

The Fool

Long is the night for one who sleeps not; long is the road for one who is weary; long is the cycle of births for the fool who knows not the true law.

If a man cannot find a companion who is his superior or even his equal, he should resolutely follow a solitary path; for no good can come from companionship with a fool.

The fool torments himself by thinking, "This son is mine, this wealth is mine." How can he possess sons and riches, who does not possess himself?

The fool who recognises his foolishness is at least wise in that. But the fool who thinks he is intelligent, is a fool indeed.

Even if the fool serves an intelligent man throughout his life, he will nevertheless remain ignorant of the truth, just as the spoon knows not the taste of the soup.

If an intelligent man serves a wise man, if only for a moment, he will quickly understand the truth, just as the tongue instantly perceives the savour of the soup.

The fools, those who are ignorant, have no worse enemies than themselves; bitter is the fruit they gather from their evil actions.

The evil action which one repents later brings only regrets and the fruit one reaps will be tears and lamentations.

The good action one does not need to repent later brings no regret and the fruit one reaps will be contentment and satisfaction.

As long as the evil action has not borne its fruits, the fool imagines that it is as sweet as honey. But when this action bears its fruits, he reaps only suffering.

Though month after month the fool takes his food with the tip of a blade of Kusa grass,¹ he is not for all that worth a sixteenth part of one who has understood the truth.

An evil action does not yield its fruits immediately, just as milk does not at once turn sour; but like a fire covered with ashes, even so smoulders the evil action.

Whatever vain knowledge a fool may have been able to acquire, it leads him only to his ruin, for it breaks his head and destroys his worthier nature.

The foolish monk thirsts after reputation, and a high rank among the Bhikkhus, after authority in the monastery and veneration from ordinary men.

“Let ordinary men and holy ones esteem highly what I have done; let them obey me!” This is the longing of the fool, whose pride increases more and more.

One path leads to earthly gain and quite another leads to Nirvana. Knowing this, the Bhikkhu, the disciple of the Perfectly Enlightened One, longs no more for honour, but rather cultivates solitude.

¹ Kusa grass is considered sacred in India. Taking one's food with the tip of a blade of Kusa grass symbolises an act of asceticism.

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This seems to point directly to hypocrites who take up the external forms and appearances of wisdom but in their hearts keep all the desires, ambitions, the need for show, and live to satisfy this ambition and these desires instead of living for the only thing that is worth living for: attainment of the true consciousness, integral self-giving to the Divine, the peace, the light and the delight that come from the true wisdom and self-forgetfulness.

One could easily replace throughout this text the word fool by the word ego. One who lives in his ego, for his ego, in the hope of satisfying his ego is a fool. Unless you transcend ego, unless you reach a state of consciousness in which ego has no reason for existing, you cannot hope to attain the goal.

The ego seems to have been indispensable at one time for the formation of the individual consciousness, but with the ego were born all the obstacles, sufferings, difficulties, all that now appears to us as adverse and anti-divine forces. But these forces themselves were a necessity for attaining an inner purification and the liberation from ego. The ego is at once the result of their action and the cause of their prolongation. When the ego disappears, the adverse forces will also disappear, having no longer any reason for their existence in the world.

With the inner liberation, with a total sincerity and perfect purity, all suffering will disappear, because it will no longer be necessary for the progress of the consciousness towards its final goal.

Wisdom, then, consists in working energetically at the inner transformation so that you may emerge victorious from a struggle which will have borne its fruits but will no longer have any need to exist.

14 March 1958

The Sage

We should seek the company of the sage who shows us our faults, as if he were showing us a hidden treasure; it is best to cultivate relations with such a man because he cannot be harmful to us. He will bring us only good.

One who exhorts us to good and dissuades us from doing evil is appreciated, esteemed by the just man and hated by the unjust.

Do not seek the company or friendship of men of base character, but let us consort with men of worth and let us seek friendship with the best among men.

He who drinks directly from the source of the Teaching lives happy in serenity of mind. The sage delights always in the Teaching imparted by the noble disciples of the Buddha.

Those who build waterways lead the water where they want; those who make arrows straighten them; carpenters shape their wood; the sage controls himself.

No more than a mighty rock can be shaken by the wind, can the sage be moved by praise or blame.

The sage who has steeped himself in the Teaching, becomes perfectly peaceful like a deep lake, calm and clear.

Wherever he may be, the true sage renounces all pleasures. Neither sorrow nor happiness can move him.

Neither for his own sake, nor for the sake of others does the sage desire children, riches or domains. He does not

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aim for his own success by unjust ways. Such a man is virtuous, wise and just.

Few men cross to the other shore. Most men remain and do no more than run up and down along this shore.

But those who live according to the Teaching cross beyond the realm of Death, however difficult may be the passage.

