Chapter One

Human Relations
and the Spiritual Life

Relations with Others in Yoga

The true unity with others, in the sadhana, is founded in the unity in the Divine Consciousness, not in the vital movement.

It is not because of your nature or evil destiny that the vital cannot find the satisfaction it expected from relations with others. These relations can never give a full or permanent satisfaction; if they did, there would be no reason why the human being would ever seek the Divine. He would remain satisfied in the ordinary earth life. It is only when the Divine is found and the consciousness lifted up into the true consciousness that the true relations with others can come.

Relations which are part of the ordinary vital nature in human life are of no value in the spiritual life — they rather interfere with the progress; for the mind and vital also should be wholly turned towards the Divine. Moreover, the purpose of sadhana is to enter into a spiritual consciousness and base everything on a new spiritual basis which can only be done when one has entered into complete unity with the Divine. Meanwhile one has to have a calm goodwill for all, but relations of a vital kind do not help — for they keep the consciousness down on a vital basis and prevent its rising to a higher level.

Until the vital has been purified, illumined and wholly offered to the Divine, there is always a vital mixture in these relations
— a mixture of the movements of the lower nature.

* These movements [of egoism] are part of man’s ignorant vital nature. The love which human beings feel for one another is also usually an egoistic vital love and these other movements, claim, demand, jealousy, abhiman, anger etc., are its common accompaniments. There is no place for them in Yoga — nor in true love, psychic or divine. In Yoga all love should be turned towards the Divine and to human or other beings only as vessels of the Divine — abhiman and the rest should have no place in it.

* I have always said that the vital is indispensable for the divine or spiritual action — without it there can be no complete expression, no realisation in life — hardly even any realisation in sadhana. When I speak of the vital mixture or of the obstructions, revolts etc. of the vital, it is the unregenerated outer vital full of desire and ego and the lower passions of which I speak. I could say the same against the mind and the physical when they obstruct or oppose, but precisely because the vital is so powerful and indispensable, its obstruction, opposition or refusal of cooperation is more strikingly effective and its wrong mixtures are more dangerous to the sadhana. That is why I have always insisted on the dangers of the unregenerated vital and the necessity of mastery and purification there. It is not because I hold, like the Sannyasis, the vital and its life power to be a thing to be condemned and rejected in its very nature.

Affection, love, tenderness are in their nature psychic, — the vital has them because the psychic is trying to express itself through the vital. It is through the emotional being that the psychic most easily expresses, for it stands just behind it in the heart centre. But it wants these things to be pure. Not that it rejects the outward expression through the vital and the physical, but as the psychic being is the form of the soul, it naturally feels the attraction of soul to soul, the nearness of soul to soul the
union of soul with soul are the things that are to it most abiding and concrete. Mind, vital, body are means of expression and very precious means of expression, but the inner life is for the soul the first thing, the deepest reality, and these have to be subordinated to it and conditioned by it, its expression, its instruments and channel. I do not think that in my emphasis on the inner things, on the psychic and spiritual, I am saying anything new, strange or unintelligible. These things have always been stressed from the beginning and the more the human being is evolved, the more they take on importance. I do not see how Yoga can be possible without this premier stress on the inner life, on the soul and the spirit. The emphasis on the mastery of the vital, its subordination and subjectation to the spiritual and the psychic is also nothing new, strange or exorbitant. It has been insisted on always for any kind of spiritual life; even the Yogas which seek most to use the vital, like certain forms of Vaishnavism, yet insist on the purification and the total offering of it to the Divine — and the relations with the Divine are an inner realisation, the soul offering itself through the emotional being. The soul or psychic being is not something unheard of or incomprehensible.

Absence of love and fellow-feeling is not necessary for nearness to the Divine; on the contrary, a sense of closeness and oneness with others is a part of the divine consciousness into which the sadhak enters by nearness to the Divine and the feeling of oneness with the Divine. An entire rejection of all relations is indeed the final aim of the Mayavadin, and in the ascetic Yoga an entire loss of all relations of friendship and affection and attachment to the world and its living beings would be regarded as a promising sign of advance towards liberation, Moksha; but even there, I think, a feeling of oneness and unattached spiritual sympathy for all is at least a penultimate stage, like the compassion of the Buddhist, before the turning to Moksha or Nirvana. In this Yoga the feeling of unity with others, love, universal joy and Ananda are an essential part of the liberation and perfection which are the aim of the sadhana.
On the other hand, human society, human friendship, love, affection, fellow-feeling are mostly and usually—not entirely or in all cases—founded on a vital basis and are ego-held at their centre. It is because of the pleasure of being loved, the pleasure of enlarging the ego by contact, mutual penetration of spirit, with another, the exhilaration of the vital interchange which feeds their personality that men usually love—and there are also other and still more selfish motives that mix with this essential movement. There are of course higher spiritual, psychic, mental, vital elements that come in or can come in; but the whole thing is very mixed, even at its best. This is the reason why at a certain stage with or without apparent reason the world and life and human society and relations and philanthropy (which is as ego-ridden as the rest) begin to pall. There is sometimes an ostensible reason—a disappointment of the surface vital, the withdrawal of affection by others, the perception that those loved or men generally are not what one thought them to be and a host of other causes; but often the cause is a secret disappointment of some part of the inner being, not translated or not well translated into the mind, because it expected from these things something which they cannot give. It is the case with many who turn or are pushed to the spiritual life. For some it takes the form of a vairāgya which drives them towards ascetic indifference and gives the urge towards Moksha. For us, what we hold to be necessary is that the mixture should disappear and that the consciousness should be established on a purer level (not only spiritual and psychic but a purer and higher mental, vital, physical consciousness) in which there is not this mixture. There one would feel the true Ananda of oneness and love and sympathy and fellowship, spiritual and self-existent in its basis but expressing itself through the other parts of the nature. If that is to happen, there must obviously be a change; the old form of these movements must drop off and leave room for a new and higher self to disclose its own way of expression and realisation of itself and of the Divine through these things—that is the inner truth of the matter.

