13 March 1957

This evening, once again, no reading. But someone has asked me a question on something I have written—Pavitra, do you have it? Read it.

(Pavitra reads) “Our best friend is he who loves us in the best of ourselves, and yet does not ask us to be other than we are.”

Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 288

I am asked to explain what this means. I have a good mind to tell you all sorts of paradoxical things! But still...

Anyway, I wrote this with something in mind which one usually forgets: one asks one’s friends and those around one to be not what they are but what one would like them to be — one can form an ideal for oneself and want to apply it to everybody, but... This reminds me of Tolstoy’s son whom I met in Japan and who was going round the world in the hope of bringing about unity among men. His intentions were excellent, but his way of doing it seemed less happy! He said with an imperturbable seriousness that if everybody spoke the same language, if everybody dressed in the same way, ate in the same way and behaved in the same way, that would inevitably bring about unity! And when asked how he planned to realise this he said it would be enough to go from land to land preaching a new but universal language, a new but universal dress, and new but universal habits. That was all.... And that was what he intended to do!

(Laughing) Well, everyone in his own little field is like that. He has an ideal, a conception of what is true and beautiful and noble, and even divine, and this conception of his he wants to impose on others. There are also many people who have a conception of the Divine and who try with all their might to
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impose their conception on the Divine... and usually don’t lose heart until they have lost their life!

It is this spontaneous and almost unconscious attitude I had in mind, for if I were to tell one of you, “There! that’s what you want to do”, he would protest very vehemently and say, “What! Never in my life!” But when one has opinions about people and especially reactions to their way of life, it is because one blames them for not being what one thinks they ought to be. If we never forget that there cannot be, should not be two things exactly alike in the universe, for the second would be useless since there would already be one of the same kind, and that the universe is constituted for the harmony of an infinite multiplicity in which two movements — and even more, two consciousnesses — are never alike, then what right have we to intervene and want that somebody should conform to our own thought?... For if you think in a particular way, it is certain that the other won’t be able to think in the same way. And if you are a person of a certain type, it is absolutely certain that the other cannot be of the same type. And what you ought to learn is to harmonise, synthesise, combine all the disparate things in the universe by putting each one in its place. Total harmony does not at all lie in an identity, but in a harmonisation which can come only by putting each thing in its place.

And this must be at the basis of the reaction that one has the right to expect from a true friend, who should wish not that his friend should be like him, but that he may be what he is.

Now, at the beginning of the sentence I said, “He loves you in the best part of yourself....” To put it a little more positively: Your friend is not one who encourages you to come down to your lowest level, encourages you to do foolish things along with him or fall into bad ways with him or one who commends you for all the nasty things you do, that’s quite clear. And yet, usually, very, very often, much too often, one makes friends with somebody with whom one doesn’t feel uneasy when one has sunk lower. One considers as one's best friend somebody
who encourages one in one’s follies: one mixes with others to roam about instead of going to school, to go and steal fruit from gardens, to make fun of one’s teachers and for all kinds of things like that. I am not making any personal remarks, but indeed I could quote some examples, unhappily far too many. And perhaps this is why I said, “They are not your true friends.” But still, they are the most convenient friends, for they don’t make you feel that you are in the wrong; while to one who comes and tells you, “Now then, instead of roaming about and doing nothing or doing stupid things, if you came to the class, don’t you think it would be better!” usually one replies, “Don’t bother me! You are not my friend.” This is perhaps why I wrote this sentence. There you are. I repeat, I am not making any personal remarks, but still it is an opportunity to tell you something that unfortunately happens much too often.

There are children here who were full of promise, who were at the top of their class, who used to work seriously, from whom I expected much, and who have been completely ruined by this kind of friendship. Since we are speaking of this, I shall tell them today that I regret this very much and that I do not call such people friends but mortal enemies against whom one should protect oneself as one would against a contagious disease.

We don’t like the company of someone who has a contagious disease, and avoid him carefully; generally he is segregated so that it does not spread. But the contagion of vice and bad behaviour, the contagion of depravity, falsehood and what is base, is infinitely more dangerous than the contagion of any disease, and this is what must be very carefully avoided. You must consider as your best friend the one who tells you that he does not wish to participate in any bad or ugly act, the one who gives you courage to resist low temptations; he is a friend. He is the one you must associate with and not someone with whom you have fun and who strengthens your evil propensities. That’s all.

Now, we won’t labour the point and I hope that those I have in mind will understand what I have said.
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Indeed, you should choose as friends only those who are wiser than yourself, those whose company ennobles you and helps you to master yourself, to progress, to act in a better way and see more clearly. And finally, the best friend one can have—isn’t he the Divine, to whom one can say everything, reveal everything? For there indeed is the source of all compassion, of all power to efface every error when it is not repeated,¹ to open the road to true realisation; it is he who can understand all, heal all, and always help on the path, help you not to fail, not to falter, not to fall, but to walk straight to the goal. He is the true friend, the friend of good and bad days, the one who can understand, can heal, and who is always there when you need him. When you call him sincerely, he is always there to guide and uphold you—and to love you in the true way.

¹ In 1961 when this talk was first published, Mother commented on this phrase: “So long as one repeats one’s mistakes, nothing can be abolished, for one recreates them every minute. When someone makes a mistake, serious or not, this mistake has consequences in his life, a ‘Karma’ which must be exhausted, but the Divine Grace, if one turns to It, has the power of cutting off the consequences; but for this the fault must not be repeated. One shouldn’t think one can continue to commit the same stupidities indefinitely and that indefinitely the Grace will cancel all the consequences, it does not happen like that! The past may be completely purified, cleansed, to the point of having no effect on the future, but on condition that one doesn’t change it again into a perpetual present; you yourself must stop the bad vibration in yourself, you must not go on reproducing the same vibration indefinitely.”