The sage will leave behind the dark ways of existence, but he will follow the way of light. He will leave his home for the homeless life and in solitude will seek the joy which is so difficult to find.

Having renounced all desires and attachments of the senses, the sage will cleanse himself of all the taints of the mind.

One whose mind is well established in all the degrees of knowledge, who, detached from all things, delights in his renunciation, and who has mastered his appetites, he is resplendent, and even in this world he attains Nirvana.

There is a sentence here which is particularly felicitous. It is the very first sentence we have read, "We should seek the company of the sage who shows our faults, as if he were showing us a hidden treasure."

In all Scriptures meant to help mankind to progress, it is always said that you must be very grateful to those who show you your faults and so you must seek their company; but the form used here is particularly felicitous: if a fault is shown to you it is as if a treasure were shown to you; that is to say, each time that you discover in yourself a fault, incapacity, lack of understanding, weakness, insincerity, all that prevents you

from making a progress, it is as if you discovered a wonderful treasure.

Instead of growing sad and telling yourself, “Oh, there is still another defect”, you should, on the contrary, rejoice as if you had made a wonderful acquisition, because you have just caught hold of one of those things that prevented you from progressing. And once you have caught hold of it, pull it out! For those who practise a yogic discipline consider that the moment you know that a thing should not be, you have the power to remove it, discard it, destroy it.

To discover a fault is an acquisition. It is as though a flood of light had come to replace the little speck of obscurity which has just been driven out.

When you follow a yogic discipline, you must not accept this weakness, this baseness, this lack of will, which means that knowledge is not immediately followed by power. To know that a thing should not be and yet continue to allow it to be is such a sign of weakness that it is not accepted in any serious discipline, it is a lack of will that verges on insincerity. You know that a thing should not be and the moment you know it, you are the one who decides that it shall not be. For knowledge and power are essentially the same thing—that is to say, you must not admit in any part of your being this shadow of bad will which is in contradiction to the central will for progress and which makes you impotent, without courage, without strength in the face of an evil that you must destroy.

To sin through ignorance is not a sin; that is part of the general evil in the world as it is, but to sin when you know, that is serious. It means that there is hidden somewhere, like a worm in the fruit, an element of bad will that must be hunted out and destroyed, at any cost, because any weakness on such a point is the source of difficulties that sometimes, later on, become irreparable.

So then the first thing is to be perfectly happy when someone or some circumstance puts you in the conscious presence of a

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fault in yourself which you did not know. Instead of lamenting, you must rejoice and in this joy must find the strength to get rid of the thing which should not be.

21 March 1958

The Adept

No sorrow exists for one who has completed his journey, who has let fall all cares, who is free in all his parts, who has cast off all bonds.

Those who are heedful strive always and, like swans leaving their lakes, leave one home after another.

Those who amass nothing, who eat moderately, who have perceived the emptiness of all things and who have attained unconditioned liberation, their path is as difficult to trace as that of a bird in the air.

One for whom all desires have passed away and who has perceived the emptiness of all things, who cares little for food, who has attained unconditioned liberation, his path is as difficult to trace as that of a bird in the air.

Even the Gods esteem one whose senses are controlled as horses by the charioteer, one who is purged of all pride and freed from all corruption.

One who fulfils his duty is as immovable as the earth itself. He is as firm as a celestial pillar, pure as an unmuddied lake; and for him the cycle of births is completed.

Calm are the thoughts, the words and the acts of one who has liberated himself by the true knowledge and has achieved a perfect tranquillity.

The greatest among men is he who is not credulous but has the sense of the Uncreated, who has cut all ties, who has destroyed all occasion for rebirth.

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Whether village or forest, plain or mountain, wherever the adepts may dwell, that place is always delightful.

Delightful are the forests which are shunned by the multitude. There, the adept, who is free from passion, will find happiness, for he seeks not after pleasure.

There is a very interesting sentence here: “He who is not credulous but has the sense of the Uncreated...”

One who is not credulous — all kinds of things can be understood from this word. The first impression is that it refers to one who does not believe in invisible things without having an experience of them, as distinct from people who follow, for example, a particular religion and have faith in dogmas simply because that is what they have been taught. But he “has the sense of the Uncreated”, that is to say, he is in contact with invisible things and knows them as they are, by identity. The Dhammapada has told us, to begin with, that the greatest of men is he who has no faith in what is taught but has a personal experience of things that are not visible, he who is free from all belief and has himself had the experience of invisible things.

Another explanation can also be given: one who is not credulous is he who does not believe in the reality of appearances, in things as we see them, who does not take them for the truth, who knows that these are only misleading appearances and that behind them lies a truth that is to be found and known by personal experience and by identity.

