something, you must first of all admit that this thing exists. Some people don't. I have known people who had a genuine contact with their psychic being without knowing at all what it was, because there was nothing in them that corresponded to the knowledge of this contact.²⁶⁸ — THE MOTHER

When you are in a particular set of circumstances and certain events take place, these events often oppose your desire or what seems best to you, and often you happen to regret this and say to yourself, "Ah! how good it would have been if it were otherwise, if it had been like this or like that", for little things and big things . . . Then years pass by, events are unfolded; you progress, become more conscious, understand better, and when you look back, you notice — first with astonishment, then later with a smile — that those very circumstances which seemed to you quite disastrous or unfavourable, were exactly the best thing that could have happened to you to make you progress as you should have. And if you are the least bit wise you tell yourself, "Truly, the divine Grace is infinite."

So, when this sort of thing has happened to you a number of times, you begin to understand that in spite of the blindness of man and deceptive appearances, the Grace is at work everywhere, so that at every moment it is the best possible thing that happens in the state the world is in at that moment. It is because our vision is limited or even because we are blinded by our own preferences that we cannot discern that things are like this.

But when one begins to see it, one enters upon a state of wonder which nothing can describe. For behind the appearances one perceives this Grace — infinite, wonderful, all-powerful — which knows all, organises all, arranges all, and leads us, whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, towards the supreme goal, that is, union with the Divine, the awareness of the Godhead and union with Him.

Then one lives in the Action and Presence of the Grace a life

full of joy, of wonder, with the feeling of a marvellous strength, and at the same time with a trust so calm, so complete, that nothing can shake it any longer.

And when one is in this state of perfect receptivity and perfect adherence, one diminishes to that extent the resistance of the world to the divine Action; consequently, this is the best collaboration one can bring to the Action of the Divine. One understands what He wants and, with all one's consciousness, adheres to His Will.²⁶⁹ — THE MOTHER

Mutual Help between the Outer Being and the Psychic

Mother, does an individual's life depend on the experience his psychic being wants to have?

Very much!

I was just speaking about this with someone today, and I said that if one can become fully conscious of one's psychic being, at the same time one understands, necessarily, the reason of one's present existence and the experience this psychic being wants to have; and instead of having it somewhat half consciously and more than half unconsciously, one can shorten this experience and so help one's psychic being to cover in a limited number of years the experiences it would perhaps take several lifetimes to go through. That is to say, the help is mutual. The psychic, when it has an influence on the outer life, brings to it light, order and quietude and the joy of the divine contact. But also the physical being, the body-consciousness — if it is identified with the psychic consciousness, and through that learns what kind of experience the psychic being wants to have — can help it to have these experiences in a very brief time, and not only save time but save many lives for the psychic being. It is a mutual help.

In brief, this is what yoga means. Yoga helps you to become fully conscious of your destiny, that is, your mission in the universe, and not only at the present moment but what it was in the

... so long as there is any doubt or hesitation, so long as one asks oneself the question of whether one has or hasn't realised this eternal soul in oneself, it proves that the *true* contact has not taken place. For, when the phenomenon occurs, it brings with it an inexpressible something, so new and so definitive, that doubt and questioning are no longer possible. It is truly, in the absolute sense of the phrase, a new birth.

You become a new person, and whatever may be the path or the difficulties of the path afterwards, that feeling never leaves you. It is not even something — like many other experiences — which withdraws, passes into the background, leaving you externally with a kind of vague memory to which it is difficult to cling, whose remembrance grows faint, blurred — it is not that. You are a new person and definitively that, whatever happens. And even all the incapacity of the mind, all the difficulties of the vital, all the inertia of the physical are unable to change this new state — a new state which makes a *decisive* break in the life of the consciousness. The being one was before and the being one is after, are no longer the same. The position one has in the universe and in relation to it, in life and in relation to it, in understanding and in relation to it, is no longer the same: it is a true reversal which can never be undone again. That is why when people tell me, "I would like to know whether I am in contact with my soul or not", I say, "If you ask the question, that is enough to prove that you are not. You don't need an answer, you are giving it to yourself." When it is *that*, it is that, and then it is finished, it is no longer anything else.²⁷⁸

