30 December 1950

“We are not aiming at success — our aim is perfection.
“We are not seeking fame or reputation; we want to prepare ourselves for a Divine manifestation.”

“Tournaments”, On Education

What is perfection?
Some people put perfection at the apex. It is generally thought that perfection is the maximum one can do. But I say that perfection is not the apex, it is not an extreme. There is no extreme — whatever you may do, there is always the possibility of something better, and it is exactly this possibility of something better which is the very meaning of progress.
Since there is no extreme, how can we attain perfection?

*If we make some progress, could it be said that we are going towards perfection?*

You are mixing up perfection and progress. You do not necessarily progress towards perfection. In progress there is perhaps a certain perfection, but it can’t be said that progress is perfection.
Progress is rather an ascent.
Perfection is a harmony, an equilibrium.
But what is equilibrium? Who here has studied a little physics?

*In a balance, when the two scales are equally loaded, it is said that an equilibrium is established.*

That’s it. And so what do I mean when I say that perfection is an equilibrium?
When, in a given circumstance, what is against the realisation, that is to say the opposition, is conquered by a conscious force, the result is the manifestation of the realisation.

Yes, it is more or less like that, but I should put it otherwise.

The idea of perfection is something which comes to us from the Divine, it descends from plane to plane; and we climb back from plane to plane.

This is still an evolutionary idea. It is always said that when a creation reaches its maximum possibility, this is perfection; but it is not that! and it is exactly against this idea that I protest. All this is only a rung in the progress. That is, Nature goes to the extreme limit of what she has, and when she sees that she can go no further, can no longer stir, she destroys everything and begins again. This can’t be called a perfection, for perfection cannot be demolished. Perfection will come only when Nature can no longer undo what she has begun. For the moment there is no instance where she has not successively undone what she had begun, believing that it was not enough or it was not that which she wanted to do. Hence it cannot be said that she has attained perfection in her creation. It would be the maximum only if she had no need to undo what she has done.

You say that we do not seek success, but is not success a sort of perfection?

For the ordinary human mentality success is perhaps a perfection, but not for us.

Perfection is not a static state, it is an equilibrium. But a progressive, dynamic equilibrium. One may go from perfection to perfection. There can come a state from which it would not be necessary to descend to a lower rung in order to go farther;
Questions and Answers

at the moment the march of Nature is like that, but in this new state, instead of being obliged to go back to be able to start again, one can walk always forward, without ever stopping. As things are, one comes to a certain point and, as human beings as they are at present cannot progress indefinitely, one must pass to a higher species or leave the present species and create another. The human being as he is at the moment cannot attain perfection unless he gets out of himself — man is a transitional being. In ordinary language it may be said: “Oh, this man is perfect”, but that is a literary figure. The maximum a human being can attain just now is an equilibrium which is not progressive. He may attain perhaps a static equilibrium but all that is static can be broken for lack of progress.

Is not perfection the fulfilment of the Divine in all the parts of the being?

No, what you are thinking of is again a rung in progress and not perfection.

Now we are going to try to find a definition which can fit all instances, that is, the individual, the collectivity, the earth and the universe.

We may say that perfection will be attained in the individual, the collectivity, on the earth and in the universe, when, at every moment, the receptivity will be equal in quality and quantity to the Force which wants to manifest.

That is the supreme equilibrium.

Hence, there must be a perfect equilibrium between what comes from above and what answers from below, and when the two meet, that is perfect equilibrium, which is the Realisation — a realisation in constant progress.

“It is better to be than to seem. We do not need to appear to be good if our sincerity is perfect. And by perfect sincerity we mean that all our thoughts, feelings,
sensations and actions should express nothing but the central Truth of our being.”

“Tournaments”, On Education

When you are absolutely sincere, you make a constant effort to live in harmony with the highest ideal of your being, the truth of your being. At every moment, in all that you think, all that you feel and all that you do, you try as perfectly as possible, as completely as possible, to put yourself in harmony with the highest ideal or, if you are conscious of it, with the truth of your being — then you have reached true sincerity. And if you are like that, if truly you do not act from egoistic motives or for personal reasons, if you act guided by your inner truth, that is, if you are perfectly sincere, it is absolutely the same to you whether the whole world judges you in one way or another. In this state of perfect sincerity you do not need to appear good or to be approved by others, for the first thing you experience when you are in harmony with your true consciousness is that you do not care what you look like. Whether you look like this or like that, whether you seem indifferent, cold, distant, proud, all this is of no importance; provided, I repeat this, you are absolutely sincere, that is, you never forget that you live in order to realise your inner, central truth.

Does not perfection consist in pleasing the Divine and no one else?

Yes, if you like, but when one is not absolutely sincere, one deceives oneself very easily, and if one feels comfortable, one says: “Oh, I am sure that I please the Divine.”