V

Answers to a Monitress
Sutras

1. Have no ambition, above all never lay claim to anything, but be at each moment the utmost that you can be.
   25 February 1957

2. As for your place in the universal manifestation, the Supreme alone will show it to you.
   2 May 1957

3. The Supreme Lord has ineluctably decreed the place you occupy in the world concert, but whatever that place may be, you have the same equal right as everyone else to scale the supreme heights as far as the supramental realisation.
   17 May 1957

4. What you are in the truth of your being is ineluctably decreed and nothing and no one can prevent you from being it; but the path you will take to attain it is left to your own free choice.
   19 May 1957

5. On the path of ascending evolution, each one is free to choose the direction he will take: the swift and steep ascent towards the summits of Truth, the supreme realisation, or, turning his back to the peaks, the easy descent towards the interminable meanderings of endless rebirths.
   23 May 1957

6. In the course of the ages and even in the course of your present life you can make your choice once and for all, irrevocably, and then you have only to confirm it at each new occasion; or else, if you have not taken the final decision at the outset, at each
On Education

moment you will have to make a new choice between falsehood and truth.

23 May 1957

7. But even supposing that you have not taken the irrevocable decision at the outset, if you have the good fortune to be alive at one of those extraordinary moments in universal history when the Grace is present, incarnate on earth, It will give you once again, at certain exceptional moments, the possibility of making a final choice that will lead you straight to the goal.

23 May 1957
Correspondence

Why are no diplomas and certificates given to the students of the Centre of Education?

For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax in our times; it is what we may call “utilitarianism”. People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful — useful to whom, to what, for what?

For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to
On Education

know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one’s weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money.

Children who are infected with this disease are out of place at the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And it is to make this quite clear to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination or competition and do not give them any diplomas or titles which they can use in the outside world.

We want here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true.

There is plenty of room in the world for all the others.

17 July 1960

Sweet Mother, in the Physical Education Section, you have made all the necessary arrangements so that by physical training we may be able to develop our body in every possible way and thus become ready to participate in the great work of integral transformation.

We have been teaching games, sports and all sorts of physical activities for several years, but we find that most of our students cannot grasp the fundamental spirit. They are usually distracted by amusement, excitement, impulsive moods and all kinds of likes and dislikes. In consequence, the discipline, the will, the resolution, the hard work and the true attitude which ensure our progress are lacking on the whole. A football match or an exciting game arouses a lot of enthusiasm but a conscientious and concentrated work which will help
Questions to a Monitress

us to master certain physical qualities and set right cer-
tain defects is always done without much eagerness. The
great majority of students, big and small, suffer from this
malady. Very few approach physical education with the
right attitude. How shall we learn to make it our normal
practice?

The contents of the consciousness must change, the level of the
consciousness must be raised, the quality of the consciousness
must progress.

Things are as you have described them, because most chil-
dren have their consciousness centred in the physical which is
tamasic and reluctant to make any effort. They want an easy life,
and only the excitement or the rivalry of a game or a competition
awakens enough interest in them so that they consent to make
an effort. For this, a vital passion has to be aroused to intesify
the will.

The idea of progress belongs to the intelligent will which
is active only in very few who are in contact with their psychic
being; later on, in those who are mentally more developed and
begin to understand the need to develop and control themselves.

I said that the remedy is to raise the consciousness to a
higher level. But, naturally, one must start with the level of the
consciousness of the captains and instructors themselves.

First of all, they should have a clear conception of what they
want to obtain from those for whom they are responsible; and
not only that, but they should also have realised in themselves
the qualities which they demand from others. Over and above
these qualities, they should have developed in their character
and action a great deal of patience, endurance, kindness, under-
standing and impartiality. They should have no likes or dislikes,
no attractions or repulsions.

That is why the new group of captains must really be an élite
group in order to set a good example to the pupils and students,
if we want them in their turn to adopt the true attitude.
On Education

Therefore I say to all: set to work sincerely and sooner or later the obstacles will be overcome.

5 July 1961

Sweet Mother,

Some activities in our programme of physical education are of a more serious nature than others and call for more concentration; these activities tend to become boring for the children. Should the captains organise their groups in such a way that everything they teach is interesting and amusing, or should the children try to create an interest in themselves?

Both are indispensable and should, as far as possible, be always present.

With a little imagination and inventive flexibility, the instructors should give charm and novelty to what they teach.

