THE CONDITIONS in which men live on earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. Those who have been able to perceive what could and ought to be done to improve the situation in the various domains of human life — economic, political, social, financial, educational and sanitary — are individuals who have, to a greater or lesser extent, developed their consciousness in an exceptional way and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas have remained more or less theoretical or, if an attempt has been made to realise them practically, it has always failed lamentably after a certain period of time; for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another; religions, spiritual or social, have been created; their beginnings have sometimes been promising, but as humanity has not been fundamentally transformed, the old errors arising from human nature itself have gradually reappeared and after some time we find ourselves almost back at the point we had started from with so much hope and enthusiasm. Also, in this effort to improve human conditions, there have always been two tendencies, which seem to be contrary but which ought to complement each other so that progress may be achieved. The first advocates a collective reorganisation, something which could lead to the effective unity of mankind. The other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that the individual should be given the conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both these
On Education

lines at once. For collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, at least a little of the preceding progress must have been realised in the collectivity. A way must therefore be found so that these two types of progress may proceed side by side.

It is in answer to this urgent need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of his international university, in order to prepare the human elite who will be able to work for the progressive unification of mankind and be ready at the same time to embody the new force which is descending to transform the earth. A few broad ideas will serve as a basis for the organisation of this university centre and will govern its programme of studies. Most of them have already been presented in the various writings of Sri Aurobindo and in the series of articles on education in this Bulletin.

The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive and progressive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible, in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All impulsions of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination must disappear and give way to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration. To make this possible, the children should be accustomed from a very early age not merely to the idea itself, but to its practice. That is why the international university centre will be international; not because students from all countries will be
An International University Centre

admitted here, nor even because they will be taught in their own language, but above all because the cultures of the various parts of the world will be represented here so as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually in ideas, theories, principles and language, but also vitally in habits and customs, art in all its forms — painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration — and physically through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of permanent world-exhibition should be organised in which all countries will be represented in a concrete and living way. The ideal would be for every nation with a well-defined culture to have a pavilion representing that culture, built in a style that is most expressive of the customs of the country; it will exhibit the nation’s most representative products, natural as well as manufactured, and also the best expressions of its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus have a very practical and concrete interest in this cultural synthesis and could collaborate in the work by taking responsibility for the pavilion that represents it. Living accommodation, large or small according to the need, could be attached, where students of the same nationality could stay and thus enjoy the true culture of their native country and at the same time receive at the university centre the education which will introduce them to all the other cultures that exist on earth. In this way, international education will not be merely theoretical, in the classroom, but practical in all the details of life.

Only a general idea of the organisation is given here; its detailed application will be presented little by little in this Bulletin as it is carried out.

The first aim will therefore be to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to bring them into contact with the ways of life of other nations, so that they learn to know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries of the world. For, in order to be real and workable, any world-organisation
On Education

must be based on this mutual respect and understanding between
country and nation as well as between individual and individual.
Only in order and collective organisation, in collaboration based
on mutual goodwill, is there any possibility of lifting man out of
the painful chaos in which he finds himself now. It is with this
aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied
at the university centre; and the solution to them will be given
in the light of the supramental knowledge which Sri Aurobindo
has revealed in his writings.

Bulletin, April 1952

Concerning the principles which will govern the education given
at the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, it has been
mentioned that each nation must occupy its own place and play
its part in the world concert.

This should not be taken to mean that each nation can
choose its place arbitrarily, according to its own ambitions and
cravings. A country’s mission is not something which can be
decided mentally with all the egoistic and ignorant preferences
of the external consciousness, for in that case the field of con-

flict between nations might be shifted, but the conflict would
continue, probably with even greater force.

Just as each individual has a psychic being which is his
true self and which governs his destiny more or less overtly, so
too each nation has a psychic being which is its true being and
moulds its destiny from behind the veil: it is the soul of the
country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre
of national aspiration, the fountainhead of all that is beautiful,
noble, great and generous in the life of the country. True patriots
feel its presence as a tangible reality. In India it has been made
into an almost divine entity, and all who truly love their country
call it “Mother India” (Bharat Mata) and offer her a daily prayer
An International University Centre

for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolises and embodies the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world.

The thinking élite in India even identifies her with one of the aspects of the universal Mother, as the following extract from the *Hymn to Durga* illustrates:

“Mother Durga! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength,... we, born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

“Mother Durga! Giver of force and love and knowledge, terrible art thou in thy own self of might, Mother beautiful and fierce. In the battle of life, in India’s battle, we are warriors commissioned by thee; Mother, give to our heart and mind a titan’s energy, to our soul and intelligence a god’s character and knowledge.

“Mother Durga! India, world’s noblest race, lay whelmed in darkness. Mother, thou risest on the eastern horizon, the dawn comes with the glow of thy divine limbs scattering the darkness. Spread thy light, Mother, destroy the darkness.

“Mother Durga! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

“Mother Durga! Thou art Kali... sword in hand, thou slayest the Asura. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest.