— THE MOTHER

... spiritual rebirth means the constant throwing away of our previous associations and circumstances and proceeding to live as if at each virgin moment we were starting life anew. It is to be free of what is called Karma, the stream of our past actions: in other words, a liberation from the bondage of Nature's common activity of cause and effect. When this cutting away of the past is triumphantly accomplished in the consciousness, all those mistakes, blunders, errors and follies which, still vivid in our

recollection, cling to us like leeches sucking our life-blood, drop away, leaving us most joyfully free. This freedom is not a mere matter of thought; it is the most solid, practical, material fact. We really are free, nothing binds us, nothing affects us, there is no obsession of responsibility. If we want to counteract, annul or outgrow our past, we cannot do it by mere repentance or similar things, we must forget that the untransformed past has ever been and enter into an enlightened state of consciousness which breaks loose from all moorings. To be reborn means to enter, first of all, into our psychic consciousness where we are one with the Divine and eternally free from the reactions of Karma. Without becoming aware of the psychic, it is not possible to do so; but once we are securely conscious of the true soul in us which is always surrendered to the Divine, all bondage ceases. Then incessantly life begins afresh, then the past no longer cleaves to us.²⁷⁹

— THE MOTHER

Ego Destined to Give Way to the Psychic Being

When humanity was first created, the ego was the unifying element. It was around the ego that the different states of being were grouped; but now that the birth of superhumanity is being prepared, the ego has to disappear and give way to the psychic being, which has slowly been formed by divine intervention in order to manifest the Divine in the human being.

It is under the psychic influence that the Divine manifests in man and thus prepares the coming of superhumanity.

The psychic is immortal and it is through the psychic that immortality can be manifested on earth.

So the important thing now is to find one's psychic, unite with it and allow it to replace the ego, which will be compelled either to get converted or disappear.²⁸⁰

— THE MOTHER

The Psychic's Awakening and Its Coming to the Front

What is meant by [the psychic's] coming to the front is simply this. The psychic ordinarily is deep within. Very few people are aware of their souls — when they speak of their soul, they usually mean the vital + mental being or else the (false) soul of desire. The psychic remains behind and acts only through the mind, vital and physical wherever it can. For this reason the psychic being except where it is very much developed has only a small and partial, concealed and mixed or diluted influence on the life of most men. By coming forward is meant that it comes from behind the veil, its presence is felt already in the waking daily consciousness, its influence fills, dominates, transforms the mind and vital and their movements, even the physical. One is aware of one's soul, feels the psychic to be one's true being, the mind and the rest begin to be only instruments of the inmost within us.²⁸¹

— SRI AUROBINDO

The psychic being is always there, but is not felt because it is covered up by the mind and vital; when it is no longer covered up, it is then said to be awake. When it is awake, it begins to take hold of the rest of the being, to influence it and change it so that all may become the true expression of the inner soul. It is this change that is called the inner conversion. There can be no conversion without the awakening of the psychic being.²⁸²

— SRI AUROBINDO

... if the psychic is awake and in front, it becomes easy to remain conscious of the things that have to be changed in the external nature and it is comparatively easy too to change them. But if the psychic gets veiled and retires in the background, the outer nature left to itself finds it difficult to remain conscious of its own wrong movements and even with great effort cannot succeed in getting rid of them.²⁸³

— SRI AUROBINDO

When the psychic being awakens, you grow conscious of your own soul; you know your self. And you no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or with the vital being. You do not mistake them for the soul.

Secondly, when awakened, the psychic being gives true bhakti for God or for the Guru. That bhakti is quite different from mental or vital bhakti.

... Thirdly, when the psychic being comes to the surface, it feels sad when the mental or the vital being is making a fool of itself. That sadness is purity offended.