On their part, the children, by cultivating in themselves the will and inclination for progress, should create a constant interest in what they do.

In the meanwhile, the captains can partly entrust to the children the responsibility for organising their own exercises, using as much as possible whatever ingenious ideas may occur to them.

If the sense of collaboration and responsibility is awakened in the children, then they will take an interest in what they do and do it with pleasure.

21 July 1961

Sweet Mother,

We have a minute of concentration before and after group every day. What should we try to do during this concentration?

Before, make an offering to the Divine of what you are going to do, so that it may be done in a spirit of consecration.
Afterwards, ask the Divine to increase the will for progress in us, so that we may become instruments that are more and more capable of serving Him.

You may also, before starting, offer yourselves to the Divine in silence.

And at the end, give thanks to the Divine in silence.

I mean a movement of the *heart* without any words in the head.

24 July 1961

In human life the cause of all difficulties, all discords, all moral sufferings, is the presence in everyone of the ego with its desires, its likes and dislikes. Even in a disinterested work which consists in helping others, until one has learned to overcome the ego and its demands, until one can force it to keep calm and quiet in one corner, the ego reacts to everything that displeases it, starts an inner storm that rises to the surface and spoils all the work.

This work of overcoming the ego is long, slow and difficult; it demands constant alertness and sustained effort. This effort is easier for some and more difficult for others.

We are here in the Ashram to do this work together with the help of Sri Aurobindo’s knowledge and force, in an attempt to realise a community that is more harmonious, more united, and consequently much more effective in life.

As long as I was physically present among you all, my presence was helping you to achieve this mastery over the ego and so it was not necessary for me to speak to you about it individually very often.

But now this effort must become the basis of each individual’s existence, more especially for those of you who have a responsible position and have to take care of others. The leaders must always set the example, the leaders must always practise the virtues they demand from those who are in their care; they
On Education

must be understanding, patient, enduring, full of sympathy and warm and friendly goodwill, not out of egoism to win friends for themselves, but out of generosity to be able to understand and help others.

To forget oneself, one’s own likings and preferences, is indispensable in order to be a true leader.

That is what I am asking of you now, so that you can face your responsibilities as you should. And then you will find that where you used to feel disorder and disunity, they have vanished, and harmony, peace and joy have taken their place.

You know that I love you and that I am always with you to sustain you, help you and show you the way.

Blessings.

26 August 1969

Sweet Mother,

Some children ask me what is the best way of spending their holidays here.

It is an excellent opportunity to do some interesting work, to learn something new or develop some weak point in their nature or their studies.

It is an excellent opportunity to choose some occupation freely and thus discover the true capacities of their being.

Blessings.

1 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

Do you approve of students going to spend their holidays at home or elsewhere?

Rather, one could say that what the children do during their holidays shows what they are and how far they are capable of
profiting from their stay here. Thus, the case is different for each one and the quality of his reaction indicates the quality of his character.

Truly speaking, those who would rather stay here than do anything else, are ready to take full advantage of their education here and are capable of fully understanding the ideal they are taught.

Blessings.

2 November 1969

_Sweet Mother,_

_Does this mean that those who go out are incapable of fully understanding the ideal they are taught, or are we unable to make them understand the ideal?_

I do not say that the teaching here is perfect and exactly what it should be. But it is certain that a good number of students are very interested and understand very well that there is something here which is not to be found elsewhere.

So, it is those students who should remain here, and as we do not have enough room to meet all demands, the choice would be easier.

Blessings.

3 November 1969

_Sweet Mother,_

_Is it possible to teach the ideal to those who do not understand it, and how can it be taught to them? Are we, instructors and teachers, worthy of this formidable task?_

What we want to teach is not only a mental ideal, it is a new idea of life and a realisation of consciousness. This realisation
On Education

is new to all, and the only true way to teach others is to live according to this new consciousness oneself and to allow oneself to be transformed by it. There is no better lesson than that of an example. To tell others: “Do not be selfish,” is not much use, but if somebody is free from all selfishness, he becomes a wonderful example to others; and someone who sincerely aspires to act in accordance with the Supreme Truth, creates a kind of contagion for the people around him. So the first duty of all those who are teachers or instructors is to give an example of the qualities they teach to others.

And if, among these teachers and instructors, some are not worthy of their post, because by their character they give a bad example, their first duty is to become worthy by changing their character and their action; there is no other way.

Blessings.

