31 March 1951

Mother reads a question asked during her talk in 1929:

“Can all physical ailments be traced to some disorder in the mind?”

Questions and Answers 1929 (16 June)

If there is one mental disorder which can bring about all illnesses, it is fear.

But, each man can make his own experiment. If one has a bad throat, this may be due to the fact that the day before one was in a state of depression. Or perhaps one is very unhappy, dissatisfied, one finds everything very bad, and the next day one gets a cold in the head.... Everyone must make his own observations.

“Each spot of the body is symbolical of an inner movement; there is there a world of subtle correspondences.... The particular place in the body affected by an illness is an index to the nature of the inner disharmony that has taken place. It points to the origin, it is a sign of the cause of the ailment. It reveals too the nature of the resistance that prevents the whole being from advancing at the same high speed. It indicates the treatment and the cure. If one could perfectly understand where the mistake is, find out what has been unreceptive, open that part and put the force and the light there, it would be possible to re-establish in a moment the harmony that has been disturbed and the illness would immediately go.”

Ibid.
Questions and Answers

Will you explain how each part of the body is symbolical of an inner movement?

In the ancient schools of initiation there was the practice of saying simply “This is true” or “This is false” to those who already had the knowledge of these things.

Can anyone relate his experience on this subject? Naturally you must be able to give the correlation between a certain psychological state and a particular part of the body.

Once, I complained to you about some pain and you asked me which part of the body was affected. When I told you which, I did not know about its correspondence with the vital, the mind, etc., yet the pain disappeared.

I don’t see any contradiction!... There are two ways of curing an illness spiritually. One consists in putting a force of consciousness and truth on the physical spot which is affected. In this case the effect produced depends naturally on the receptivity of the person. Supposing the person is receptive; the force of consciousness is put upon the affected part and its pressure restores order. Many of you here can tell how Sri Aurobindo cured them. It was like a hand which came and took away the pain. It is as clear as that.

In other cases, if the body lacks receptivity altogether or if its receptivity is insufficient, one sees the inner correspondence with the psychological state which has brought about the illness and acts on that. But if the cause of the illness is refractory, not much can be done. Let us say the origin is vital. The vital absolutely refuses to change, it clings terrifically to the condition in which it is; then that is hopeless. You put the force, and usually it provokes an increase in the illness, produced by the resistance of the vital which did not want to accept anything. I speak of the vital but it can be the mind or something else.

When the action is directly upon the body, that is, on the
affected part, it is possible that one is relieved; then, some hours later or even after a few days, the illness returns. This means that the cause has not been changed, that the cause is in the vital and is still there; it is only the effect which has been cured. But if one can act simultaneously upon both the cause and the effect, and the cause is sufficiently receptive to consent to change, then one is completely cured, once for all.

I once had an illness which was almost like an experience. I wanted to get rid of jealousy. The whole night I felt a strong pressure, I had pain all over the body, to the very bones. The next morning I had a stomach-ache and sent you word with my brother. You told him that if I did not get better in a few hours, you would send the doctor. He forgot to tell me that he had seen you and what you had told him, but I learnt later that it was at the exact moment you had spoken to him that I was cured.

I knew it was that!

How can one increase the receptivity of the body?

It depends on the part. The method is almost the same for all parts of the being. To begin with, the first condition: to remain as quiet as possible. You may notice that in the different parts of your being, when something comes and you do not receive it, this produces a shrinking — there is something which hardens in the vital, the mind or the body. There is a stiffening and this hurts, one feels a mental, vital or physical pain. So, the first thing is to put one’s will and relax this shrinking, as one does a twitching nerve or a cramped muscle; you must learn how to relax, be able to relieve this tension in whatever part of the being it may be.