I take it therefore that the condition you describe is a period
of transition and change, negative in its beginning, as these movements often are at first, so as to create a vacant space for the new positive to appear and live in it and fill it. But the vital, not having a long continued or at all sufficient or complete experience of what is to fill the vacancy, feels only the loss and regrets it even while another part of the being, another part even of the vital, is ready to let go what is disappearing and does not yearn to keep it. If it were not for this movement of the vital (which in your case has been very strong and large and avid of life), the disappearance of these things would, at least after the first sense of void, bring only a feeling of peace, relief and a still expectation of greater things. What is intended in the first place to fill the void was indicated in the peace and joy which came to you as the touch of Shiva — naturally, this would not be all but a beginning, a basis for a new self, a new consciousness, an activity of a greater nature; as I told you, it is a deep spiritual calm and peace that is the only stable foundation for a lasting Bhakti and Ananda. In that new consciousness there would be a new basis for relations with others; for an ascetic dryness or isolated loneliness cannot be your spiritual destiny since it is not consonant with your Swabhava which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a comprehensive movement of the life-force. Therefore do not be discouraged; wait upon the purifying movement of Shiva.

* There is no taboo in the Yoga on any feeling that is true and pure, but all the feelings undergo the stress of a pressure from the spiritual consciousness and whatever there is that is mixed, impure, egoistic or the feeling itself if it is fundamentally self-regarding, either disappears or, if it remains, becomes an obstacle to the progress. In the ascetic Yoga all human feelings are regarded as illusory and have to disappear — “the knots of the heart are cut” — so as to leave only the one supreme aspiration. In this Yoga the emotional being has not to be got rid of, but to undergo a transformation; the shortest way of transformation is to turn all the being to the Divine. But when that is done, then
it is found that what is pure and true in any human relation survives, but with a rich and subtle change, or else new relations are established that come straight from the Divine. If, however, something resists the change, then it is quite possible that there may be an oscillation between blank indifference or vairagya and the indulgence of the untransformed feeling—the human vital on one side, the disillusioned Vairagi on the other side. Some even have to pass through this vairagya in order to reach the possibility of a divinised emotional nature, but that is not the normal movement of this Yoga.

As for being self-centred, it is obviously not the right thing for Yoga to be centred in the ego and revolving round it; one has to be centred in the Divine with all the movements turning round that centre—until they can all be in the Divine. One has naturally to think much of one’s own nature and its change, but that is inevitable for the sadhana—to prevent its turning into a self-centred condition, the aspiration to the Divine, vision of the Divine everywhere, the surrender to the Divine have to be made the main objective of the sadhana.

The idea that all sadhaks must be aloof from each other and at daggers drawn is itself a preconceived idea that must be abandoned. Harmony and not strife is the law of Yogic living. This preconceived idea arises perhaps from the old notion of Nirvana as the aim; but Nirvana is not the aim here. The aim here is fulfilment of the Divine in life and for that union and solidarity are indispensable. I find it difficult to see in the mind’s eye X developing an aversion for you and it would not be easy for you to develop an aversion for X; so these nightmares of the vital imagination ought not to emerge. Aversion and quarrelling are unyogic, not Yogic tendencies; the fact that this Asram is full of quarrels only shows that it is still an Asram of very imperfect sadhaks, not yet an Asram of Yogis—it does not at all mean that aversion and quarrelling are the dharma of the spiritual seeker.

The ideal of the Yoga is that all should be centred in and around the Divine and the life of the sadhaks must be founded
on that firm foundation, their personal relations also should have the Divine for their centre. Moreover, all relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual basis with the vital only as a form and instrument of the spiritual; — this means that from whatever relations they have with each other all jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and other evil vital feelings should be abandoned, for they can be no part of the spiritual life. So also all egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear — the love that loves only for the ego’s sake and as soon as the ego is hurt and dissatisfied ceases to love or even cherishes rancour and hate. There must be a real living and lasting unity behind the love. It is understood of course that such things as sexual impurity must disappear also.