4 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

What qualifications do you consider essential for an instructor or a teacher in the Ashram? Isn’t it better not to do this work if one feels incapable of doing it well? For then it is the children who suffer because of us, isn’t that so?

Whatever imperfections the teachers and instructors here may have, they will always be better than those from outside. For all who work here do so without remuneration and in the service of a higher cause. It is clearly understood that each one, whatever his worth or capacity, can and must progress constantly to realise an ideal which is still much higher than the present realisation of humanity.

But if one is truly eager to do one’s best, it is by doing the work that one progresses and learns to do it better and better.

Criticism is seldom useful, it discourages more than it helps.
And all goodwill deserves encouragement, for with patience and endurance, there is no progress which cannot be made.

The main thing is to keep the certitude that whatever may have been accomplished, one can always do better if one wants to.

The ideal to attain is an unflinching equality of soul and conduct, a patience that never fails and, of course, the absence of any preference or desire.

It is obvious that for one who teaches, the essential condition for the proper fulfilment of his task is the absence of all egoism; and no human being is exempt from the necessity of this effort.

But, I repeat, this effort is easier to make here than anywhere else.

Blessings.

5 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

Should those who are much attracted by the pleasures of ordinary life, such as cinemas, restaurants, social life, etc., come to study in our school? For, as a rule, one feels that this is why most of our students go out during the holidays, and every time they come back they need quite a long time to readjust themselves here.

Those who are strongly attached to ordinary life and its agitation should not come here, for they are out of their element and create disorder.

But it is difficult to know this before they come, for most of them are very young, and their character is not yet well formed. But as soon as they are caught in the frenzy of the world, it would be better, for themselves and for others, that they return to their parents and their habits.

Blessings.

14 November 1969
On Education

_Sweet Mother,_

_There are several children here who are sent by their parents just for their education. The idea that they are only students and that they will go away from here after their studies, is already firmly fixed in their minds._

_Once we know that these children have a clear idea of what they want to do, is it not better to advise them officially to go and study elsewhere? Or, because they have already been accepted, should we allow them to continue their studies and finish them here?_

Unfortunately, there are many parents who send their children here not because they think that they will have a special education here but because the Ashram does not ask money for their studies; and consequently parents need to spend much less money here than elsewhere.

But the poor children are not responsible for this transaction, and we must give them a chance to develop fully if they are capable of it. Therefore, we accept them if we see a possibility in them. And it is only when they clearly show that they are incapable of benefiting from their education here that we are ready to let them go if they want to.

_Blessings._

15 November 1969

_Sweet Mother,_

_For the students who know that they will go away from here after their studies, is it not necessary for them to go out from time to time in order to be able to adjust themselves later to ordinary life?_

There is no difficulty in adapting to ordinary life, it is a bondage to which one is subjected from birth, for all carry it in themselves by atavism, and even those who are born to be freed need to
struggle seriously and continuously to get rid of this atavism in order to be truly free.

Blessings.

16 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

What do you expect of those students who are going to leave after their studies here? Surely there must be a great difference between them and ordinary people. What is the difference?

Often, as soon as they find themselves in the midst of ordinary life, many of them realise the difference and regret what they have lost. Few of them have the courage to give up the comforts they find in their ordinary surroundings, but even the others no longer face life with the same unconsciousness as those who have never been in contact with the Ashram.

The work we do is not done with the expectation of something in return, but simply to help the progress of humanity.

Blessings.

18 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

How far do you consider it the duty of a teacher or an instructor to impose discipline on the students?

To prevent the students from being irregular, rude or negligent is obviously indispensable; unkind and harmful mischief cannot be tolerated.

But as a general and absolute rule, the teachers and especially the physical education instructors must be a constant living example of the qualities demanded from the students; discipline, regularity, good manners, courage, endurance, patience in effort,
On Education

are taught much more by example than by words. And as an absolute rule: never to do in front of a child what you forbid him to do.

For the rest, each case implies its own solution, and one must act with tact and discernment.

That is why to be a teacher or an instructor is the best of all disciplines, if one knows how to comply with it.

Blessings.

20 November 1969

A child ought to stop being naughty because he learns to be ashamed of being naughty, not because he is afraid of punishment.¹

In the first case, he makes true progress.

In the second, he falls one step down in human consciousness, for fear is a degradation of consciousness.

21 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

Do the responsibilities of a teacher or an instructor cease after his working hours at school or at the playground?