... Lastly, the psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be depressed by falsehood — nor does it exaggerate the truth. For example, even if everything around says, "There is no God", the psychic being refuses to believe in it. It says, "I know, and I know because I feel."²⁸⁴

— SRI AUROBINDO

Is identification with the psychic the same thing as the psychic coming in front?

That is, the first step is the identification, and then, once you can keep this identification, the psychic governs the rest of the nature and life. It becomes the master of existence. So this is what we mean by the psychic coming in front. It is that which governs, directs, even organises the life, organises the consciousness, the different parts of the being. When this happens, the work goes very fast. Very fast....²⁸⁵

— THE MOTHER

By what signs can one tell that the psychic being has come to the surface?

One feels peaceful and happy, full of trust, full of a deep and true benevolence, and very close to the divine presence.²⁸⁶

— THE MOTHER

Awakening of the Psychic Indispensable in the Integral Yoga

The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature. One may practise yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does 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. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the supramental cannot find a sufficient base in a spiritualised mind alone. If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible....²⁸⁷

— SRI AUROBINDO

Methods for Discovering the Psychic

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. Whatever you do, whatever your occupations and activities, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must be always living and present behind all that you do, all that you feel, all that you think.²⁸⁸

— THE MOTHER

What is the difference between mechanical, religious and psychological methods? Religious methods are those adopted by the various religions. Not many religions speak of the inner Truth; for them, it is more a matter of coming into contact with their God. Heaven and hell: this is a roundabout way of saying...*

Psychological methods are those that deal with states of consciousness, that try to realise the inner self by withdrawing from all activity and attempting to create the conscious inner conditions of detachment, self-abstraction, concentration, higher Reality, renunciation of all the outer movements, etc. A psychological method is one which acts on the thoughts, feelings and actions.

Mechanical methods are those which are based on purely mechanical means — one can benefit from them by using them in a certain way. Take breath-control, for example: it acts more or less mechanically, but it is sometimes recommended to add to this a concentration of one's thought, to repeat a word, as in Vivekananda's teaching. This works up to a certain point, but then it fades away. These human attempts in various times and places have been more or less successful individually but they have never given a collective result.

The psychological method is far more difficult but far more effective: through your actions, to be in a state of inner will to express nothing in yourself but the Truth of your being, and to

* Words missing in the transcription.

make everything dependent on that Truth. Of course, if you do nothing, it is easier, but it is also easier to deceive yourself. When you sit down in isolation, in complete silence and far away from everybody, and examine yourself with more or less indulgent eyes, you may imagine that you are realising something wonderful. But when you are put to the test at every minute of your life, when you have the occasion to become aware of your imperfections, your infirmities, your little movements of bad will a hundred times a day, you soon lose the illusion of being . . . * and so your efforts are more sincere.²⁸⁹

— THE MOTHER

Some Guidance for Discovery of the Psychic

It is through this psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life. In most cases the presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable and even, in a very few, the presence becomes tangible and its action fully effective. These go forward in life with an assurance and a certitude all their own; they are masters of their destiny. It is for the purpose of obtaining this mastery and becoming conscious of the psychic presence that psychic education should be practised. But for that there is need of a special factor, the personal will. For till now, the discovery of the psychic being and identification with it have not been among the recognised subjects of education, and although one can find in special treatises useful and practical hints on the subject, and although in exceptional cases one may have the good fortune of meeting someone who is capable of showing the way and giving the help that is needed to follow it, most often the attempt is left to one's own personal initiative. The discovery is a personal matter and a great determination, a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, trace out his own path through his own difficulties. The goal is

* Words missing in the transcription.

known to some extent, for most of those who have reached it have described it more or less clearly. But the supreme value of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, its ingenuousness, and that escapes all ordinary mental laws. And that is why anyone wanting to take up the adventure usually first seeks out some person who has successfully undertaken it and is able to sustain him and enlighten him on his way. Yet there are some solitary travellers and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you decentralise, extend and widen yourself; you begin to live in all things and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings, live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvellous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation; there are others, many others. All help you to go beyond the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with snares and problems to be solved, which demand an unflinching determination. It is like the explorer's trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land, of some great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery which requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few simple words of advice may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have

written on this subject have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice. And yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always alert to discover what progress you still have to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act in this way; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth,

concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass, only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing laboriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon you by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.²⁹⁰

— THE MOTHER

Glossary of Names, Sanskrit Terms, and Special Terms

The philosophical and psychological terms in this glossary are defined mostly in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

adverse forces — see hostile forces

Agni — the godhead of fire; the fire of aspiration, purification, transformation.