That is the ideal, but as for the way of attainment, it may differ for different people. One way is that in which one leaves everything else to follow the Divine alone. This does not mean an aversion for anybody any more than it means aversion for the world and life. It only means absorption in one’s central aim, with the idea that once that is attained it will be easy to found all relations on the true basis, to become truly united with others in the heart and the spirit and the life, united in the spiritual truth and in the Divine. The other way is to go forward from where one is, seeking the Divine centrally and subordinating all else to that, but not putting everything else aside, rather seeking to transform gradually and progressively whatever is capable of such transformation. All the things that are not wanted in the relation, — impurity, jealousy, anger, egoistic demand, — drop away as the inner being grows purer and is replaced by the unity of soul with soul and the binding together of the social life in the hoop of the Divine. Your eagerness to bring your friends into the Yoga was perhaps in reality due to a recognition somewhere in the being that this was the safest way to preserve the relation, to found it on the common search for the Divine. If quarrels intervene and there is strife, it is because the old ego-basis stuck still and brought in old reactions not of a Yogic character; but for that the Yoga is not to blame.

It is not that one cannot have relations with people outside
the circle of the sadhaks, but there too if the spiritual life grows within, it must necessarily affect the relation and spiritualise it on the sadhak's side. And there must be no such attachment as would make the relation an obstacle or a rival to the Divine. Attachment to family etc. often is like that and, if so, it falls away from the sadhana. That is an exigence which, I think, should not be considered excessive. All that however can be progressively done; a severing of existing relations is necessary for some; it is not so for all. A transformation, however gradual, is indispensable, — severance where severance is the right thing to do.

P.S. I must repeat also that each case differs — one rule for all is not practical or practicable. What is needed by each for his spiritual progress is the one consideration to be held in view.

Love for Others and Love for the Divine

The love of the sadhak should be for the Divine. It is only when he has that fully that he can love others in the right way.

* Yes. First, one should enter into union with the Divine, and learn to live in the true light, true consciousness, true force. Yogic relations with others should come only when one lives in the Divine — then it will be safe and then there can be no influence [from others], for the only influence will be that of the Divine.

* It cannot be said that it [one's affinity for certain persons] is either bad or good in a general way. It depends on the person, the effects and many other things. As a general rule, all these affinities have to be surrendered to the Divine along with the rest of the old nature — so that only what is in harmony with the Divine Truth can be kept and transformed for its work in you. All relations with others must be relations in the Divine and not of the old personal nature.
It is not necessary to have love for everybody just now. If you have a general goodwill, that is enough.

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It is as the love of the Divine grows that the other things cease to trouble the mind.

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There is a love in which the emotion is turned towards the Divine in an increasing receptivity and growing union. What it receives from the Divine it pours out on others, but freely without demanding a return. If you are capable of that, then that is the highest and most satisfying way to love.¹

Family Ties and Duties

What you write about the family ties is perfectly correct. It creates an unnecessary interchange and comes in the way of a complete turning to the Divine. Relations after taking up Yoga should be less and less based on a physical origin or the habits of the physical consciousness and more and more on the basis of sadhana — of sadhak with sadhaks, of others as souls travelling the same path or children of the Mother than in the ordinary way or with the old viewpoint.

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When one enters the spiritual life, the family ties which belong to the ordinary nature fall away — one becomes indifferent to the old things. This indifference is a release. There need be no harshness in it at all. To remain tied to the old physical affections would mean to remain tied to the ordinary nature and that would prevent the spiritual progress.

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¹ The next day the correspondent asked, “What must one do to have this love?” Sri Aurobindo replied, “First you must want it in a continuous way.” — Ed.
Human physical relations are necessarily temporary — the soul has to go away and prepare itself for other lives through which it will move eventually nearer to the Divine. Regard it so and open yourself to the peace from above; turn yourself towards that which is Eternal and Divine.

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You ought to be able to see, after receiving today’s telegram, that the cause of the unrest is in yourself and not in the outward circumstances. It is your vital attachment to family ties and the ordinary social ideas and feelings that has risen in you and creates the difficulty. If you want to practise Yoga, you must be able to live in the world, so long as you are there, with a mind set upon the Divine and not bound by the environment. One who does this, can help those around him a hundred times more than one who is bound and attached to the world.

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The question about the family duties can be answered in this way — the family duties exist so long as one is in the ordinary consciousness of the grahastha; if the call to a spiritual life comes, whether one keeps to them or not depends partly upon the way of Yoga one follows, partly on one’s own spiritual necessity. There are many who pursue inwardly the spiritual life and keep the family duties, not as social duties but as a field for the practice of karmayoga, others abandon everything to follow the spiritual call or line and they are justified if that is necessary for the Yoga they practise or if that is the imperative demand of the soul within them.

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There is no harm in devoting yourself to occupations which will help the sadhana. The earning of money and family affairs have only to be looked after if the circumstances are such as to compel it. They should then be done in a spirit of entire detachment, dealing with them so as to develop in oneself the consciousness described in the Gita.
Relations between Parents and Children

There are many kinds of truth and in the Shastra you will find all kinds, some seeming in conflict with others. Service to parents is part of family and social duty. It has nothing to do in itself with Yoga. Yoga is truth not of family or society, but of spiritual life, and in spiritual life the seeking for the Divine takes precedence of everything.

If we ask you to remain still with your father and mother, it is not from the point of view of Truth, but of charity. Four of their children have already left them to come to the Asram; it would be too hard a blow if you also left them now. As you have remained with them so long, you might remain a little longer. Even while in the family, you can prepare yourself for the spiritual life, by remembering the Divine in all you do and by doing it as a sacrifice for the sake of the Divine.