The method of relaxing the contraction may be different
in the mind, the vital or the body, but logically it is the same thing. Once you have relaxed the tension, you see first if the disagreeable effect ceases, which would prove that it was a small momentary resistance, but if the pain continues and if it is indeed necessary to increase the receptivity in order to be able to receive what is helpful, what should be received, you must, after having relaxed this contraction, begin trying to widen yourself — you feel you are widening yourself. There are many methods. Some find it very useful to imagine they are floating on water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass. Others make an effort to identify themselves with the sky and the stars, so they widen, widen themselves, identifying themselves more and more with the sky. Others again don’t need these pictures; they can become conscious of their consciousness, enlarge their consciousness more and more until it becomes unlimited. One can enlarge it till it becomes vast as the earth and even the universe. When one does that one becomes really receptive. As I have said, it is a question of training. In any case, from an immediate point of view, when something comes and one feels that it is too strong, that it gives a headache, that one can’t bear it, the method is just the same, you must act upon the contraction. One can act through thought, by calling the peace, tranquillity (the feeling of peace takes away much of the difficulty) like this: “Peace, peace, peace... tranquility... calm.” Many discomforts, even physical, like all these contractions of the solar plexus, which are so unpleasant and give you at times nausea, the sensation of being suffocated, of not being able to breathe again, can disappear thus. It is the nervous centre which is affected, it gets affected very easily. As soon as there is something which affects the solar plexus, you must say, “Calm... calm... calm”, become more and more calm until the tension is destroyed.

In thought also. For instance, you are reading something and come across a thought you don’t understand — it is beyond you, you understand nothing and so in your head it lies like a brick,
31 March 1951

and if you try to understand, it becomes more and more like a brick, a stiffening, and if you persist it gives you a headache. There is but one thing to do: not to struggle with the words, remain just like this (gesture, stretched out, immobile), create a relaxation, simply widen, widen. And don’t try to understand, above all, don’t try to understand — let it enter like that, quite gently, and relax, relax, and in this relaxing your headache goes away. You no longer think of anything, you wait for a few days and after some days you see from inside: “Oh! How clear it is! I understand what I had not understood.” It is as easy as that. When you read a book which is beyond you, when you come across sentences which you cannot understand — one feels that there is no correspondence in the head — well, you must do this; one reads the thing once, twice, thrice, then remains calm and makes the mind silent. A fortnight later, one takes up the same passage again and it is clear as daylight. Everything has been organised in the head, the elements of the brain which were wanted for the understanding have been formed, everything has been done gradually and one understands. I knew many people who, when I used to tell them something, argued, — they did not understand anything at all. They were shut up in their mind which could not catch the thought, which threw it out, refused it violently. You have said something, you don’t insist; you have said it, that’s all; if need be you say it a second time, but you don’t insist. A week, a month later, those very people come looking for you and tell you with strong conviction, “But things are like that, you don’t understand, things are like that!” It is exactly what you have told them, you know. But they tell you, “I thought about it, now I know, it is this, it is truly this.” If you have the misfortune to tell them, “But this is exactly what I had told you”, they pull a long face! And they don’t understand any longer.

_Illnesses enter through the subtle body, don’t they? How can they be stopped?_
Questions and Answers

Ah! Here we are.... If one is very sensitive, very sensitive — one must be very sensitive — the moment they touch the subtle body and try to pass through, one feels it. It is not like something touching the body, it is a sort of feeling. If you are able to perceive it at that moment, you have still the power to say “no”, and it goes away. But for this one must be extremely sensitive. However, that develops. All these things can be developed methodically by the will. You can become quite conscious of this envelope, and if you develop it sufficiently, you don’t even need to look and see, you feel that something has touched you. I can give you an instance of this, there are many similar ones.

