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“Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. Sarīram khalu dharmasādhanam, says the old Sanskrit adage, — the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.”

The Supramental Manifestation, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 5

Mother, how can the functioning of the body “attain to a supreme capacity”?

Precisely by transformation. This implies a total transformation. Sri Aurobindo speaks about it later in what follows.

For the moment, our body is simply a doubtful improvement on the animal body, for if we have gained from a certain point of view, we have lost from another. It is certain that from the point of view of purely physical capacities many animals are superior to us. Unless by a special culture and transformation
we succeed in really transforming our capacities, it could be said that from the point of view of strength and muscular power a tiger or a lion is far superior to us. From the point of view of agility a monkey is far superior to us; and, for instance, a bird can travel without needing any exterior mechanism or plane, which is not yet possible for us... and so on. And we are bound by the animal necessities of the functioning of our organs; so long as we depend, for instance, on material food, on absorbing matter in such a crude form, we shall be quite inferior animals.

Therefore, I don’t want to anticipate what we are going to read, but all this purely animal functioning of our body, all this part which is exactly the same as in animal life — that we depend for life on the circulation of the blood and to have blood we need to eat, and so on, and all that this implies — these are terrible limitations and bondages! As long as material life depends on that, it is obvious that we won’t be able to divinise our life.

So, we must assume that animality in the human being should be replaced by another source of life, and this is quite conceivable — not only conceivable but partially realisable; and this is obviously the aim we ought to set before ourselves if we want to transform matter and make it capable of expressing divine qualities.

In the very, very old traditions — there was a tradition more ancient than the Vedic and the Chaldean which must have been the source of both — in that ancient tradition there is already mention of a “glorious body” which would be plastic enough to be transformed at every moment by the deeper consciousness: it would express that consciousness, it would have no fixity of form. It mentioned luminosity: the constituent matter could become luminous at will. It mentioned a sort of possibility of weightlessness which would allow the body to move about in the air only by the action of will-power and by certain processes of control of the inner energy, and so on. Much has been said about these things.
I don’t know if there ever were beings on earth who had partially realised this, but in a very small way there have been partial instances of one thing or another, examples which go to prove that it is possible. And following up this idea, one could go so far as to conceive of the replacement of material organs and their functioning as it now is, by centres of concentration of force and energy which would be receptive to the higher forces and which, by a kind of alchemy, would use them for the necessities of life and the body. We already speak of the different “centres” in the body — this knowledge is very widespread among people who have practised yoga — but these centres could be perfected to the point where they replace the different organs by a direct action of the higher energy and vibrations on matter. Those who have practised occultism well enough, in its most integral form, it could be said, know the process of materialisation of subtle energies and can put them in contact with physical vibrations. Not only is it something that can be done, but it is something which is done. And all that is a science, a science which must itself be perfected, completed, and which will obviously be used for the creation and setting in action of new bodies which will be able to manifest the supramental life in the material world.

But, as Sri Aurobindo says, before this can be done, it is good to utilise all that we have in order to increase and make more exact the control of physical activities. It is very obvious that those who practise physical culture scientifically and with coordination acquire a control over their bodies that’s unimaginable for ordinary people. When the Russian gymnasts came here, we saw with what ease they did exercises which for an ordinary man are impossible, and they did them as if it was the simplest thing in the world; there was not even the least sign of effort! Well, that mastery is already a great step towards the transformation of the body. And these people who, I could say, are materialists by profession, used no spiritual method in their education; it was solely by material means and an enlightened
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use of human will that they had achieved this result. If they had added to this a spiritual knowledge and power, they could have achieved an almost miraculous result.... Because of the false ideas prevalent in the world, we don’t usually see the two things together, spiritual mastery and material mastery, and so one is always incomplete without the other; but this is exactly what we want to do and what Sri Aurobindo is going to explain: if the two are combined, the result can reach a perfection that’s unthinkable for the ordinary human mind, and this is what we want to attempt.

As he goes on to say — we shall probably read it next time — first one has to fight against a formidable mass of stupid prejudices which create an irreconcilable antagonism between material and spiritual life. And it is something so deep-rooted in human consciousness that it is very difficult to eradicate it, even in those who think they have understood Sri Aurobindo’s teaching! And many people said, when for altogether different reasons I began to hold meditations again, “Ah! At last! We are returning to spiritual life....” This was indeed what prevented me from holding them for a long time. It was in order not to encourage this stupidity. But for other reasons it was necessary to do it and so I did. So long as this foolishness is not uprooted from human consciousness, the supramental force will always find it considerably difficult not to be engulfed in the obscurity of a human thought which understands nothing. That’s all. All the same, we shall succeed.

I chose this book, *The Supramental Manifestation*, in order to have the opportunity of putting you into contact with a truth expressed in an almost combative form, in order to fight against this old division, this total lack of understanding of the eternal Truth.

And perhaps, when we have finished reading it, I shall be able to tell you why we have started the meditations again — but certainly not “to return to spiritual life”!

And it is so deep-rooted. Oh! Even those who outwardly
profess to understand — when they think of the spiritual life, they immediately think of meditation.

There we are. Now, we shall have one all the same, but for another reason!

(Meditation)