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It [a child's debt to his parents] is a law of human society, not a law of Karma. The child did not ask the father to bring him into the world — and if the father has done it for his own pleasure, it is the least he can do to bring up the child. All these are social relations (and it is not at all a one-sided debt of the child to the father, either), but whatever they are, they cease once one takes to the spiritual life. For the spiritual life does not at all rest on the external physical relations; it is the Divine alone with whom one has then to do.

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The attachment to parents belongs to the ordinary physical nature — it has nothing to do with Divine Love.

Old Relations

We are sorry to hear that she is suffering from such serious difficulties and certainly we are prepared to give her what inner help we can. It is not, however, any force from us that has worked to
separate her from her old supporters and friends. It is, evidently, one result of some change and progress in her consciousness which has disturbed the old relation between her internal nature and her external surroundings and power of action upon them. To try to go back to the old relation does not usually succeed; the only safe course is to progress still farther and arrive at a new consciousness and new power which will enable her to establish a fresh relation with her external environment. If one keeps courage and always looks forward, relying on the Force behind which supports, there are no troubles, no difficulties, no apparent disasters even which cannot be passed through safely and eventually overcome.

Yes. The inner being turned to the Divine naturally draws away from old vital relations and outer movements and contacts till it can bring a new consciousness into the external being.

The movement [of rejection] of which you speak is not psychic but emotive. It is a vital emotive force that you put out and waste. It is also harmful because, while on the one side you try to reject a past vital relation or tie with these people, you by this movement re-establish in another way a vital relation with them. If there was anything wrong in your first movement, this is quite a false way of remedying the defect.

Certainly, it would be better to reject without any violent feeling against any person, because the violence is a sign of a certain weakness in the vital which must be corrected — not for any other reason. The rejection should be quiet, firm, self-assured, decisive; it will then be more radical and effective.

Friendship and Affection

All are not indifferent in this Asram to each other, nor is friendship or affection excluded from the Yoga. Friendship with the Divine is a recognised relation in the sadhana. Friendships be-
tween the sadhaks exist and are encouraged by the Mother. Only we seek to found them on a surer basis than that on which the bulk of human friendships are insecurely founded. It is precisely because we hold friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things that we want this change — because we do not want to see them broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone — it is to make them truly sacred and secure that we want them rooted in the soul, founded on the rock of the Divine. Our Yoga is not an ascetic Yoga: it aims at purity, but not at a cold austerity. Friendship and love are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire. It is not a vain dream, for we have seen that even in imperfect conditions when a little of the indispensable element is there at the very root the thing is possible. It is difficult and the old obstacles still cling obstinately. But no victory can be won without a fixed fidelity to the aim and a long effort. There is no other way than to persevere.

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In Yoga friendship can remain, but attachment has to fall away or any such engrossing affection as would keep one tied to the ordinary life and consciousness — human relations must take quite a small and secondary place and not interfere with the turn to the Divine.

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As to the question about affections etc. I answered X long ago that in Yoga all attachments have to be given up so that there may be no rival to the Divine, but love and affection can be there — only as a new basis of consciousness has to be reached love and affection have to be rebased on that deeper and higher consciousness, not allowed to remain in their old form or on their old level — all the life must be centred round the Divine. It is so in this Yoga at least. There are others in which a man must become aloof from all things, but that is when one is bound towards Nirvana.

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Human affection is obviously unreliable because it is so much bound up with selfishness and desire; it is a flame of the ego sometimes turbid and misty, sometimes more clear and brightly coloured — sometimes tamasic based on instinct and habit, sometimes rajasic and fed by passion or the cry for vital interchange, sometimes more sattwic and trying to be or look to itself disinterested. But fundamentally it depends on a personal need or a return of some kind inward or outward and when the need is not satisfied or the return ceases or is not given, it most often diminishes or dies or exists only as a tepid or troubled remnant of habit from the past or else turns for satisfaction elsewhere. The more intense it is, the more it is apt to be troubled by tumults, clashes, quarrels, egoistic disturbances of all kinds, selfishness, exactions, lapses even to rage and hatred, ruptures. It is not that these affections cannot last — tamasic instinctive affections last because of habit in spite of everything dividing the persons, e.g. certain family affections; rajasic affections can last sometimes in spite of all disturbances and incompatibilities and furious ruptures because one has a vital need of the other and clings because of that or because both have that need and are constantly separating to return and returning to separate, or proceeding from quarrel to reconciliation and from reconciliation to quarrel; sattwic affections last very often from duty to the ideal or with some other support though they may lose their keenness or intensity or brightness. But the true reliability is there only when the psychic element in human affection becomes strong enough to colour or dominate the rest. For that reason friendship is or rather can oftenest be the most durable of the human affections because there there is less interference of the vital and even though a flame of the ego it can be a quiet and pure fire giving always its warmth and light. Nevertheless reliable friendship is almost always with a very few; to have a horde of loving, unselfishly faithful friends is a phenomenon so rare that it can be safely taken as an illusion. In any case human affection whatever its value has its place, because through it the psychic being gets the emotional experiences it needs until it is ready to prefer the true
to the apparent, the perfect to the imperfect, the divine to the human. As the consciousness has to rise to a higher level, so the activities of the heart also have to rise to that higher level and change their basis and character. Yoga is the founding of all the life and consciousness in the Divine, so also love and affection must be rooted in the Divine and a spiritual and psychic oneness in the Divine must be their foundation—to reach the Divine first leaving other things aside or to seek the Divine alone is the straight road towards that change. That means no attachment—it need not mean turning affection into disaffection or chill indifference. But X seems to want to take his vital emotions just as they are—tels quels—into the Divine—let him try and don’t bother him with criticisms and lectures; if it can’t be done, he will have to find it out himself. Or perhaps he wants to clap on the Divine to the rest as a crowning ornament, shikhara, of his pyramid of love and affections.