I am asking this because our children usually behave very badly in the streets. They walk where they like, they talk in the middle of the road, and the most difficult problem is when they ride their bicycles without lights or brakes, or double. None of us take any notice of all that because it is outside our working hours.

And as nothing is being done to put a stop to this, indifference to the law has become so widespread that one even sees responsible people disregarding these laws.

¹ Later Mother added: “This is the first step. When he has come so far, he can then make further progress and learn the joy of being good.”
The best remedy for this sorry state of affairs would be, when all the children are assembled (probably at the playground), to give them a short lesson on how to behave in the street—what one may do and what one ought not to do. Someone who knows how to speak to them and tell them this in an interesting, and even if possible an amusing way, could no doubt obtain a result.

Blessings.

21 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

Does this mean that once we have explained properly to the children how to behave in the street, we no longer have any responsibility for what they do outside our working hours?

It is difficult to interfere in an incident one has not witnessed. Gossip is always suspect. But if one of the instructors personally witnesses the bad behaviour of one of his students, then it is appropriate for him to intervene, on condition, of course, that his relation with the student is friendly and affectionate.

Blessings.

22 November 1969

Sweet Mother,

Don’t you think that in our programme of education children should be taught to do some disinterested work for the Ashram, at least once a week?

It is always good to do disinterested work. But it becomes much better if the work becomes an enjoyment and not a boring task.

Blessings.

26 November 1969
On Education

Sweet Mother,

Every year we give a special prize to the best students of groups A1 and A2. This year there is a boy who has worked very well throughout the year, but now he has gone home for the holidays and hasn’t taken part in the Demonstration of December 2. Do you think he should still be given the prize for this year?

All depends on how he left: whether it was to obey his parents or whether he wanted to go himself. If he wanted to leave, whatever his outer merit, it would perhaps be better not to give him the prize, because that would mean that we attach no importance to the inner attitude and to the student’s understanding of the aim we pursue, that is, to prepare the men of tomorrow for the new creation.

Blessings.

9 December 1969

Sweet Mother,

Is it good to give prizes to the children or reward them in order to make them work or to create some sort of interest?

It is obvious that for the children it is better to study in order to develop their consciousness and learn a little of all they do not know; but to give prizes to those who have been particularly studious, disciplined and attentive, is not bad.

Blessings.

17 December 1969

Sweet Mother,

Don’t you think that to become a teacher or an instructor here, especially for the little ones, it is necessary
to have lived in the Ashram for a certain length of time?

It is a certain attitude of consciousness which is necessary — and unfortunately, living even several years in the Ashram does not always lead to this right attitude.

Truly speaking, teachers should be taken on trial to see if they can acquire this right attitude and adapt themselves to the needs of their task.

Blessings.

18 December 1969

Sweet Mother,

What do you mean by “a certain attitude of consciousness”?

The attitude of consciousness which is required is an inner certitude that, in comparison with all that is to be known, one knows nothing; and that at every moment one must be ready to learn in order to be able to teach. This is the first indispensable point.

There is a second one. It is that outer life, as we know it, is a more or less illusory appearance and that we must constantly keep a living aspiration for the Truth.

Blessings.

19 December 1969

Sweet Mother,

What is the role of parents or guardians in the Ashram? How should they contribute to a better education of their children?

Here, the first duty of the parents or guardians is not to contradict either by word or example the education that is given to their children.
On Education

In a positive way, the best thing they can do is to encourage the children to be docile and disciplined.
Blessings.

24 December 1969

Sweet Mother,

What is Your opinion about fashion, dress and ornaments?
What do You consider to be of good taste in our Ashram life?

Thank God, I have no opinions.
For me good taste means being simple and sincere.
Blessings.

4 January 1970

Sweet Mother,

How are we to teach the children to organise the freedom that You give us here?

Children have everything to learn. This should be their main preoccupcation in order to prepare themselves for a useful and productive life.

At the same time, as they grow up, they must discover in themselves the thing or things which interest them most and which they are capable of doing well. There are latent faculties to be developed. There are also faculties to be discovered.

Children must be taught to like to overcome difficulties, and also that this gives a special value to life; when one knows how to do it, it destroys boredom for ever and gives an altogether new interest to life.

We are on earth to progress and we have everything to learn.

14 January 1972

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Answers to a Monitress

Sweet Mother,

Yesterday You wrote: “There are latent faculties to be developed. There are also faculties to be discovered.”