And this makes one reflect on the number of things, the countless number of things that we believe without any personal knowledge, simply because we have been taught that they are like that, or because we are accustomed to think they are like that, or because we are surrounded by people who believe that things are like that. If we look at all the things that we believe and not only believe but assert with an indisputable authority, “This is like this”, “That, but of course it is like that”, “And

this thing, yes, it is so....” In truth, however, we know nothing about it, it is simply because we are in the habit of thinking that they are like that. What are the things that you have experienced personally, with which you have had a direct contact, of which you can at least say with sincerity, “I am convinced that it is like that, because I have experienced it”? Not many.

In reality, if you truly want to have knowledge, you must begin by making a very important study: verify the things that we have been taught, even the most common and the most insignificant. Then you will understand why the text says “the greatest among men”, because I do not think that many have made this experiment.

Just to find out the number of things we believe and assert, simply because it is customary to believe and assert them, is indeed a very interesting discovery.

Now go and look into your thought and consciousness for all the things that you assert without proof. You will see!

28 March 1958

The Thousands

Better than a thousand words devoid of meaning is a single meaningful word which can bring tranquillity to one who hears it.

Better than a thousand verses devoid of meaning is a single meaningful verse which can bring tranquillity to one who hears it.

Better than the repetition of a hundred verses devoid of meaning is the repetition of a single verse of the Teaching which can bring tranquillity to one who hears it.

The greatest conqueror is not he who is victorious over thousands of men in battle, but he who is victorious over himself.

The victory that one wins over oneself is of more value than victory over all the peoples.

No god, no Gandharva,¹ nor Mara nor Brahma² can change that victory to defeat.

If, month after month, for a hundred years one offers sacrifices by the thousand, and if for a single instant one offers homage to a being full of wisdom, that single homage is worth more than all those countless sacrifices.

If for a hundred years a man tends the flame on Agni's altar, and if, for a single instant, he renders homage to a man who has mastered his nature, this brief homage has more value than all his long devotions.

¹ Celestial musician. ² The creator of the universe.

Whatever the sacrifices and oblations a man in this world may offer throughout a whole year in order to acquire merit, that is not worth even a quarter of the homage offered to a just man.

For one who is respectful to his elders, four things increase: long life, beauty, happiness and strength.

A single day spent in good conduct and meditation is worth more than a hundred years spent in immorality and dissipation.

A single day of wisdom and meditation is worth more than a hundred years spent in foolishness and dissipation.

A single day of strength and energy is worth more than a hundred years spent in indolence and inertia.

A single day lived in the perception that all things appear and disappear is worth more than a hundred years spent not knowing that they appear and disappear.

A single day spent in contemplation of the path of immortality is worth more than a hundred years lived in ignorance of the path of immortality.

A single day spent in contemplation of the supreme Truth is worth more than a hundred years lived in ignorance of the supreme Truth.

All kinds of different things are gathered here under the same heading. It is an association of words more than an association of ideas. But the central trend is this, that it is preferable to have one moment of sincerity rather than a long life of apparent devotion and that a psychological and spiritual victory over oneself is more important than all external victories.

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There is also an interesting reflection, that a victory over oneself is the only victory which is truly safe from the intervention of any god or power of Nature or any instrument of evil. If you have gained self-mastery on one point, that goes beyond the reach of any intervention even from the very highest powers, whether they are gods of the Overmind or any anti-divine powers in the world.

The opening text says that a single word that gives you peace is worth more than thousands of words that have no meaning — this anybody can understand — but it is also said that the word that gives you peace is worth more than thousands of words that can satisfy the mental activity but have no psychological effect on your being.

Indeed, when you have found something which has the power to help you in gaining a victory over your unconsciousness and inertia, you must, till you reach the final result, exhaust all the effects produced by that word or phrase before you look for others.

It is more important to pursue to its end the practice of the effect produced by an idea that one has met somehow, than to try to accumulate in the head a large number of ideas. Ideas may all be very useful in their own time, if they are allowed in at the opportune moment, particularly if you carry to the extreme limit the result of one of those dynamic ideas that are capable of making you win an inner victory. That is to say, one should have for one's chief, if not only aim the practice of what one knows rather than the accumulation in oneself of a knowledge which remains purely theoretical.

So one could sum up: put into practice integrally what you know, only then can you usefully increase your theoretical knowledge.

11 April 1958

Evil

Hasten towards the good, leave behind all evil thoughts, for to do good without enthusiasm is to have a mind which delights in evil.

If one does an evil action, he should not persist in it, he should not delight in it. For full of suffering is the accumulation of evil.

If one does a good action, he should persist in it and take delight in it. Full of happiness is the accumulation of good.

As long as his evil action has not yet ripened, an evil-doer may experience contentment. But when it ripens, the wrong-doer knows unhappiness.

As long as his good action has not yet ripened, one who does good may experience unhappiness. But when it ripens, the good man knows happiness.

Do not treat evil lightly, saying, "That will not touch me." A jar is filled drop by drop; even so the fool fills himself little by little with wickedness.