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It [ordinary affection] is the vital seeking to pour itself out with the implicit idea of getting a return, an interchange. The consciousness of oneness is something behind all life and all forms of affection come no doubt from it, but not consciously, and they get changed, mixed, perverted when the vital takes up the action of the force of Love of whose true or divine nature it is unconscious.

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But that is the nature of human vital affection, it is all selfishness disguised as love. Sometimes when there is a strong vital passion, need or tie, then the person is ready to do anything to retain the affection of the other. But it is only when the psychic is able to get into the movement that there is real unselfish affection or at least some element of it.

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It is meant [by not retaining vital relations] that you should have the relation of sadhaks with each other, one of goodwill and friendly feeling, but not any special relation of a vital character.
If there is anyone you cannot meet without such a vital relation coming up, then only it is not advisable to meet him or her.

* What you write is quite correct — each sadhak must have the direct inner contact with the Mother and rely on her for the spiritual help and progress. But there may be psychic or spiritual friendships which may be helpful in another way and especially in certain difficult stages before the inner contact with the Mother is consciously established.

Vital Love

It is not helpful to make so much of the past and give it such a primary value. Whatever may be the glamour of a vital love, once it falls away and one gets to a higher level, it should be seen to have been not the great thing one imagined. To keep the exaggerated estimate of it is to hold the consciousness back from the full essor towards the greater thing with which that cannot for a moment compare. If one keeps a fervour like that for an inferior past, it must make it more difficult to develop the entire person for a higher future. It is indeed not the Mother’s wish that X or you either should look back in a spirit of enthusiastic appreciation to the old vital love. It was indeed “so little” in any true estimate of things. It is not at all a question of comparison or of exalting the vital passion of one at the expense of that of the other. It is the whole thing that must dwindle in its proportions and recede into the shadowy constructions of the past which have no longer any importance.

* It is the ordinary nature of vital love not to last or, if it tries to last, not to satisfy, because it is a passion which Nature has thrown in in order to serve a temporary purpose; it is good enough therefore for a temporary purpose and its normal tendency is to wane when it has sufficiently served Nature’s purpose. In mankind, as man is a more complex being, she calls in the aid of imagination
and idealism to help her push, gives a sense of ardour, of beauty and fire and glory, but all that wanes after a time. It cannot last, because it is all a borrowed light and power, borrowed in the sense of being a reflection caught from something beyond and not native to the reflecting vital medium which imagination uses for the purpose. Moreover nothing lasts in the mind and vital, all is in a flux there. The one thing that endures is the soul, the spirit. Therefore love can last or satisfy only if it bases itself on the soul and spirit, if it has its roots there. But that means living no longer in the vital but in the soul and spirit.

The difficulty of the vital giving up is because the vital is not governed by reason or knowledge, but by instinct and impulse and the desire of pleasure. It draws back because it is disappointed, because it realises that the disappointment will always repeat itself, but it does not realise that the whole thing is in itself a glamour or, if it does, it repines that it should be so. Where the vairagya is sattwic, born not of disappointment but of the sense of greater and truer things to be attained, this difficulty does not arise. However the vital can learn by experience, can learn so much as to turn away from its regret of the beauty of the will-o’-the-wisp. Its vairagya can become sattwic and decisive.

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There is nothing unusual in your feelings towards X. It is the way that vital love usually takes when there is no strong psychic force to correct and uphold it. After the first vital glow is over, the incompatibility of the two egos begins to show itself and there is more and more strain in the relations — for one or both the demands of the other become intolerable to the vital part, there is constant irritation and the claim is felt as a burden and a yoke. Naturally in a life of sadhana there is no room for vital relations — they are a stumbling block preventing the wholesale turning of the nature towards the Divine.

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The phenomenon of which you speak is normal to human nature. People are drawn together or one is drawn to another
by a certain feeling of affinity, of agreement or of attraction between some part of one's own nature and some part of the other's nature. At first this only is felt; one sees all that is good or pleasant to one in the other's nature and even attributes, perhaps, qualities to him that are not there or not so much there as one thinks. But with closer acquaintance other parts of the nature are felt with which one is not in affinity — perhaps there is a clash of ideas or opposition of feelings or conflict of two egos. If there is a strong love or friendship of a lasting character, then one may overcome these difficulties of contact and arrive at a harmonising or accommodation; but very often this is not there or the disagreement is so acute as to counteract the tendency of accommodation or else the ego gets so hurt as to recoil. Then it is quite possible for one to begin to see too much and exaggerate the faults of the other or to attribute things to him of a bad or unpleasant character that are not there. The whole view can change, the good feeling change into ill-feeling, alienation, even enmity or antipathy. This is always happening in human life. The opposite also happens, but less easily — i.e. the change from ill-feeling to good feeling, from opposition to harmony. But of course ill-opinion or ill-feeling towards a person need not arise from this cause alone. It happens from many causes, instinctive dislike, jealousy, conflicting interests, etc.