“Mother Durga! India lies low in selfishness and fearfulness and littleness. Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear.

“Mother Durga! Extend wide the power of Yoga. We are thy Aryan children, develop in us again the lost teaching, character,
On Education

strength of intelligence, faith and devotion, force of austerity, power of chastity and true knowledge, bestow all that upon the world. To help mankind, appear, O Mother of the world, dispel all ills.

“Mother Durga! Slay the enemy within, then root out all obstacles abroad. May the noble heroic mighty Indian race, supreme in love and unity, truth and strength, arts and letters, force and knowledge, ever dwell in its holy woodlands, its fertile fields, under its sky-scraping hills, along the banks of its pure-streaming rivers. This is our prayer at the feet of the Mother. Make thyself manifest.

“Mother Durga! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest.”

One would like to see in all countries the same veneration for the national soul, the same aspiration to become fit instruments for the manifestation of its highest ideal, the same ardour for progress and self-perfection enabling each people to identify itself with its national soul and thus find its true nature and role, which makes each one a living and immortal entity regardless of all the accidents of history.

Bulletin, August 1952

Advice to Newcomers

The International University Centre is being organised little by

1 Hymn to Durga, translated by Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta from Sri Aurobindo’s Bengali original.
An International University Centre

little. Until it is possible to erect the new buildings where it will be permanently housed, and for which the plans are now ready, certain departments such as the library, the reading room and a limited number of classes have been accommodated in the old premises that are going to be pulled down. Already future teachers and future students are beginning to arrive, some from outside, new to the climate and customs of the country. They are arriving in the Ashram for the first time and know nothing of its life or its customs. Some of them come with a mental aspiration, either to serve or to learn; others come in the hope of doing yoga, of finding the Divine and uniting with Him; finally there are those who want to devote themselves entirely to the divine work upon earth. All of them come impelled by their psychic being, which wants to lead them towards self-realisation. They come with their psychic in front and ruling their consciousness; they have a psychic contact with people and things. Everything seems beautiful and good to them, their health improves, their consciousness grows more luminous; they feel happy, peaceful and safe; they think that they have reached their utmost possibility of consciousness. This peace and fullness and joy given by the psychic contact they naturally find everywhere, in everything and everybody. It gives an openness towards the true consciousness pervading here and working out everything. So long as the openness is there, the peace, the fullness and the joy remain with their immediate results of progress, health and fitness in the physical, quietness and goodwill in the vital, clear understanding and broadness in the mental and a general feeling of security and satisfaction. But it is difficult for a human being to keep up a constant contact with his psychic. As soon as he settles down and the freshness of the new experience fades away, the old person comes back to the surface with all its habits, preferences, small manias, shortcomings and misunderstandings; the peace is replaced by restlessness, the joy vanishes, the understanding is blinded and the feeling that the place is the same as everywhere else creeps in, because one has
become what one was everywhere else. Instead of seeing only what has been accomplished, he becomes aware more and more and almost exclusively of what has yet to be done; he becomes morose and discontented and blames people and things instead of blaming himself. He complains of the lack of comfort, of the unbearable climate, of the unsuitable food that makes his digestion painful. Taking support from Sri Aurobindo’s teaching that the body is an indispensable basis for the yoga, that it should not be neglected and that, on the contrary, great care should be given to it, the physical consciousness concentrates almost exclusively on the body and tries to find ways of satisfying it. This is practically impossible, for, with a very few exceptions, the more it is given, the more it demands. Besides, the physical being is ignorant and blind; it is full of false notions, preconceived ideas, prejudices and preferences. Indeed, it cannot deal effectively with the body. Only the psychic consciousness has the knowledge and the insight needed to do the right thing in the right way.

You might well ask, what is the remedy for this state of affairs? For here we are going round in a vicious circle, since the whole trouble comes from drawing away from the psychic and only the psychic can find the solution to the problems. There is consequently only one remedy: be on your guard, hold fast to the psychic, do not allow anything in your consciousness to slip in between your psychic and yourself, close your ears and your understanding to all other suggestions and rely only on the psychic.

Usually, those who become conscious of their psychic being expect that it will liberate them from vital and physical attractions and activities; they seek to escape from the world in order to live in the joy of contemplation of the Divine, and in the immutable peace of constant contact with Him. The attitude of those who want to practise Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga is quite different. When they have found their psychic being and are united with it, they ask it to turn its gaze towards the physical
being in order to act on it with the knowledge that comes from the contact with the Divine, and to transform the body so that it may be able to receive and manifest the divine consciousness and harmony.

This is the goal of our efforts here; this will be the culmination of your studies in the International University Centre.

So, to all those who come to join the University Centre, I shall say once more: never forget our programme and the deeper reason of your coming here. And if in spite of all your efforts the horizon sometimes darkens, if hope and joy fade away, if enthusiasm flags, remember that it is a sign that you have drawn away from your psychic being and lost contact with its ideal. In this way you will avoid making the mistake of throwing the blame on the people and things around you and thus quite needlessly increasing your sufferings and your difficulties.

_Bulletin, November 1952_