What is the role of the teacher or the instructor in the discovery of these faculties?

The teacher should not be a book that is read aloud, the same for everyone, no matter what his nature and character. The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself and to discover what he is capable of doing.

For that one must observe his games, the activities to which he is drawn naturally and spontaneously and also what he likes to learn, whether his intelligence is awake, the stories he enjoys, the activities which interest him, the human achievements which attract him.

The teacher must find out the category to which each of the children in his care belongs. And if after careful observation he discovers two or three exceptional children who are eager to learn and who love progress, he should help them to make use of their energies for this purpose by giving them the freedom of choice that encourages individual growth.

The old method of the seated class to which the teacher gives the same lesson for all, is certainly economical and easy, but also very ineffective, and so time is wasted for everybody.

15 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

You have written: “If after careful observation, he (the teacher) discovers two or three exceptional children who are eager to learn and who love progress, he should help them to make use of their energies for this purpose by giving them the freedom of choice that encourages individual growth.”

Do You mean that freedom of choice should be given
On Education

only to exceptional children? What about the others?

I said we should give freedom of choice to exceptional children because for them it is absolutely indispensable if we truly want to help them to develop fully.

Of course this freedom of choice can be given to all the children, and after all it is a good way to find their true nature; but most of them will prove to be lazy and not very interested in studies. But, on the other hand, they may be skilful with their hands and be willing to learn to make things. This too should be encouraged. In this way the children will find their true place in society, and will be prepared to fulfil it when they grow up.

Everyone should be taught the joy of doing well whatever he does, whether it is intellectual, artistic or manual work, and above all, the dignity of all work, whatever it may be, when it is done with care and skill.

16 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

For the exceptional children, do You think that we should turn their energies towards their special talent or is it better to direct them towards a total development?

It depends entirely on the child and his capacities.

18 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

Once I asked You whether, in our programme of education, we should teach the children to do some disinterested work for the Ashram, at least once a week. And You answered:

“It is always good to do disinterested work. But this
becomes much better if the work becomes an enjoyment and not a boring task."

Could You suggest how we could introduce this into our programme?

If the children could see the different kinds of work they can do, the inclination to do one thing or another would awaken and it would become as interesting as a game for them—if they are really intelligent.

18 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

When You said that we should observe the games of the children, what age did You have in mind?

It depends entirely on the child. Some are already awake at the age of seven, some take longer.

What is important is to give the children the chance to see and judge for themselves.

Mother, from seven to what age?

One could say about eighteen. It depends on the case. Some children are fully developed at the age of fourteen or fifteen. It is different for each one. It depends on the case.

18 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

You have written: “The teacher must find out the category to which each of the children in his care belongs.”

3 Oral question and reply.
On Education

*How can we distinguish the categories of children?*

By watching them live.
To be able to classify the children one must find out about their nature by observing their habits and reactions.
The teacher must not be a machine for reciting lessons, he must be a psychologist and an observer.

*19 January 1972*

*Sweet Mother,*

*Should we put the children of each category together?*

That has both advantages and disadvantages. The grouping of students should be made according to the resources at our disposal and the facilities we have. The arrangement should be flexible so that it can be improved upon if necessary.
To be a good teacher one must have the insight and knowledge of a Guru with an unfailing patience.

*19 January 1972*

*Sweet Mother,*

*You have said: “The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself.”*

*How can we help a student to know himself? For that, isn't it necessary for us to have attained a higher level of consciousness ourselves?*

Oh, yes indeed!*

The attitude of the teacher must be one of a constant will to progress, not only in order to know always better what he

*4 Oral reply (this sentence only).*
wants to teach the students, but above all in order to be a living example to show them what they can become.

(After five minutes' meditation) The teacher should be the living example of what he asks the students to become.

19 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

Is that the only way of teaching the students to know themselves?\(^5\)

It is the only right way. You see, a teacher who tells them, “You must not lie” and yet lies himself; “You must not lose your temper” and loses it himself — what would the result be? The children will not only lose confidence in the teacher but also in what he teaches.

Mother, every day I type out what You write, and P takes it to the School to show it to the other teachers, and they like it very much. And now some teachers are giving me questions to ask You.\(^6\)

(Laughing) Good! It is very good!