One must try to look calmly on others, not overstress either virtues or defects, without ill-feeling or misunderstanding or injustice, with a calm mind and vision.

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There is the selfishness which is always a part if not the whole of human love — and it is the reaction of the demand and desire it brings that creates the opposite feeling. It is when this selfish element is rejected that one can feel the true psychic or divine love.

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Love does not consist in demands and desires — demand and desire spring from ego. Love exists for its own sake and does
not offer itself on conditions. These feelings do not spring from the psychic and it is only by the psychic prevailing in you that the true consciousness can become free and full in the nature and all these repinings and unhappinesses disappear.

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The love in the vital or other parts is the true thing, good for the spiritual life, only when in the vital love is changed into a form of the psychic love and becomes an instrument for the transformation of the soul’s love, no longer for the desires of the ego which men call love.

**Vital Love and Psychic Love**

Ordinary human love is vital, emotional and physical and always egoistic — a form of self-love. The psychic element is very small except in a few.

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Human love is mainly vital, when it is not vital and physical together. It is also sometimes psychic + vital. But the Love with a dominant psychic element is rare.

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It is difficult to define its [psychic love’s] limits or to recognise it. For even when there is the psychic love for another person, it gets in the human being so mixed up with the vital that it is the commonest thing to justify a vital love by claiming for it a psychic character. One could say that psychic love is distinguished by an essential purity and selflessness — but the vital can put on a very brilliant imitation of that character, when it likes.

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It depends on what you mean by psychic “love”. One can have a psychic feeling for all beings; it does not depend on sex nor has it anything sexual in it.

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There is a fundamental psychic feeling which is the same for all; but there can also be a special psychic feeling for one or another.

It [psychic love] is sometimes turned to the human person, but it never gets its true satisfaction till it turns to the Divine.

Men are necessarily separated by the individualisation of their nature and can only establish contacts there. In the psychic being one gets the sense of oneness by psychic sympathy, but not any unification, for the psychic is the individual soul and must unify itself with the Divine before it can through the Divine unify with others. In spiritual realisation there are two quite opposite forms — one in which one withdraws from all outer things including all material beings in the world to merge in the Divine and one in which one feels the Self or the Divine in all and through that realisation attains to a universal oneness.

Certainly, as the psychic attitude develops it is bound to have an effect not only on oneself but on the relations with others.

**Personal Relations in Yoga**

Personal relation is not a part of the Yoga. When one has the union with the Divine, then only can there be a true spiritual relation with others.

A personal relation is formed when there is an exclusive mutual looking to each other. The rule about personal relations in this Yoga is this: (1) All personal relations to disappear in the single relation between the sadhaka and the Divine; (2) All personal (psychic-spiritual) relations to proceed from the Divine Mother, determined by her, and to be part of the single relation with the Divine Mother. In so far as it keeps to this double rule and
admits no physical indulgence or vital deformation or mixture, a personal relation can be there. But since as yet the Supramental has not taken possession but is only descending and there is still struggle in the vital and physical levels, there must be a great carefulness such as would not be necessary if the supramental transformation were already there. Both have to be in direct relation with the Mother and in a total dependence on her and to see that that remains and that nothing diminishes its totality or cuts across it in the least degree.

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I don’t think it is much use writing about personal relations in the true spiritual life (which does not yet exist here). None would understand it except as a form of words. Only three points —

1. Its very base would have to be spiritual and psychic and not vital. The vital would be there but as an instrument only.

2. It would be a relation flowing from the higher Truth, not continued from the lower Ignorance.

3. It would not be impersonal in the sense of being colourless, but whatever colours were there would not be the egoistic and muddy colours of the present relations.

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The Yoga cannot be done if equality is not established. Personal relations must be founded on the relation with the Divine in himself and the Divine in all and they must not be “ties” to pull one down and keep bound to the lower nature but part of the higher unity.

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The natural feeling of one sadhak to another should be kindliness and good feeling to all and the friendliness which is natural or ought to be so between all who follow the same spiritual aim, but personal attachment is supposed to be overcome, as all attachments of the vital must be. Personal relations *can* exist if they are founded on the spiritual consciousness or help towards it, but nothing that holds one back or turns one away from
the Divine. I have not opposed any sadhak having a friendly relation with another. But if it is based on ego, on vital desires and impulses or, if these come strongly in, then obviously there is something there that makes it undesirable. In this case, you have written very frankly that your intimacy with X would be of that character on your side. So I could not but acquiesce in your feeling that it would be better not to go to his room or resume the old close contact.

P.S. In what I have written of the relation of sadhaks, I mean of course the relation on the way. I leave aside the spiritual or psychic love for all which can come afterwards and be the radiation of the union with the Divine.

