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“One of the commonest forms of ambition is the idea of service to humanity. All attachment to such service or work is a sign of personal ambition.”

*Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (14 April 1929)*

Why do you say that this is ambition?

Why do you want to serve humanity, what is your idea? It is ambition, it is in order to become a great man among men. It is difficult to understand?... I can see that!

*The Divine is everywhere. So if one serves humanity, one serves the Divine, isn’t that so?*

That’s marvellous! The clearest thing in this matter is to say: “The Divine is in me. If I serve myself, I am also serving the Divine!” *(Laughter)* In fact, the Divine is everywhere. The Divine will do His own work very well without you.

I see quite well that you do not understand. But truly, if you do understand that the Divine is there, in all things, with what are you meddling in serving humanity? To serve humanity you must know better than the Divine what must be done for it. Do you know better than the Divine how to serve it?

The Divine is everywhere. Yes. Things don’t seem to be divine.... As for me, I see only one solution: if you want to help humanity, there is only one thing to do, it is to take yourself as completely as possible and offer yourself to the Divine. That is the solution. Because in this way, at least the material reality which you represent will be able to grow a little more like the Divine.

We are told that the Divine is in all things. Why don’t things change? Because the Divine does not get a response, everything...
does not respond to the Divine. One must search the depths of the consciousness to see this. What do you want to do to serve humanity? Give food to the poor? — You can feed millions of them. That will not be a solution, this problem will remain the same. Give new and better living conditions to men? — The Divine is in them, how is it that things don’t change? The Divine must know better than you the condition of humanity. What are you? You represent only a little bit of consciousness and a little bit of matter, it is that you call “myself”. If you want to help humanity, the world or the universe, the only thing to do is to give that little bit entirely to the Divine. Why is the world not divine?... It is evident that the world is not in order. So the only solution to the problem is to give what belongs to you. Give it totally, entirely to the Divine; not only for yourself but for humanity, for the universe. There is no better solution. How do you want to help humanity? You don’t even know what it needs. Perhaps you know still less what power you are serving. How can you change anything without indeed having changed yourself?

In any case, you are not powerful enough to do it. How do you expect to help another if you do not have a higher consciousness than he? It is such a childish idea! It is children who say: “I am opening a boarding-house, I am going to build a crèche, give soup to the poor, preach this knowledge, spread this religion....” It is only because you consider yourself better than others, think you know better than they what they should be or do. That’s what it is, serving humanity. You want to continue all that? It has not changed things much. It is not to help humanity that one opens a hospital or a school.

All the same it has helped, hasn’t it? If all the schools were abolished...

I don’t think that humanity is happier than it was before nor that there has been a great improvement. All this mostly gives
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you the feeling “I am something.” That’s what I call ambition.

If these very people who are ready to give money for schools were told that there was a divine Work to be done, that the Divine has decided to do it in this particular way, even if they are convinced that it is indeed the Divine’s Work, they refuse to give anything, for this is not a recognised form of beneficence — one doesn’t have the satisfaction of having done something good! This is what I call ambition. I had instances of people who could give lakhs of rupees to open a hospital, for that gives them the satisfaction of doing something great, noble, generous. They glorify themselves, that’s what I call ambition.

I knew a humorist who used to say: “It won’t be so soon that the kingdom of God will come, for those poor philanthropists — what would remain for them? If humanity suffered no longer, the philanthropists would be without work.” It is difficult to come out of that. However, it is a fact that never will the world come out of the state in which it is unless it gives itself up to the Divine. All the virtues — you may glorify them — increase your self-satisfaction, that is, your ego; they do not help you truly to become aware of the Divine. It is the generous and wise people of this world who are the most difficult to convert. They are very satisfied with their life. A poor fellow who has done all sorts of stupid things all his life feels immediately sorry and says: “I am nothing, can do nothing. Make of me what You want.” Such a one is more right and much closer to the Divine than one who is wise and full of his wisdom and vanity. He sees himself as he is.

The generous and wise man who has done much for humanity is too self-satisfied to have the least idea of changing. It is usually these people who say: “If indeed I had created the world, I wouldn’t have made it like this, I would have created it much better than that”, and they try to set right what the Divine has done badly! According to their picture, all this is stupid and useless.... It is not with that attitude that you can belong to the Divine. There will always be between you and Him the conscious ego of one’s own intellectual superiority which judges
the Divine and is sure of never being mistaken. For they are
convinced that if they had made the world, they would not have
committed all the stupidities that God has perpetrated. And all
this comes from pride, vanity, self-conceit; and there is exactly
the seed of that in people who want to serve humanity.