19 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

When we attempt to organise the children into categories based on their capacity for initiative, we see that there is a mixture of levels of achievement in various subjects. That makes the work very difficult for certain teachers who are in the habit of taking ordinary classes in the old classical way.

\(^5\) Oral question and reply.
\(^6\) Oral comment and reply.
On Education

We are here to do difficult things. If we repeat what others do, it is not worth the trouble; there are already many schools in the world.

Men have tried to cure the ignorance of the masses by adopting the easiest methods. But now we have passed that stage and humanity is ready to learn better and more fully. It is up to those who are in the lead to show the way so that others can follow.

21 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

How do You conceive the organisation of our education, to enable the children to discover their capacities and then follow the path of their individual development?

That is what we are trying to do here. It depends on the teacher. I do not have a theory one could put down on paper...7

This is what we are trying to do here. But doing it well depends on the teacher, on the trouble he takes, and on his power of psychological understanding. He must be capable of recognising the character and possibilities of the student, so that he can adapt his teaching to the needs of each individual.

22 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

Should the teachers be classified by subject? Is that the best way?

Classification by subject is important when one wants to study one or several subjects in depth, once an overall grounding that is useful for everyone has already been provided equally to all:

7 Oral reply (this paragraph only).
for example, reading and writing, speaking at least one language correctly, a little general geography, a general outline of modern science and a few indispensable rules of conduct for group or communal living.

For a detailed and thorough study of one subject the appropriate age depends on the child and his capacity to learn.

The precocious ones can start at the age of twelve. For most it will be more like fifteen and even seventeen or eighteen.

And when one wants to master a particular subject, especially a scientific or philosophical subject, one must be prepared to spend one’s whole life learning; one must never stop studying.

22 January 1972

_Sweet Mother,_

_I come back to the same question. What do You mean exactly by “categories of children”?_

_Do these categories correspond only to their character or also to their interests?_

The categories of character.

In assessing the possibilities of a child, ordinary moral notions are not of much use. Natures that are rebellious, undisciplined, obstinate, often conceal qualities that no one has known how to use. Indolent natures may also have a great potential for calm and patience.

It is a whole world to discover and easy solutions are not much use. The teacher must be even more hard-working than the student in order to learn how to discern and make the best possible use of different characters.

23 January 1972

_Sweet Mother,_

_Yesterday You mentioned rules of conduct._
On Education

What are the rules of conduct You consider indispensable in our community?

Patience, perseverance, generosity, broad-mindedness, insight, calm and understanding firmness, and control over the ego until it is completely mastered or even abolished.

Mother, this is not exactly what I wanted to ask. What I understand by “rules of conduct” was “manners”.

Manners belong to the moral rules of ordinary life and have no value from our point of view.

23 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

You have spoken of arranging students according to categories of character. In our present state of ignorance, if we try to impose a classification, would it not be something very arbitrary and even a dangerous game for the growing child?

Naturally, it is better not to take arbitrary and ignorant decisions. It would be disastrous for the children.

What I have said is for those who are capable of recognising characters and assessing them rightly, otherwise the result would be awful and more harmful than the usual mechanical teaching.

24 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

To be able to do what You have asked of us, isn’t it the teacher’s first duty to do an intense and sincere yoga instead of acting in a hasty and arbitrary manner?
Answers to a Monitress

Certainly!\(^8\)

What I have written is an ideal to be realised; you must prepare yourselves to be able to do it.

To be able to adopt this method, the teacher must be a discerning psychologist and that requires time and experience.

24 January 1972

_Sweet Mother,_

_You have said that the teacher must be a discerning psychologist, a Guru. You know very well that we are far from being all that. The teachers being what they are, how should the system of education be organised in order to improve our way of teaching?_

By doing what they can, knowing that they have everything to learn. In this way they will gain experience and do things better and better. That is the best way to learn, and if they do it in all sincerity, in two or three years they will become experts and will be truly useful.

Naturally, work done in this way becomes really interesting and makes the teachers as well as the students progress.

25 January 1972

_Sweet Mother,_

_Should we also have categories for the teachers as we do for the children — according to their way of teaching, of seeing things, and their affinity for certain subjects?_

For that, the teacher who organises the studies must be a discerning psychologist, observant and full of goodwill, knowing that he too has to learn and progress.

\(^8\) Oral reply (this sentence only).
On Education

The true attitude is to take life as a field of perpetual study, where one must never stop learning and think that one knows everything there is to know. One can always know more and understand better.