Do not treat good lightly, saying, "That will not touch me." A jar is filled drop by drop; even so the sage fills himself little by little with goodness.

The merchant who is carrying many precious goods and who has but few companions, avoids dangerous roads; and a man who loves his life is wary of poison. Even so should one act regarding evil.

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A hand that has no wound can carry poison with impunity; act likewise, for evil cannot touch the righteous man.

If you offend one who is pure, innocent and defenceless, the insult will fall back on you, as if you threw dust against the wind.

Some are reborn here on earth, evil-doers go to the worlds of Niraya,¹ the just go to the heavenly worlds, but those who have freed themselves from all desire attain Nirvana.

Neither in the skies, nor in the depths of the ocean, nor in the rocky caves, nowhere upon earth does there exist a place where a man can find refuge from his evil actions.

Neither in the skies, nor in the depths of the ocean, nor in the rocky caves, nowhere upon earth does there exist a place where a man can hide from death.

People have the habit of dealing lightly with thoughts that come. And the atmosphere is full of thoughts of all kinds which do not in fact belong to anybody in particular, which move perpetually from one person to another, very freely, much too freely, because there are very few people who can keep their thoughts under control.

When you take up the Buddhist discipline to learn how to control your thoughts, you make very interesting discoveries. You try to observe your thoughts. Instead of letting them pass freely, sometimes even letting them enter your head and establish themselves in a quite inopportune way, you look at them, observe them and you realise with stupefaction that in the space of

¹ Hell; the state of suffering.

a few seconds there passes through the head a series of absolutely improbable thoughts that are altogether harmful.

You believe you are so good, so kind, so well disposed and always full of good feelings. You wish no harm to anybody, you wish only good — all that you tell yourself complacently. But if you look at yourself sincerely as you are thinking, you notice that you have in your head a collection of thoughts which are sometimes frightful and of which you were not at all aware.

For example, your reactions when something has not pleased you: how eager you are to send your friends, relatives, acquaintances, everyone, to the devil! How you wish them all kinds of unpleasant things, without even being aware of it! And how you say, “Ah, that will teach him to be like that!” And when you criticise, you say, “He must be made aware of his faults.” And when someone has not acted according to your ideas, you say, “He will be punished for it!” and so on.

You do not know it because you do not look at yourself in the act of thinking. Sometimes you know it, when it becomes a little too strong. But when the thing simply passes through, you hardly notice it — it comes, it enters, it leaves. Then you find out that if you truly want to be pure and wholly on the side of the Truth, then that requires a vigilance, a sincerity, a self-observation, a self-control which are not common. You begin to realise that it is difficult to be truly sincere.

You flatter yourself that you have nothing but good feelings and good intentions and that whatever you do, you do for the sake of what is good — yes, so long as you are conscious and have control, but the moment you are not very attentive, all kinds of things happen within you of which you are not at all conscious and which are not very pretty.

If you want to clean your house thoroughly, you must be vigilant for a long time, for a very long time and especially not believe that you have reached the goal, like that, at one stroke, because one day you happened to decide that you would be on the right side. That is of course a very essential and important

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point, but it must be followed by a good many other days when you have to keep a strict guard on yourself so as not to belie your resolution.

4 April 1958

Punishment

All tremble when faced with punishment; all fear death. Seeing others as ourselves, do not strike, do not cause another to strike.

All tremble when faced with punishment; life is dear to all. Seeing others as ourselves, do not strike, do not cause another to strike.

Whosoever hurts creatures eager for happiness for the sake of his own happiness, nevertheless will not obtain it after his death.

Whosoever does not hurt creatures eager for happiness for the sake of his own happiness, will obtain it after death.

Never speak harsh words to anyone, for they will be returned to you. Angry words cause suffering and one who utters them will bear them in return.

If you remain as silent as a broken gong, you have already entered Nirvana, for violence no longer abides in you.

As the cowherd, with his stick, drives the herd to pasture, so old age and death drive the life out of all living beings.

The fool does evil without knowing it; he is consumed and tormented by his actions as by a fire.

One who does harm to one who does none, one who offends one who offends not, will soon suffer one of the ten states that follow:

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He will endure intense pain, he will suffer disastrous losses and terrible injury, serious illness, madness.

Or he will come in conflict with authority, he will be the object of gross calumny, he will lose his near ones or his possessions.

Or else fire will destroy his dwelling-place; and at the time of the dissolution of his body he will be reborn in Hell.

Neither going naked or with matted hair, nor remaining dirty, nor fasting, nor sleeping on the bare ground, nor smearing the body with ashes, nor the practice of ascetic postures, can purify the mortal who has not cast away all doubt.

However richly he is dressed, if a man cultivates tranquillity of mind, if he is calm, resigned, master of himself, pure, if he does no harm to any creature, he is a Brahmin, he is an ascetic, he is a Bhikkhu.

