February 24, 1962

Something seems to have changed.

For a long time, several months, things were constantly on the brink, and dangerously so; I felt they could go either this way or that. Then on my birthday¹ something suddenly tilted. All at once a formation seemed to have been lifted, a formation weighing terribly on ... I won't say on what, because it appeared to be everything ... it was lifted with the sweep of a hand, exactly the same movement Sri Aurobindo used for taking away illnecessities.²

It has made a tremendous change for this body, as though I had abruptly gotten out of a very tight corner.

And in the afternoon, I had a funny experience at the Playground.³ When I got down from the car to go inside, I felt.... For close to a year now I have been saddled with (I mean it was imposed on me) a useless pair of legs: weak, awkward, old, worn out — worthless. I constantly had to will them to walk, and even then they were more than clumsy. And it was all swept away in the same manner (sweeping gesture). I literally almost danced! Imagine, getting rid of a pair of legs just like that! INSTANTLY my legs felt the way they used to (I have always had strong legs) — that alert, solid, agile strength — and I had to restrain myself from cavorting about! “Ah, now we can walk!” “Keep calm,” I had to tell them, or they would have started skipping and prancing!

And they stayed that way, there was no relapse. I was waiting to see if it would last — it did. Something seems to be over with now.

But what was that formation?

I don't know.

Because.... I've noticed there are always several ways of explaining things. But certainly one very common explanation would be that it was some type of magic spell — for my health too.

The last time X came, I was very ill the day he arrived and he was called to my room upstairs — actually I wanted him to come upstairs for several reasons, so he could see certain things.... But he didn't see a thing, or if he did, he was reluctant to say so. “Oh, it's a physical ailment,” he said (it isn't true, I had no physical ailment — perhaps he didn't want to say it), “it's a physical ailment; something may be acting from outside, but it doesn't amount to much.” But it seems to me the formation was made a long time ago — I was always feeling attacked — and it must have been skillfully made!⁴

It was that or else, as I often thought, some necessary preparation for the work — something that had to be done.

It touched all the parts of my body and all the workings of the organs in succession — very, very methodically.

But is it necessary? Is all this disorganization necessary? Perhaps I call it disorganization when it isn't.... You know, we are totally ignorant in that realm. We have our old human ways

¹ Mother was 84 on February 21.
² Mother used to say that when Sri Aurobindo cured somebody, one often saw a subtle hand come with a current of blue force and seize, as it were, the vibration of the illness or disorder between its fingertips.
³ On the afternoon of the 21st, Mother went to watch a performance given by the children.
⁴ Since the black-magic attack in December 1958.
of seeing, but when it comes to the body's functioning, we know nothing about what's good or not. Or even what's painful or not: the body's initial impulse is to feel the pain, but upon reflection and attentive observation, we see it is simply an intensity of sensation we're not used to. So it could well have been that. And if we were used to it (and especially if we didn't think of it as something troublesome), we would feel quite differently about it. In any case, it's not something unbearable — we can bear a lot of things, much more than we imagine.

I am not sure, you see. We keep going on with old notions, old routines and old habits — what can we possibly know!

Anyway, this thing had to follow its course and wind up somewhere.

I should mention that three or four days before my birthday something apparently very troublesome happened (it could have been troublesome, anyway), and it made me wonder: “Will I be able to do what I have to on the 21st?” I wasn't happy about it. “No,” I said, “I can't let these people down when they're expecting so much from this day; that's not right.” So throughout the 20th I stayed exclusively concentrated in a very, very deep, very interiorized invocation, not in the least superficial, far from all emotions and sentiments — something really at the summit of the being. And I remained in contact with That, for everything to be truly for the best, free from any false movement in Matter whatsoever. And that night I was CLEARLY cured; I mean I followed the action and saw myself really and truly cured. When I got up in the morning, I got up cured. All the things I constantly had to do, all the tapasyas just to keep going, were no longer necessary — someone had taken charge of everything, and it was all over and done with. And on the morning of the 21st, with a crowd of two thousand and some hundred people, it went perfectly smoothly, without the slightest hitch. Then in the afternoon I had that very special experience for my legs.

So on the 21st morning I could say quite spontaneously and unhesitatingly, “Today the Lord has given me the gift of healing me.” (I was speaking in English about the things people had given me, and I said, “... and the Lord has given me the gift of healing me.”)

