

12 June 1957

“It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins, as if both the complete fasting and the feasting were natural conditions, alternating by an immediate and easy passage from one to the other, of a body already trained by a sort of initial transformation to be an instrument of the powers and activities of Yoga. But one thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature, giving to her her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull

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them in from the environment around, all about it and below it.”

The Supramental Manifestation, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 28–29

The description Sri Aurobindo gives here of the possibility of a prolonged fast while maintaining all activities, is a description of his own experience.

He is not speaking of a possibility but of something he has done. But it would be a great mistake to believe that it is an experience that can be imitated in its outer appearance; and even if one managed to do it by an effort of will, it would be perfectly useless from the spiritual point of view, if the experience has not been preceded by a change of consciousness which would be a preliminary liberation.

It is not by abstaining from food that you can make a spiritual progress. It is by being free, not only from all attachment and all desire and preoccupation with food, but even from all need for it; by being in the state in which all these things are so foreign to your consciousness that they have no place there. Only then, as a spontaneous, natural result, can one usefully stop eating. It could be said that the essential condition is to forget to eat — forget, because all the energies of the being and all its concentration are turned towards a more total, more true inner realisation, towards this *constant*, imperative preoccupation with the union of the whole being, including the bodily cells, with the vibration of the divine forces, with the supramental force which is manifesting, so that this may be the true life: not only the purpose of life, but the essence of life, not only an imperative need of life, but all its joy and all its *raison d'être*.

When that is there, when this realisation is attained, then to eat or not to eat, to sleep or not sleep, all this has no longer any importance. It is an outer rhythm left to the play of the universal forces as a whole, finding expression through the circumstances and people around you; and then the body, united, totally united with the inner truth, has a suppleness, a constant adaptability:

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if food is there, it takes it; if it isn't there, it doesn't think about it. And so too with all things.... This is not life! They are modes of existing to which one adapts oneself without giving it any thought. This gives you the feeling of a kind of blossoming, as a flower opens on a plant, a sort of activity which does not come from a concentrated will but is in harmony with all the forces around you, a way of being which is adapted to the circumstances you live in, which have absolutely no importance in themselves.

There comes a moment when, free from everything, one needs practically nothing, and one can use anything, do anything without this having any real influence on the state of consciousness one is in. This is what really matters. To try through outer gestures or arbitrary decisions which come from a mental consciousness aspiring for a higher life can be a means, not a very effective one but still a sort of reminder to the being that it ought to be something other than what it is in its animality — but it's not that, it's not that at all! A person who could be entirely absorbed in his inner aspiration, to the point of not giving any thought or care to these external things, who would take what comes and not think about it when it doesn't, would be infinitely farther on the path than someone who undertakes ascetic practices with the idea that this will lead him to realisation.

The only thing that is truly effective is the change of consciousness; it is the inner liberation through an intimate, constant union, absolute and inevitable, with the vibration of the supramental forces. The preoccupation of every second, the will of all the elements of the being, the aspiration of the entire being, including all the cells of the body, is this union with the supramental forces, the divine forces. And there is no longer any need at all to be preoccupied with what the consequences will be. What has to be in the play of the universal forces and their manifestation will be, quite naturally, spontaneously, automatically, there is no need to be preoccupied with it. The only thing that matters is the constant, total, complete contact — constant,

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yes, constant — with the Force, the Light, the Truth, the Power, and that ineffable delight of the supramental consciousness.

That is sincerity. All the rest is an imitation, it is almost a part one plays for oneself.

Perfect purity is *to be*, to be ever more and more, in a self-perfecting becoming. One must never pretend that one *is*: one must *be*, spontaneously.

This is sincerity.