Is there in this world a man beyond reproach that merits no blame, as a thoroughbred needs no blow from the whip?

Like a spirited horse, be quick and eager for the goal. By trust, virtue, energy, meditation, the quest for truth, perfection of knowledge and conduct, by faith destroy in you all suffering.

Those who build waterways lead the water where they want; those who make arrows straighten them; carpenters shape their wood; the sage controls himself.

One has the impression that these things were written for rather

primitive people. The series of calamities that will befall you if you do harm is quite amusing.

It would seem — provided of course that this is an exact record of the words that the Buddha spoke — that he must have changed the terms of his talks according to his audience and if he had to do with rustic people without education, he would speak a very material language with very practical and concrete comparisons so that they might understand him. There is a considerable difference of level in these verses. Some have become very famous, as, for example, the last verse here, where it is said that the artisan shapes his material to achieve what he has to do, and this striking conclusion: the sage controls himself.

Truly one has the impression that human mentality has progressed since that age. Thought has become more complex, psychology more profound, to the extent that these arguments appear almost puerile. But when we mean to practise them, then we realise that we have remained almost on the same level, and that if thought has progressed, practice, far from being better, seems to have become worse. And here there is a childlike simplicity, something rather healthy, an absence of perversion that unfortunately the human race no longer possesses.

There was a moral healthiness in those days which has now completely disappeared. These arguments make you smile, but the practice of what is taught here is much more difficult now than it was at that time. A kind of hypocrisy, pretension, underhand duplicity seems to have taken possession of the human mind and especially its way of being, and men have learnt to deceive themselves in a most pernicious way.

In those times, one could say, “Don’t do harm, you will be punished”; hearts were simple and the mind as well, and one said, “Yes, it is better not to do harm, because I will be punished.” But now, with an ironical smile, you say, “Oh! I shall surely find a way to avoid punishment.”

Mental capacity seems to have grown, mental power seems to have developed, men seem to be much more capable of playing

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with ideas, of having mental command over all principles, but at the same time they have lost the simple and healthy candour of people who lived closer to Nature and knew less how to play with ideas. Thus humanity as a whole seems to have reached a very dangerous turning-point. Those who are trying to find a solution to the general corruption preach a return to the simplicity of yore, but of course that is quite impossible: you cannot go back.

We must go farther on, we must advance, climb greater heights and go beyond the arid search for pleasure and personal welfare, not through fear of punishment, even punishment after death, but through the development of a new sense of beauty, a thirst for truth and light, through understanding that it is only by widening yourself, illumining yourself, setting yourself ablaze with the ardour for progress, that you can find both integral peace and enduring happiness.

One must rise up and widen — rise up... and widen.

18 April 1958

Old Age

Why this joy, this gladness, when the world is forever burning? O you who are enveloped in shadows, why do you not seek the light?

See then this poor decorated form, this mass of corruptible elements, of infirmities and vain desires in which nothing is lasting or stable.

This fragile body is but a nest of misery, of decrepitude and corruption; for life ends in death.

What pleasure is there in contemplating these white bones strewn like gourds in autumn?

In this fortress made of bone and covered with flesh and blood, only pride and jealousy, dissolution and death are established.

Even the gorgeous chariots of kings are worn out in the end. It is the same with this body which at last is worn out with age; but the true Law is never worn out and so one sage can pass it on to another.

The ignorant man grows older like a bullock; his weight increases but not his intelligence.

Many times have I passed in vain through the cycle of births in search of the builder of this house. And how painful is this cycle of births!

At last, I have found you, builder; never again shall you build this house that is my body. All the beams are shattered and the ridge of the roof has crumbled.

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My liberated mind has attained the extinction of all desires.

Those who have not lived a life of self-control and who, in their youth, have not known how to gather the true riches, perish like aged herons beside a lake with no fish.

Those who have not lived a life of self-control and who, in their youth, have not known how to gather the true riches are like shattered bows; they grieve for their lost strength.

There is one thing certain which is not clearly stated here, but which is at least as important as all the rest. It is this, that there is an old age much more dangerous and much more real than the amassing of years: the incapacity to grow and progress.

As soon as you stop advancing, as soon as you stop progressing, as soon as you cease to better yourself, cease to gain and grow, cease to transform yourself, you truly become old, that is to say, you go downhill towards disintegration.

There are young people who are old and there are old people who are young. If you carry in you this flame for progress and transformation, if you are ready to leave everything behind so that you may advance with an alert step, if you are always open to a new progress, a new improvement, a new transformation, then you are eternally young. But if you sit back satisfied with what has been accomplished, if you have the feeling that you have reached your goal and you have nothing left to do but enjoy the fruit of your efforts, then already more than half your body is in the tomb: it is decrepitude and the true death.

Everything that has been done is always nothing compared with what remains to be done.