Ananda — delight, beatitude, bliss.

anumantā — giver of the sanction.

aspiration — the call of the being for higher things; for the Divine, for all that belongs to the higher or divine consciousness.

Asura — a hostile, anti-divine being, in revolt against the Divine, against the Light and the Truth.

asūyā — envy, carping.

Atma(n) — the Self; the Spirit; the original and essential nature of our existence; the spiritual being above the mind. In its nature the Atman is transcendent or universal (Paramatma, Atma); when it individualises and becomes a central being, it is then the Jivatman.

Bhakti — love for the Divine; devotion to the Divine.

Brahmananda, Swami — (1863-1922), the first president of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission.

calm — a still, unmoved condition which no disturbance can affect; a strong and positive quietude, firm and solid.

central being — the term is generally applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. It has two forms: the Jivatman, which is *above* the manifestation in life and presides over it; and the psychic being which stands *behind* mind, life and body in the manifestation and uses them as its instruments.

consciousness — the self-aware force of existence. The essence of consciousness is the power to be aware of itself and its objects; but it is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has a dynamic and creative energy.

conversion — a turning away of the being from lower things towards the Divine.

Coué, Émile — (1857-1926). French pharmacist and psychotherapist. He is remembered for his formula for curing by optimistic autosuggestion: "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better."

Dhammapada, the — probably the best known book in the Pali Bud-

215. CWM 3:150, 151
216. CWM 4:137
217. SABCL 22:300
218. CWM 9:430
219. CWM 17:78
220. CWM 15:327
221. CWM 6:160-61
222. CWM 15:380
223. CWM 7:221-22
224. CWM 16:167
225. CWM 16:167-68
226. SABCL 22:265-66
227. SABCL 22:266
228. SABCL 22:269
229. CWM 7:227-28
230. CWM 7:105-06
231. CWM 3:62-63
232. SABCL 22:269
233. CWM 7:263-64
234. CWM 16:249-50
235. CWM 5:394
236. CWM 4:165
237. CWM 6:389
238. CWM 5:395
239. CWM 7:422-24
240. CWM 4:246
241. CWM 15:556-57
242. CWM 14:351
243. CWM 14:351
244. CWM 9:16-17
245. CWM 7:76
246. CWM 14:353
247. CWM 14:359
248. CWM 16:410
249. CWM 16:412-13
250. SABCL 24:1095
251. SABCL 22:299
252. CWM 16:268
253. SABCL 24:1121
254. SABCL 24:1120
255. CWM 17:106
256. CWM 8:252
257. CWM 5:205-07
258. CWM 10:29-30
259. CWM 3:124-25
260. CWM 5:359
261. CWM 9:268-70
262. CWM 3:148-49
263. CWM 7:221
264. SABCL 22:288
265. CWM 7:222-23
266. CWM 6:386-87
267. CWM 5:394-95
268. CWM 15:327
269. CWM 8:257-58
270. CWM 6:447-48
271. CWM 16:249
272. CWM 16:248
273. CWM 16:397
274. CWM 7:273
275. CWM 16:223-24
276. CWM 8:402-05
277. CWM 8:172-75
278. CWM 9:336-37
279. CWM 3:176-77
280. CWM 16:432
281. SABCL 24:1097
282. SABCL 24:1096
283. SABCL 24:1101
284. SABCL 24:1103-04
285. CWM 6:334
286. CWM 17:74
287. SABCL 24:1095
288. CWM 12:4-5
289. CWM 15:324-25
290. CWM 12:32-35