25 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

If the children want to do practical work from the age of nine in the field of electronics or technology, should they be encouraged?

Yes, of course.

25 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

In this method of work, the teacher must devote sufficient time to each one individually. But the teachers are few in number. How can we respect the needs of each one as fully as possible and at the same time satisfy all those who ask for help?

One cannot make a theory. It depends on each case, the possibilities and circumstances. It is an attitude which the teacher must have and apply as well as he can, and better and better if possible.

26 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

You said the other day that there were teachers who were not capable, and that they should stop teaching. What is the criterion for assessing the capacity of a teacher?
First, he must understand, he must know what we want to do and understand well how to do it.

Secondly, he must have a power of psychological discernment in dealing with the students, he must understand his students and what they are capable of doing.

Naturally, he must know the subject he is teaching. If he is teaching French, he must know French. If he is teaching English, Geography, Science, he must know what he is teaching.

But the most important thing is that he must have psychological discernment.9

31 January 1972

Sweet Mother,

Nowadays in schools elsewhere, especially in the West, much importance is given to “sex-education”.

What is “sex-education”? What do they teach?

For myself, I don’t like people to be preoccupied with these things. In my time we were never preoccupied with these things. Now children talk about them all the time — it is in their minds, in their feelings. It is disgusting. It is difficult, very difficult.

But if they talk about it elsewhere, we have to talk about it here too. They should be told the consequences of these things. Especially the girls ought to be told that the consequences can be disastrous. When I was young, in those days, people never spoke about all that, they never paid attention to these things. In those days, people did not talk about all that. Here, I did not want this subject to be discussed. That is why we do physical culture. In that way the energies are used to develop strength, beauty, skill and all that; and one is more capable of control. You will see, the ones who do a lot of physical culture, they are much more capable of mastering their impulses.10

9 Oral reply. 10 Oral reply (the above paragraphs only).
On Education

(After meditation) The energies that are used in human beings for reproduction and which take such a predominant place in their existence should on the contrary be sublimated and used for progress and higher development, to prepare the advent of the new race. But first the vital and the physical must be freed from all desire, otherwise there is a great risk of disaster.

1 February 1972

Sweet Mother,

What is the essential difference between the behaviour and responsibility of a teacher with regard to young children and with regard to older students (over fourteen or fifteen, for instance)?

Naturally, as the consciousness and intelligence develop in the children, it is more and more through them that we can deal with the children.

3 February 1972

Sweet Mother,

Should one punish a child?

Punish? What do you mean by punish? If a child is noisy in class and prevents the others from working, you must tell him to behave himself; and if he continues, you can send him out of the class. That is not a punishment, it is a natural consequence of his actions. But to punish! To punish! You have no right to punish. Are you the Divine? Who has given you the right to punish? The children too can punish you for your actions. Are you perfect yourselves? Do you know what is good or what is bad? Only the Divine knows. Only the Divine has the right to punish.11

11 Oral reply (this paragraph only).

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The vibrations that you emit bring you into contact with corresponding vibrations. If you emit harmful and destructive vibrations, quite naturally you draw corresponding vibrations towards yourselves and that is the real punishment, if you want to use that word; but it does not correspond at all to the divine organisation of the world.

Every action has its consequences, good or bad, but the idea of reward and punishment is a purely human idea and does not at all correspond to the way in which the Truth-Consciousness acts. If the Consciousness that rules the world had acted according to human principles of punishment and reward, there would have been no men left on earth for a long time.

When men become pure enough to transmit the divine vibrations without distorting them, then suffering will be abolished from the world. That is the only way.

3 February 1972

Some teachers have written to me that they have read what I wrote for you and that it had done them a lot of good. So you can continue showing them.12

This prayer, Mother?

Yes, if you type this out on a piece of paper:

“We want to be true servitors of the Divine.”

And then the prayer:

“Supreme Lord, Perfect Consciousness, You alone truly know what we are, what we can do, the progress we must make in order to become capable and worthy of serving You as we want to do. Make us conscious of our capacities, but also of our difficulties, so that we may be able to surmount them and serve You faithfully.”

12 All the material for this date (14 February) is oral.
On Education

And then this — the conclusion:
“The supreme happiness is to be true servitors of the Divine.”
There are people whom it helps. Did you show them your notebook?

I don’t show this [meditation] notebook to everyone. I type out the questions on education from the other notebook and give them to the school. But I don’t show this notebook to everybody.