What are they going to give to humanity? Nothing at all! Even if they gave every drop of their blood, all the ideas in their
head, all the money in their pocket, that could not change one
individual, who is but a second of time in eternity. They believe
they can serve eternity? There are even beings higher than man
who have come, have brought the light, given their life, and
that has not changed things much. So how can a little man, a
microscopic being, truly help? It is pride. The argument given
is: “If everyone did his best, all would go well.” I don’t think
so and, even, it is impossible. In a certain way, each thing in the
universe does its best. But that best doesn’t come to anything
at all. Unless everything changes, nothing will change. It is this
best that must change. In the place of ignorance must be born
knowledge and power and consciousness, otherwise we shall
always turn in a circle around the same stupidity.

You may open millions of hospitals, that will not prevent
people getting ill. On the contrary, they will have every facility
and encouragement to fall ill. We are steeped in ideas of this kind.
This puts your conscience at rest: “I have come to the world, I
must help others.” One tells oneself: “How disinterested I am! I
am going to help humanity.” All this is nothing but egoism.

In fact, the first human being that concerns you is yourself.
You want to diminish suffering, but unless you can change the
capacity of suffering into a certitude of being happy, the world
will not change. It will always be the same, we turn in a circle —
one civilisation follows another, one catastrophe another; but the
thing does not change, for there is something missing, something
not there, that is the consciousness. That’s all.

At least, that’s my opinion. I am giving it to you for what
it is worth. If you want to build hospitals, schools, you may do
so; if that makes you happy, so much the better for you. It has
not much importance. When I saw the film *Monsieur Vincent*,
I was very interested. He found out that when he fed ten poor
men, a thousand came along. That was what Colbert told him:
“It seems you create them, your poor ones, by feeding them!”
And it is not altogether false. However! If it is your destiny
to found schools and give instruction, to care for the sick, to
open hospitals, it is good, do it. But you must not take that
very seriously. It is something grandiose you are doing for your
own pleasure. Say: “I am doing it because it gives me pleasure.”
But do not speak of yoga. It is not yoga you are doing. You
believe you are doing something great, that’s all, and it is for
your personal satisfaction.

*It is said that the Rishi Vishvamitra also created a new
world.*

What did he do? Tell me. He was not happy with this world and
created another, did he? Where is this world?

Naturally, the first idea is to be greater than the one who
has created the world. For one thinks that it is badly done. It is
possible, you may say it is done badly. If you believe that you can
do better than the Divine, I am not saying that you will be wrong.
I am saying that you cannot say that you are not ambitious. I do
not say they were wrong; I say they are ambitious. It is nothing
else but that. The proof is that these are people who do good,
these are the generous, good, disinterested ones who are the most
difficult to convert; their ego is formidable. Their idea of justice,
generosity, etc. is so big that there is no place for anything else,
for the Divine.

Before being capable of doing good, one must go deep within
oneself and make a very important discovery. It is that one does
not exist. There is one thing which exists, that is the Divine,
and so long as you have not made that discovery, you cannot
advance on the path. But it is so hard a carapace!... If you have
the philosophic mind, you will ask yourself: “What do I call ‘myself’? Is it my body? — it changes all the time, it is never the same thing. Is it my feelings? — they change so often. Is it my thoughts? — they are built and destroyed continuously. That is not myself. Where is the self? What is it that gives me this sense of continuity?” If you continue sincerely, you go back a few years. The problem becomes more and more perplexing. You continue to observe, you tell yourself: “It is my memory.” But even if one loses one’s memory, one would be oneself. If one sincerely continues this profound search, there comes a moment when everything disappears and one single thing exists, that is the Divine, the divine Presence. Everything disappears, dissolves, everything melts away like butter in the sunlight.... When one has made this discovery, one becomes aware that one was nothing but a bundle of habits. It is always that which does not know the Divine and is not conscious of the Divine which speaks. In everyone there are these hundreds and hundreds of “selves” who speak and in hundreds of completely different ways — “selves” unconscious, changing, fluid. The self which speaks today is not the same as yesterday’s; and if you look further, the self has disappeared. There is only one who remains. That is the Divine. It is the only one that may be seen always the same. And unless you have gone so far...

If everything comes from Him, why are there so many errors?

You must not believe that everything that happens to you in life comes to you naturally from the Divine, that is, that it is the Truth-Consciousness which is directing your life. For if everything came from Him, it would be impossible for you to make a mistake.