Do not look behind. Look ahead, always ahead and go forward always.

25 April 1958

The Ego

If a man holds himself dear, let him guard himself closely. The sage should watch through one of the three vigils of his existence (youth, maturity, or old age).

One should begin by establishing oneself in the right path; then, one will be able to advise others. Thus the sage is above all reproach.

If one puts into practice what he teaches to others, being master of himself, he can very well guide others; for in truth it is difficult to master oneself.

In truth, one is one's own master, for what other master can there be? By mastering oneself, one acquires a mastery which is difficult to achieve.

The evil done by himself, originated by himself, emanating from him, crushes the fool as the diamond crushes a hard gem.

Just as the creeper clings to the Sal tree, even so one entrapped by his own evil actions does to himself the harm his enemy would wish him.

It is so easy to do oneself wrong and harm, but how difficult it is to do what is good and profitable!

The fool who, because of his wrong views, rejects the teachings of the adepts, the Noble Ones and the Just, brings about his own destruction, as the fruit of the bamboo kills the plant.

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Doing evil, one harms oneself; avoiding evil, one purifies oneself; purity and impurity depend on ourselves; no one can purify another.

No man should neglect his supreme Good to follow another, however great. Knowing clearly what is his best line of conduct, he should not swerve from it.

The question here seems to be more about egoism than ego.

Egoism is a relatively easy thing to correct, because everyone knows what it is. It is easy to discover, easy to correct, if one truly wants to do it and is bent on it.

But the ego is much more difficult to seize, because, in fact, to realise what the ego is one must already be out of it, otherwise one cannot find it out. You are wholly moulded from it, from head to foot, from the outermost to the innermost, from the physical to the spiritual, you are steeped in ego. It is mixed with everything and you are not aware of what it is. You must have already conquered it, come out of it, freed yourself from it, at least partially, at least in some little corner of your being somewhere, in order to realise what the ego is.

The ego is what helps us to individualise ourselves and what prevents us from becoming divine. It is like that. Put that together and you will find the ego. Without the ego, as the world is organised, there would be no individual, and with the ego the world cannot become divine.

It would be logical to conclude, "Well, let us first of all become conscious individuals and then we shall send away the ego and become divine." Only, when we have become conscious individuals, we have grown so accustomed to living with our ego that we are no longer able to discern it and much labour is needed to become aware of its presence.

On the other hand, everyone knows what egoism is. When you want to pull everything towards you and other people do not interest you, that is called egoism; when you put yourself

at the centre of the universe and all things exist only in relation to you, that is egoism. But it is very obvious, one must be blind not to see that one is egoistic. Everybody is a little egoistic, more or less, and at least a certain proportion of egoism is normally acceptable; but even in ordinary life, when one is a little too egoistic, well, one receives knocks on the nose, because, since everyone is egoistic, no one much likes egoism in others.

It is taken for granted, it is part of public morality. Yes, one must be a little bit egoistic, not too much, so it is not conspicuous! On the other hand, nobody speaks of the ego, because nobody knows it. It is such an intimate companion that one does not even recognise its existence; and yet so long as it is there one will never have the divine consciousness.

The ego is what makes one conscious of being separate from others. If there were no ego, you would not perceive that you are a person separate from others. You would have the impression that you are a small part of a whole, a very small part of a very great whole. On the other hand, every one of you is most certainly quite conscious of being a separate person. Well, it is the ego that gives you this impression. As long as you are conscious in this way, it means that you have an ego.

When you begin to be aware that everything is yourself, and that this is only a very small point in the midst of thousands and thousands of other points of the same person that you are everywhere, when you feel that you are yourself in everything and that there is no separation, then you know that you are on the way towards having no more ego.

There even comes a time when it is impossible to conceive oneself and say, "It is not I", for even to express it in this way, to say that the All is you, that you are the All or that you are the Divine or that the Divine is you, proves that something still remains.

There is a moment — this happens in a flash and can hardly stay — when it is the All that thinks, it is the All that knows, it is the All that feels, it is the All that lives. There is not even... not even the impression that... you have reached that point.

Questions and Answers

Then it is all right. But until then, there is still a little remnant of ego somewhere; usually it is the part which looks on, the witness that looks on.

So do not assert that you have no more ego. It is not accurate. Say you are on the way towards having no more ego, that is the only correct thing to say.

I do not believe that it has happened to you, has it? — not yet! And yet it is indispensable, if you truly intend to know what the supramental is. If you are a candidate for supermanhood, you must resolve to dispense with your ego, to go beyond it, for as long as you keep it with you, the supermind will be for you something unknown and inaccessible.

But if through effort, through discipline, through progressive mastery, you surmount your ego and go beyond it, even if only in the tiniest part of your being, this acts like the opening of a small window somewhere, and by looking carefully through the window, you will be able to glimpse the supermind. And that is a promise. When you glimpse it, you find it so beautiful that you immediately want to get rid of all the rest... of the ego!