No, that one is for you. But you can copy things like this which are for everybody. You can show it to all those who have goodwill. I have received several letters telling me that it had done them a lot of good. So you can continue.

Yes, Mother, I don’t show this notebook to everyone because I thought that You wanted to use it immediately for the Bulletin.

Not all of it. For example, I wouldn’t put this in the Bulletin.

14 February 1972

Sweet Mother,
Concerning the categories You have mentioned for the school, should there also be similar categories for physical education?

For physical exercises, it all depends on the body and its capacities. Easy exercises that are not tiring can be given to everyone. Afterwards, it all depends on the body, on its strength, its health, its resistance to fatigue, etc., etc. Exercises should be given according to capacity and the children should be grouped according to these capacities. It is a matter of experience and observation.
Answers to a Monitress

To be a good teacher of physical culture one must know anatomy, the various functions of the body, their development and their functioning.

16 February 1972

Sweet Mother,

Could you write something on discipline for us?

Discipline is indispensable to physical life. The proper functioning of the organs is based on a discipline. It is precisely when an organ or a part of the body does not obey the general discipline of the body that one falls ill.

Discipline is indispensable to progress. It is only when one imposes a rigorous and enlightened discipline on oneself that one can be free from the discipline of others.

The supreme discipline is integral surrender to the Divine and to allow nothing else either in one’s feelings or in one’s activities. Nothing should ever be omitted from this surrender — that is the supreme and most rigorous discipline.

17 February 1972

Sweet Mother,

Yesterday You wrote on discipline. But what attitude should we take towards the imposed discipline to which we must conform in communal life?

Communal life must necessarily have a discipline so that the weaker are not bullied by the stronger; and this discipline must be respected by all those who want to live in that community.

But for the community to be happy, this discipline should be set by the most broad-minded person or persons, if possible the person or persons who are conscious of the Divine Presence and are surrendered to it.
On Education

For the world to be happy, power should only be in the hands of those who are conscious of the Divine Will. But for the time being that is impossible because the number of those who are truly conscious of the Divine Will is very small, and because they necessarily have no ambition.

In fact, when the time comes for this realisation, it will take place quite naturally.

The duty of each one is to prepare himself for it as completely as he can.

18 February 1972

Mother,

Some people criticise the fact that we have too many rules in our physical education and that we impose too much discipline on the children.

There can be no physical education without discipline. The body itself could not function without a strict discipline. Actually, the failure to recognise this fact is the principal cause of illness.

Digestion, growth, blood-circulation, everything, everything is a discipline. Thought, movement, gestures, everything is a discipline, and if there is no discipline people immediately fall ill.13

18 February 1972

Sweet Mother,

The students, especially the adolescents, often complain that they have to do even the physical exercises that they do not like and do not find interesting. Would you reply to this, Mother?

We are not on earth to follow our own sweet will but to progress.

13 Oral reply (this paragraph only).
Physical exercises are not done for fun or to satisfy one's whims, but as a methodical discipline to develop and strengthen the body.

True wisdom is to take pleasure in everything one does and that is possible if one takes everything one does as a way to progress. Perfection is difficult to attain and there is always a great deal of progress to be made in order to achieve it.

To seek pleasure is certainly the best way to make yourself miserable.

If you truly want peace and happiness, your constant preoccupation should be:

“What progress must I make to be able to know and serve the Divine?”

Show this to C. She ought not to have listened to what the children say. She has been here a long time. She ought to know that.

That [“To seek pleasure is certainly the best way to make yourself miserable”] is an absolute truth. It affirms that if you want to satisfy your little ego, you are sure to be unhappy. For sure! It is the best way to make yourself miserable. To say: “Oh, it is boring; oh, I must do what I like; oh, that person is unkind to me; oh, life does not bring me what I want.” Ouah!!!

“Am I what I ought to be?
“Am I doing what I ought to be doing?
“Am I progressing as much as I should?”
Then it becomes interesting.

“What should I learn in order to make my next progress?
What infirmity must I cure? What shortcoming must I overcome?
What weakness must I get rid of?”

And then, naturally, the next moment: “How can I become capable of understanding and serving the Divine?”

14 Written question and reply. The comment following is oral.
On Education

I have written it down specially so that you can show it to C.

Yes, Mother, she knows, but she wanted to know how to explain to the children.

Yes, that is all there is to say.

19 February 1972