This explanation is clear; and the healing was the result of tapasya. It's self-explanatory. Something was even saying to my body, to the body's SUBSTANCE, “O unbelieving substance, now you won't be able to say there are no miracles.” Throughout all the work that was being done on the 20th, something was saying (I don't know who, because it doesn't come like something foreign to me any more, it's like a Wisdom, it seems like a Wisdom, something that knows: not someone in particular, but ‘that which knows’, whatever its form), something that knows was insisting to the body, by showing it certain things, vibrations, movements, “From now on, O unbelieving substance, you can't say there are no miracles.” Because the substance itself is used to each thing having its effect, to illnesses following a particular course and certain things even being necessary for it to be cured. This process is very subtle, and it doesn't come from the intellect, which can have a totally different interpretation of it; it's rather a kind of consciousness ingrained in physical substance, and that's what was being addressed and being shown certain movements, certain vibrations and so forth: “You see, from now on you can't say there are no miracles.” In other words, a direct intervention of the Lord, who doesn't follow the beaten path, but does things ... in His own way.

There was also that attack (it was rather serious and threw the doctor into a fit of anxiety) which took place, I think, the day before sari distribution. The next morning, throughout the distribution, someone else seemed to have taken possession of my body and to be doing what had to be done, taking care of all the difficulties; I was comfortable, serene, simply like a carefree spectator. I had nothing to worry about, someone was... (What ‘someone’?

5 A heart attack.
6 On February 18, Mother distributed saris and handkerchiefs.
Someone, something, I don't know, there's no more difference, it's not delineated like that any more; but anyway, it was a being, a force, a consciousness — perhaps a part of myself, I don't know; none of this is clear-cut; it's quite precise, but not divided, very smooth — [Mother makes a rounded gesture] — no breaks.) Something, then, a will or a force or a consciousness — plainly a power — had taken possession of the body and was doing all the work, looking after everything. I was witnessing everything, smiling. But it's gone now.

It came specifically for that work (I was in pretty bad shape); when the work was over, it dissolved — it didn't leave abruptly but it became inactive. Afterwards, I felt rather confident. “Well in any case,” I thought, “something similar could happen on the 21st, since it just happened now.”

The 19th was so-so, and on the 20th I was concentrated all day long: no contacts with anyone, nothing external, only an intense invocation ... as intense and concentrated as when you're trying to melt into the Lord at death. It was like that. The same movement of identification, but at its core a will for everything to work out in a good way here [on the material plane]. “In a good way” ... I mean I said to the Lord, “YOUR Good, the true Good, not.... The true Good, a victorious Good, a real progress over the way life is usually lived.” And I stayed in this unwavering concentration the whole day, all the time, all the time: even when I spoke, it was something very external speaking. And then at night when I went to bed I felt something had changed — the body felt completely different. When I got up in the morning, all the pains and disorders and dangers had ... vanished. “Lord,” I said, “You have given me a gift of health....”

And with this change, the bodily substance, the very stuff of the cells, was constantly being told, “Don't you forget, now you see that miracles CAN happen.” In other words, the way things work out in physical substance may not at all conform to the laws of Nature. “Don't forget, now!” It kept coming back like a refrain: “Don't forget, now! This is how it is.” And I saw how necessary this repetition was for the cells: they forget right away and try to find explanations (oh, how stupid can you be!). It's a sort of feeling (not at all an individual way of thinking), it's Matter's way of understanding things, the way Matter is able to understand.

Oh, that's enough talk for now!

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Later:

Do you object to my doing some pranayama7 before I begin working?

I think it would do you good, mon petit.

I began three days ago, but I keep getting entangled with the traditional formation around it: “Oh, it's dangerous, it's dangerous, be careful.” So this morning I thought I'd better speak to you about it.

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7 Pranayama: breathing exercises.
Are you doing it without instructions?

There's a traditional way of doing it, I know the formula.

How does it go?

The time varies. You inhale through the left nostril for let's say 4 seconds, then you hold your breath for 16 seconds, raising the diaphragm and closing all the openings; after 16 seconds you exhale for 8 seconds through the other nostril.

Are these the ‘official’ figures?

Yes; I mean that's the proportion: inhale 4, hold 16, exhale 8.

Sixteen?

It has to be double the exhalation. If you do 8, then it's 8-32-16.

I did it myself for years, using the same system: inhale, hold, exhale, remain empty. But holding the lungs empty is said to be dangerous, so I don't advise it. I did it for years. Without knowing it, Sri Aurobindo and I did it nearly the same way, along with all sorts of other things that aren't supposed to be done! This is to tell you that the danger is mainly in what you think. In the course of certain movements, both of us made the air go out through the crown of the head — apparently that's only to be done when you want to die! (Mother laughs) It didn't kill us.

No, the ‘danger’ is MAINLY a thought formation.

You can achieve excellent control of the heart. But I never practiced it violently, never strained myself. I think holding for 16 is too long. I used to do it simply like this: breathe in very slowly to the count of 4, then hold for 4 like this (I still have the knack of it!), lifting the diaphragm and lowering the head (Mother bends her neck), closing everything and exerting pressure (this is an almost instantaneous cure for hiccups — it's handy!). Then while I held the air, I would make it circulate with the force (because it contained force, you see) and with the peace as well; and I would concentrate it wherever there was a physical disorder (a pain or something wrong somewhere). It's very effective. The way I did it was: inhale, hold, exhale and empty — you are completely empty. It's very useful; very handy for underwater swimmers, for instance!