Please note that I am not saying that you must be totally free from all ego in order to have a glimpse of the supramental; for then that would be something almost impossible. No, to be free from ego, just a little bit somewhere, in some corner of your being, even only a little corner of the mind; if it is the mind and the vital, it is well and good, but if by chance — oh! not by chance — if by repeated efforts you have entered into contact with your psychic being, then the door is wide open. Through the psychic you can suddenly have a very clear and beautiful vision of what the supermind is, only a vision, not a realisation. That is the great way out. But even without going so far as this beautiful realisation, the psychic realisation, if you succeed in liberating some part of your mind or your vital, that makes a kind of hole in the door, a keyhole; through this keyhole you have a glimpse, just a little glimpse. And that is already very attractive, very interesting.

2 May 1958

The World

Do not follow the way of evil. Do not cultivate indolence of mind. Do not choose wrong views. Do not be of those who linger in the world.

Arise. Cast off negligence. Follow the teaching of wisdom. The sage knows happiness in this world and the other.

Follow the teaching of wisdom and not that of evil. The sage knows happiness in this world and the other.

One who looks upon the world as a bubble or a mirage, Yama the King of Death cannot find him.

Come, look upon the world as the brightly-coloured chariot of a Raja, which attracts the foolish, but where, in truth, there is nothing attractive.

One who, having been negligent, becomes vigilant, illumines the earth like the moon coming forth from behind the clouds.

One whose good actions efface the evil he has done, illumines the earth like the moon coming forth from behind the clouds.

The world is wrapped in darkness and few are those who find their way, who, like a bird escaping from a net, soar up towards heaven.

The swans take the path of the sun. Those who possess occult powers fly through the air. The sages leave this world after defeating Mara and his army of evil.

Questions and Answers

No evil is impossible to him who transgresses one law of the Doctrine, who utters falsehood and who disdains the higher world.

In truth, misers do not attain to the world of the gods and fools do not know the happiness of giving. But the sage delights in giving and thus knows happiness in the other world.

Rather than ruling the earth, rather than reaching heaven, rather than reigning over the worlds, it is better to enter the upward current.

There are four pieces of advice here which I would like to retain for our meditation. “Do not cultivate indolence of mind.” “Do not choose wrong views” — unfortunately this is something one does all the time. And, “Arise. Cast off negligence.”

The world has been so made — at least up to now, let us hope that it will not be so for much longer — that, spontaneously, a man who is not cultured, when he is brought into contact with ideas, always chooses wrong ideas.

And a child who is not educated always chooses bad company. It is a thing I experience constantly and concretely. If you keep a child in a special atmosphere and if, from a very early age, you instill in him a special atmosphere, a special purity, he has a chance of not making a wrong choice. But a child who is taken from the world as it is and is placed in a society where there are good and bad elements will go straight to those who can spoil him, teach him wrong things, that is to say, towards the worst company.

A man who has no intellectual culture, if you give him some mixed ideas, just at random, to choose from, he will always choose the stupid ones; because, as Sri Aurobindo has told us, this is a world of falsehood, of ignorance and an effort is needed, an aspiration; one must come in contact with one’s inmost being — a conscious and luminous contact — if one is to distinguish the true

from the false, the good influence from the bad. If you let yourself go, you sink into a hole.

Things are like that because what rules the world — oh! let us put it in the past tense, so that it becomes true — what ruled the world was falsehood and ignorance.

In fact, for the moment, it is still like that; one should have no illusions about it. But perhaps with a great effort and great vigilance we shall be able to make it otherwise... soon — the “perhaps” is for “soon”.

Surely it will come one day, but we want it soon, and that is why the last two recommendations please me: “Arise. Cast off negligence.”

9 May 1958

The Awakened One (The Buddha)

He whose victory has never been surpassed nor even equalled—which path can lead to Him, the Pathless, the Awakened One who dwells within the Infinite?

One in whom there is neither greed nor desire, how can he be led astray? Which path can lead to Him, the Pathless, the Awakened One who dwells within the Infinite?

Even the gods envy the sages given to meditation, the Awakened Ones, the Vigilant who live with delight in renunciation and solitude.

It is difficult to attain to human birth. It is difficult to live this mortal life. It is difficult to obtain the good fortune of hearing the True Doctrine. And difficult indeed is the advent of the Awakened Ones.

Abstain from evil; cultivate good and purify your mind. This is the teaching of the Awakened Ones.

Of all ascetic practices patience is the best; of all states the most perfect is Nirvana, say the Awakened Ones. He who harms others is not a monk. He who oppresses others is not a true ascetic.

Neither to offend, nor to do wrong to anyone, to practise discipline according to the Law, to be moderate in eating, to live in seclusion, and to merge oneself in the higher consciousness, this is the teaching of the Awakened Ones.