Someone was seeking to establish a constant and conscious contact — absolutely constant and conscious — with the inner Godhead, not only with the psychic being but the divine Presence in the psychic being, and she had decided that she would be like this, that she would busy herself with nothing else, that is to say, whatever she might be doing, her concentration was upon this, and even when she went out walking in the street, her concentration was upon this. She lived in a big city where there was much traffic: buses, tramways, etc., many things, and to cross the street one had to be considerably careful, wide-awake and attentive, otherwise one could get run over, but this person had resolved that she would not come out of her concentration. One day when she was crossing one of the big avenues with all its cars and its tramways, still deep in her concentration, in her inner seeking, she suddenly felt at about an arm's length a little shock, like this; she jumped back and a car passed just by her side. If she had not jumped back she would have been run over.... This is an extreme point, but without going so far one can very easily feel a kind of little discomfort (it is not something which is imposed with a great force), a little uneasiness coming near you from anywhere at all: front, behind, above, below. If at that moment you are sufficiently alert, you say “no”, as though you were cutting off the contact with great strength, and it is finished. If you are not conscious at that moment, the next minute or a
few minutes later you get a queer sick feeling inside, a cold in
the back, a little uneasiness, the beginning of some disharmony;
you feel a maladjustment somewhere, as though the general
harmony had been disturbed. Then you must concentrate all
the more and with a great strength of will keep the faith that
nothing can do you harm, nothing can touch you. This suffices,
you can throw off the illness at that moment. But you must
do this immediately, you understand, you must not wait five
minutes, it must be done at once. If you wait too long and begin
to feel really an uneasiness somewhere, and something begins
to get quite disturbed, then it is good to sit down, concentrate
and call the Force, concentrate it on the place which is getting
disturbed, that is to say, which is beginning to become ill. But
if you don’t do anything at all, an illness indeed gets lodged
somewhere; and all this, because you were not sufficiently alert.
And sometimes one is obliged to follow the entire curve to find
the favourable moment again and get rid of the business. I have
said somewhere that in the physical domain all is a question of
method — a method is necessary for realising everything. And
if the illness has succeeded in touching the physical-physical,
well, you must follow the procedure needed to get rid of it.
This is what medical science calls “the course of the illness”.
One can hasten the course with the help of spiritual forces, but
all the same the procedure must be followed. There are some
four different stages. The very first is instantaneous. The second
can be done in some minutes, the third may take several hours
and the fourth several days. And then, once the thing is lodged
there, all will depend not only on the receptivity of the body
but still more on the willingness of the part which is the cause
of the disorder. You know, when the thing comes from outside
it is in affinity with something inside. If it manages to pass
through, to enter without one’s being aware of it, it means there
is some affinity somewhere, and the part of the being which has
responded must be convinced.

I have known some truly extraordinary instances. If you can
Questions and Answers

at the moment... Wait, take an example which is quite concrete: sunstroke. This upsets you considerably, it is one of the things which makes you most ill—a sunstroke upsets everything, it disturbs the inner functions, it generally causes a congestion in the head and very high fever. So, if this has happened, if it has succeeded in getting through the protection and entering you, well, if you can just go into a quiet place, stretch yourself out flat, go out of your body (naturally, you must learn this; there are people who do this spontaneously, for others a long discipline is necessary), go out of your body, remain above in a way to be able to see the body (you know the phenomenon, seeing one’s body when one is outside? This can be done at will, going out of one’s body and remaining just above it), the body is stretched out on a bed, a bench, on the ground, anywhere; you are stretched just above it and from there, consciously, you pull the Force from above, and if you are used to doing it, if your aspiration is strong enough, you get the answer; and then, from there, taking care not to re-enter your body, you begin to push these forces into the body, like that, regularly, until you see the body receiving them (for, the first few moments they don’t enter, because the body is quite upset by the illness, it is not receptive, it is tensed up), you push them gently, gently, quietly, without nervousness, very peacefully, into the body. But you must not be disturbed by anyone. If someone comes along, sees you stretched out and shakes you, it is extremely dangerous. You must do this in quiet conditions, ask people not to disturb you or better shut yourself up where they can’t disturb you. But you can concentrate slowly (this takes more or less time—ten minutes, half an hour, one hour, two hours—it depends upon the seriousness of the disorder which has set in), slowly, from above, you concentrate the Force until you see that the body is receiving, that the Force is entering, the disorder is being set right and there is a relaxation in the body itself. Once that is done you can get back and you are cured. This has been done for a sunstroke, which is a fairly violent thing, and also for typhoid
fever, and many other illnesses, as, for instance, for a liver which was suddenly upset somehow (not due to indigestion, but a liver which doesn't function properly for the moment); it may also be cured in the same way. There was a case of cholera which was healed like that. The cholera had just been caught, had entered, but was not yet lodged; it was completely cured. Consequently, when I say that if one masters the spiritual force and knows how to use it, there is no malady which cannot be cured. I don't say it just like that in the air; it is said from experience with the thing. Of course, you will say you don’t know how to go out of the body, draw the Force, concentrate it, have all this mastery.... It is not very frequent, but it is not impossible. And one can be sure that if one is helped... In fact, there is a much easier method, it is to call for help.

But the condition in every case — in every case — whether one does it oneself and depending only on oneself or whether one does it by asking someone to do it for one, the first condition: not to fear and to be calm. If you begin to boil and get fidgety in your body, it is finished, you can do nothing.

For everything — to live the spiritual life, heal sickness — for everything, one must be calm.