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Our experience is that it is only when both are in the true consciousness centred round the Divine that there is some chance of a true meeting in the Divine. Otherwise, with the personal relation that forms there comes in either disappointment and alienation or else reactions that are not pure.

**Universal Love and Personal Relations**

One can talk to all, unless one has a reason for not doing so. The oneness with all is an internal realisation, but it does not necessarily impose the same dealing with all. It is the old story of *hāthi brahman* and *māhout brahman*. There is the fundamental realisation and there are the disparities of the Lila — both have to be taken into account.

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No, that by itself [expressing one’s affection to all] is not the wideness needed — the spiritual wideness brings the sense of being one being with all, of containing all in oneself, as it were, and with that comes a kind of universal love which is spiritual, free and pure, but which one is not moved to show to everybody by outward signs, but which has its effect. The personal relation can be only with some, not with all.

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That was exactly what X tried to do — to express the love in connection with this or that person. But universal love is not personal — it has to be held within as a condition of the consciousness which will have its effects according to the Divine Will or be used by that Will if necessary, but to run about expressing it for one’s personal satisfaction or the satisfaction of others is only to spoil and lose it.

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The dynamic Love cannot go out equally to all — that would create a chaotic disturbance because of the unpreparedness of the majority. It is only the static immutable universal Love that can apply equally to all — that which comes in a still wideness of the heart which corresponds with the still wideness of the mind in which there is the equanimity and infinite peace.

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So long as the whole consciousness is not clear of doubtful stuff and the realisation of oneness confirmed in the supreme purity, the expression of the all-love is not advisable. It is by holding it in oneself that it becomes a real part of the nature, established and purified by joining with it the other realisations still to come. At present it is only a first touch and to dissipate it by expression would be very imprudent. The sex and vital might easily become active — I have known cases of very good Yogis in whom the viśvaprema became the viśvakāma, all-love becoming all-lust. This has happened with many both in Europe and the East. Even apart from that it is always best to solidify and to confirm rather than to throw out and disperse. When the sadhana has progressed and the knowledge from above comes to enlighten and guide the love, then it will be another matter. My insistence on rejection of all untransformed vital movements is based on experience, mine and others’ and that of past Yogas like the Vaishnava movement of Chaitanya (not to speak of the old Buddhist Sahaja dharma) which ended in much corruption. A wide movement such as that of all-love can only take place when the ground of Nature has been solidly prepared for
it. I have no objection to your mixing with others, but only under a continual guard and control by a vigilant mind and will.

Relations between Men and Women in Yoga

As for turning all to the Divine, that is a counsel of perfection for those who don’t care to carry any luggage. But otherwise friendship between man and man or man and woman or woman and woman is not forbidden provided it is the true thing and sex does not come in and also provided it does not turn one away from the goal. If the central aim is strong, that is sufficient. When I spoke of personal relation I certainly did not mean pure indifference, for indifference does not create a relation: it tends to non-relation altogether. Emotional friendship need not be an obstacle.

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The only relation permissible between a sadhak and sadhika here is the same as between a sadhak and sadhak or between a sadhika and sadhika — a friendly relation between followers of the same path of Yoga and children of the Mother.

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In a general way the only method for succeeding in having between a man and a woman the free and natural Yogic relations that should exist between a sadhak and a sadhika in this Yoga is to be able to meet each other without thinking at all that one is a man and another a woman — both are simply human beings, both sadhaks, both striving to serve the Divine and seeking the Divine alone and none else. Have that fully in yourself and no difficulty is likely to come.

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Even in the world there have been relations between man and woman in which sex could not intervene — purely psychic relations. The consciousness of sex difference would be there no
doubt, but without coming in as a source of desire or disturbance into the relation. But naturally it needs a certain psychic development before that is possible.

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It is certainly easier to have friendship between man and man or between woman and woman than between man and woman, because there the sexual intrusion is normally absent. In a friendship between man and woman the sexual turn can at any moment come in in a subtle or a direct way and produce perturbations. But there is no impossibility of friendship between man and woman pure of this element; such friendships can exist and have always existed. All that is needed is that the lower vital should not look in at the back door or be permitted to enter. There is often a harmony between a masculine and a feminine nature, an attraction or an affinity which rests on something other than any open or covert lower vital (sexual) basis — it depends sometimes predominantly on the mental or on the psychic or on the higher vital, sometimes on a mixture of these for its substance. In such cases friendship is natural and there is little chance of other elements coming in to pull it downwards or break it.

It is also a mistake to think that the vital alone has warmth and the psychic is something frigid without any flame in it. A clear limpid goodwill is a very good and desirable thing — one has only to consider what a changed place the Asram would be if all had it for each other. But that is not what is meant by psychic love. Love is love and not merely goodwill. Psychic love can have a warmth and a flame as intense and more intense than the vital, only it is a pure fire, not dependent on the satisfaction of ego-desire or on the eating up of the fuel it embraces. It is a white flame, not a red one; but white heat is not inferior to the red variety in its ardour. It is true that the psychic love does not usually get its full play in human relations and human nature, it finds the fullness of its fire and ecstasy more easily when it is lifted towards the Divine. In the human relation the psychic love gets mixed up with other elements which seek at
Once to use it and overshadow it. It gets an outlet for its own full intensities only at rare moments. Otherwise, it comes in only as an element, but even so it contributes all the higher things in a love that is predominantly vital— all the finer sweetness, tenderness, fidelity, self-giving, self-sacrifice, reachings of soul to soul, idealising sublimations that lift up human love beyond itself come from the psychic. If it could dominate and govern and transmute the other elements, mental, vital, physical, of human love, then love could be on the earth some reflection or preparation of the real thing, an integral union of the soul and its instruments in a dual life. But even some imperfect appearance of that is rare.