I had trouble breathing in slowly enough — that's a bit hard. I began with 4 and eventually managed to do 12. I did 12-12-12-12. It took me months to reach that, it can't be done quickly. To breathe in very slowly and hold all that air isn't easy.

Now I have lost the knack, I can barely do more than 6 (Mother demonstrates). I count: 1-2-3-4... no quicker.

And exhale slowly — that's very difficult — being careful to empty the top part of the lungs, because air often stagnates there. This seems to be one of the most frequent causes of coughs and colds. When I had bronchitis I learned to empty the air out completely. And I

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8 Uddiyana-bandha and jalandhara-bandha.
knew singing, so I was familiar with the method: you learn to hold the air and then release it slowly, slowly, so as to keep singing nonstop.

I advise you to practice it.

How much time do you spend on it?

*Eight to ten minutes, three times a day before my japa.*

Oh, that's very good.

*I don't know why, but I got entangled with that traditional formation which says it's dangerous.*

Someone put it on you, mon petit!

*It troubled me.*

No, it's not at all dangerous, at least if you don't overdo it. If you do it simply,... I think some people practice pranayama with the idea of gaining 'powers'. That idea of gaining powers fouls it up more than anything. But if you do it simply as a help to your progress, there's no danger.

At any rate, Sri Aurobindo and I both did a lot of things considered dangerous, and absolutely nothing happened to us. Not that it's necessary to do dangerous things, but nothing happened to us, so it all depends on how you do them.

I think you can safely forget about this formation.

But instead of doing equal amounts of time, it might be better to do less for inhaling and more for holding the breath. The holding part is extremely interesting! When the air is inside, let's say you have a headache or a sore throat or a pain in your arm, anything — then you take the air ... *(Mother demonstrates)* and direct it to the unwell part ... very, very helpful and pleasant and interesting. You see the force go to the spot, settle in and stay there, all sorts of things.

Ah, it's funny, because just this morning.... Did you come for the balcony?

*Lately I have been coming, but I didn't this morning.*

Yes, I thought I didn't see you! But when I went out on the balcony, something suddenly began making me do pranayama! I started doing it and it was funny — I had great fun. It was like the Lord entering into me as air, and when it was held inside like that (I was doing it physically at the same time), all the air began to flow out into everybody and do its work in each one — with such a sensation of ease, of tranquil power, and so sure of itself! So comfortably peaceful.

The balcony darshans are interesting.

Well, do it ... according to your inner moods.

At what time?
I do my japa in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.


(Then Mother listens to Satprem read the Playground Talk of March 28, 1956, in which a child asks: “How can understanding be increased?” Mother had replied: “By increasing consciousness, by going beyond the mind, by enlarging one's consciousness, deepening one's consciousness, by touching regions beyond the mind.”)

Now I would add one thing: by experience. By changing knowledge into experience. And one experience automatically leads to another.

What I mean by ‘experience’ is something totally different from what people normally understand. It’s something almost ... not new as such but assuming a new reality. It is not ‘experiencing what one knows’ — that’s taken for granted, it's banal— but.... We would need another word. Instead of knowing something (even a knowledge far superior to mental knowledge, even a very integral knowledge), you ... become the power that makes it BE.

Essentially, it is becoming the tapas [energy] of things — the tapas of the universe.

The Manifestation is always said to begin with Sachchidananda: first Sat, pure Existence; then Chit, the awareness of this Existence; and then Ananda, the Delight of Existence which makes it go on. But between Chit and Ananda there is Tapas — that is, Chit realizing itself. And when you become this tapas, this tapas of things, you have the knowledge that gives the power to change.9 The tapas of things is what governs their existence in the Manifestation.

You see, I am expressing this for the first time, but I began to live it a while back. When you are THERE, you have a feeling of (what shall I say?) of such formidable power! The universal power, really. You have the sense of total mastery over the universe.

But you can't put that in.

Why not?

Then put it in!

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9 Tapas: literally, heat. It is the concentrated energy constituting everything — not generated by some mechanism, but by the very concentration of the power of Consciousness (chit). In Indian tradition, the world was created by Tapas in the form of an egg — the primordial egg — which broke open from the incubating heat of consciousness-force and gave birth to the world. To ‘become the tapas of things’ is to uncover in one’s own material, bodily substance that same formidable, supramental seat of energy (what physicists, following Einstein, call atomic energy: $E = mc^2$), the energy that animates the stone and the bird and the universe — for then like can act upon like. Mother was reaching that point.