How does it happen that there’s error everywhere? Why do things go in opposition to the Divine and to what they ought to be?... Because there are numerous elements which cross each
other and intervene. Wills cross each other, the strongest gets the best of it. It is this complexity of norms that has created a determinism. The divine Will is completely veiled by this host of things. So I have said here (Mother takes her book): “You must accept all things — and only those things — that come from the Divine. Because things can come from concealed desires. The desires work in the subconscious and attract things to you of which possibly you may not recognise the origin, but which do not come from the Divine but from disguised desires.”

If you have a strong desire for something you cannot get, you project your desire outside yourself. It goes off like a tiny personality separated from you and roams about in the world. It will take a little round, more or less large, and return to you, perhaps when you have forgotten it. People who have a kind of passion, who want something, — that goes out from them like a little being, like a little flame into the surroundings. This little being has its destiny. It roams about in the world, tossed around by other things perhaps. You have forgotten it, but it will never forget that it must bring about that particular result.... For days you tell yourself: “How much I would like to go to that place, to Japan, for instance, and see so many things”, and your desire goes out from you; but because desires are very fugitive things, you have forgotten completely this desire you had thrown out with such a force. There are many reasons for your thinking about something else. And after ten years or more, or less, it comes back to you like a dish served up piping hot. Yes, like a piping-hot dish, well arranged. You say: “This does not interest me any longer.” It does not interest you ten or twenty years later. It was a small formation and it has gone and done its work as it could.... It is impossible to have desires without their being realised, even if it be quite a tiny desire. The formation has done what it could; it took a lot of trouble, it has worked hard, and after years it returns. It is like a servant you have sent out and who has done his best. When he returns you tell him: “What have you done?” — “Why? But, sir, it was because you wanted it!”
You cannot put forth a strong thought without its going out from you like a little balloon, as it were. We have certain stories which are not unbelievable, like the one about that miser who thought of nothing but his money; he had hidden his hoard somewhere and always used to go to see it. After his death he continued to come as a ghost (that is to say, his vital being), to watch over his money. Nobody could go near the place without meeting with a catastrophe. It is like that, if you have worked to bring out something, it is always realised. It may be realised even after your death! Yes, for when your body ceases to exist, none of the vibrations stops existing. They are realised somewhere. That was what the Buddha said: the vibrations continue to exist, to be perpetuated. They are contagious. They continue in others, pass into others, and everyone adds a little to them.

Can one help the world with a vibration of goodwill?

With good wishes one can change many things, only it must be an extremely pure and unmixed goodwill. It is quite obvious that a thought, a perfectly pure and true prayer, if it is sent forth into the world, does its work. But where is this perfectly pure and true thought when it passes into the human brain? There are degradations. If through an effort of inner consciousness and knowledge, you can truly overcome in yourself a desire, that is to say, dissolve and abolish it, and if through inner goodwill, through consciousness, light, knowledge, you are able to dissolve the desire, you will be, first of all in yourself personally, a hundred times happier than if you had satisfied this desire, and then it will have a marvellous effect. It will have a repercussion in the world of which you have no idea. It will spread forth. For the vibrations you have created will continue to spread. These things grow larger like the snowball. The victory you win in your character, however small it be, is one which can be gained in the whole world. And it is this I meant just now: all things which are done outwardly without changing the inner nature —
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hospitals, schools, etc. — are done through vanity, for the feeling
of being great, whilst these small unnoticed things overcome in
oneself gain an infinitely greater victory, though the effects are
hidden. Every movement in you which is false and opposed to
the truth is a negation of the divine life. Your small efforts have
considerable results which you don’t even have the satisfaction
of knowing, but which are true and have precisely an impersonal
and general effect.

If you really want to do something good, the best thing you
can do is to win your small victories in all sincerity, one after
another, and thus you will do for the world the maximum you
are able to.

Will our victory act for the whole world?

It will not change the whole world. For your victory is too small
for the whole world. Millions of such victories are needed. It
is a very small victory if compared with the whole. But it gets
mingled with other things.... It could be said that it is like bring-
ing into the world the capacity of doing a thing. But for this to
act effectively, at times centuries are necessary; it is a question
of proportion. You can try it out (and it is much more difficult)
even with those around you. You must be absolutely sincere, not
do it with the idea of getting a result, but because you want to
gain a victory. If you gain it, it will necessarily have an effect on
those around you. But if a bargaining element is mixed up in it, if
you do this thing because you want to get that other: “I want to
overcome my defects, but that person must also overcome his”,”
then that doesn’t work. It is a merchant’s attitude: “I give this,
but I shall take that.” That spoils everything. There is neither
sincerity nor purity. It is bargaining.

Nothing must be mixed with your sincerity, your aspiration,
your motive. You do things for love of the Divine, for truth, for
perfection, without any other motive, any other idea. And that
brings results.