Here we do not talk of psychic love between sadhaks, for the reason that that comes usually to be employed as a cover and excuse for things that are not at all psychic and have no place in the spiritual life. Our view is that the normal thing is in Yoga for the entire flame of the nature to turn towards the Divine and the rest must wait for the true basis; to build higher things on the sand and mire of the ordinary consciousness is not safe. That does not necessarily exclude friendships or comradeships, but these must be subordinate altogether to the central fire. If anyone makes meanwhile the relation with the Divine his one absorbing aim, that is quite natural and gives the full force to the sadhana. Psychic love finds itself wholly when it is the radiation of the diviner consciousness for which we are seeking; till then it is difficult for it to put out its undimmed integral self and figure.

P.S. Mind, vital, physical are properly instruments for the soul and spirit; when they work for themselves then they produce ignorant and imperfect things—if they can be made into conscious instruments of the psychic and the spirit, then they get their own diviner fulfilment; that is the idea contained in what we call transformation in this Yoga.

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To avoid X is not the way to get rid of these feelings [of possessiveness and jealousy]. The Mother allowed the relation between you because you had need of help and there was a need also of
psychic and spiritual comradeship in the work, a support to each other among its difficulties. That something vital got into the relationship and caused the disturbances of jealousy, sense of possession etc. is true; but the remedy is not to break off but to let it grow into the true thing. It is difficult to get rid of the vital mixture all at once, because these movements had created in you a habit of recurrence supported by forces that wanted to break your sadhana. These forces have now lost a great deal of their power, — but the movement itself still recurs and from force of habit your nature responds and gets troubled. Do not be discouraged by this recurrence; it happens with everyone. Keep your psychic perception and quietly stand back from the jealousy and sense of possession when it occurs, not accepting it as a thing right or natural, but not desponding either because of its recurrence. In time the growth of the psychic in you will help you to turn the relation into the true thing altogether.

The first thing you have to do is to make up your mind what you want. If you want to have a free mind and vital to pursue your sadhana, you must get rid of the attachment for X left from the past; if you once do so entirely, you can either mix with him or not meet him without any reaction or inconvenience. Till then both the impulse or need of seeing him and the recoil from it carry too much of the savour of the old relation to be effective.

For a sadhak the suitable partner does not exist — and any “partner” would create a barrier between him and the Divine. A companion, not of the same sex, is a different matter.

It [mixing with women] is not so harmful for a woman as mixing freely with men under the vital impulse — but all mixing on the vital plane has its dangers. What you should do in mixing with women is not to give yourself vitally, to remain within yourself,
but to mix with them outwardly in a quiet way — forming no vital relation with any.

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The first [question] was about a complementary soul and marriage. The answer is easy to give; the way of the spiritual life lies for you in one direction and marriage lies in quite another and opposite. All talk about a complementary soul is a camouflage with which the mind tries to cover the sentimental, sensational and physical wants of the lower vital nature. It is that vital nature in you which puts the question and would like an answer reconciling its desires and demands with the call of the true soul in you. But it must not expect a sanction for any such incongruous reconciliation from here. The way of the supramental Yoga is clear; it lies not through any concession to these things, — not, in your case, through the satisfaction, under a spiritual cover if possible, of its craving for the comforts and gratifications of a domestic and conjugal life and the enjoyment of the ordinary emotional desires and physical passions, but through the purification and transformation of the forces which these movements pervert and misuse. Not these human and animal demands, but the divine Ananda which is above and beyond them and which the indulgence of these degraded forms would prevent from descending, is the great thing that the aspiration of the vital being must demand in the sadhaka.

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If that [contempt] is your feeling about women the sooner you get rid of it the better — for it is very silly. As for shyness etc., it should be got rid of, but do not replace it by familiarity or overintimacy.

Loneliness

The inner loneliness can only be cured by the inner experience of union with the Divine; no human association can fill the void. In the same way, for the spiritual life the harmony with others
must be founded not on mental and vital affinities, but on the
divine consciousness and the union with the Divine. When one
finds the Divine and finds others in the Divine, then the real
harmony comes. Meanwhile what there can be is the goodwill
and unity founded on the feeling of a common divine goal and
the sense of being all children of the Mother. Real harmony can
come only on a psychic or a spiritual basis.

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To be alone with the Divine is the highest of all privileged states
for the sadhak, for it is that in which inwardly he comes nearest
to the Divine and can make all existence a communion in the
chamber of the heart as well as in the temple of the universe.
Moreover that is the beginning and base of the real oneness with
all, for it establishes that oneness in its true base, on the Divine,
for it is in the Divine that he meets and unites with all and no
longer in a precarious interchange of the mental and vital ego.
So do not fear loneliness but put your trust in the Mother and
go forward on the Path in her strength and Grace.