Even a rain of gold would not be able to quench the thirst of desire, for it is insatiable and the origin of sorrows. This the sage knows.

Even the pleasures of heaven are without savour for the sage. The disciple of the Buddha, of the Perfectly Awakened One, rejoices only in the extinction of all desire.

Impelled by fear, men seek refuge in many places, in the mountains, in the forests, in the groves, in sanctuaries.

But this is not a safe refuge; this is not the supreme refuge. Coming to this refuge does not save a man from all sufferings.

One who takes refuge in the Buddha, in the Dhamma¹ and the Sangha,² with perfect knowledge, perceives the Four Noble Truths:

Suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to cessation of suffering.

In truth, this is the sure refuge, this is the sovereign refuge. To choose this refuge is to be liberated from all suffering.

It is difficult to meet the Perfectly Noble One. Such a being is not born everywhere. And where such a sage is born, those around him live in happiness.

Happy is the birth of the Buddhas, happy the teaching of the true Law. Happy is the harmony of the Sangha, happy the discipline of the United.

¹ The True Doctrine.

² The community; the order of the Great Ones and the order of the monks.

Questions and Answers

One cannot measure the merit of the man who reveres those who are worthy of reverence, whether the Buddha or his disciples, those who are free from all desire and all error, those who have overcome all obstacles and who have crossed beyond suffering and grief.

This concerns the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path that lead to the annihilation of suffering. Here are the details given in the text:

The Four Noble Truths are:

(1) Life — taken in the sense of ordinary life, the life of ignorance and falsehood — is indissolubly linked with suffering: suffering of the body and suffering of the mind.

(2) The cause of suffering is desire, which is caused by ignorance of the nature of separative life.

(3) There is a way to escape from suffering, to put an end to pain.

(4) This liberation is obtained by following the discipline of the Eightfold Path which gradually purifies the mind from the Ignorance. The fourth Truth is called the method of the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Path consists in a training in the following eight stages:

(1) *Correct seeing*. To see things as they are, that is to say, a pure, accurate vision, the best vision.

Three conditions characterise existence: pain, impermanence, the absence of a fixed ego. So the Dhammapada says. But it is not quite that, it is rather the absence of a fixed, durable and separate personality in the psychological aggregate, the lack of a true continuity in the personal consciousness. It is for this reason that, for example, in the ordinary state one cannot remember one's past lives nor have the sense of a conscious continuity through all one's lives.

The first point then is to see correctly, and to see correctly is to see that pain is associated with ordinary life, that all things

are impermanent and that there is no continuity in the personal consciousness.

(2) *Correct intention or desire.* But the same word “desire” should not have been used, because we have just been told that we should not have desire. It is rather “correct aspiration”. The word “desire” should be replaced by “aspiration”.

“To be freed from attachments and to have kind thoughts for everything that exists.” To be constantly in a state of kindness. To wish the best for all, always.

(3) *Correct speech that hurts none.* Never speak uselessly and scrupulously avoid all malevolent speech.

(4) *Correct behaviour — peaceful, honest.* From all points of view, not only materially, but morally, mentally. Mental honesty is one of the most difficult things to achieve.

(5) *Correct way of living. Not to cause harm or danger to any creature.* This is relatively easy to understand. There are people who carry this principle to the extreme, against all common sense. Those who put a handkerchief to their mouths, for example, so as not to swallow germs, who have the path in front of them swept so as not to step on an insect. This seems to me a little excessive, because the whole of life as it is at present is made up of destruction. But if you understand the text correctly, it means that one must avoid all possibility of doing harm, one must not deliberately endanger any creature. You can include here all living creatures and if you extend this care and this kindness to everything that lives in the universe, it will be very favourable to your inner growth.

(6) *Correct effort.* Do not make useless efforts for useless things, rather keep all the energy of your effort to conquer ignorance and free yourself from falsehood. That you can never do too much.

(7) The seventh principle comes to confirm the sixth: *correct vigilance.* You must have an active and vigilant mind. Do not live in a half-somnolence, half-unconsciousness — usually in life you let yourself go, come what may! This is what everyone does. Now and then you wake up and you realise that you have wasted your

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time; then you make a big effort only to fall back again, a minute later, into indolence. It would be better to have something less vehement but more constant.

(8) And finally, *correct contemplation*. Egoless thought concentrated on the essence of things, on the inmost truth and on the goal to be attained.

How often there is a kind of emptiness in the course of life, an unoccupied moment, a few minutes, sometimes more. And what do you do? Immediately you try to distract yourself, and you invent some foolishness or other to pass your time. That is a common fact. All men, from the youngest to the oldest, spend most of their time in trying not to be bored. Their pet aversion is boredom and the way to escape from boredom is to act foolishly.

Well, there is a better way than that — to remember.

When you have a little time, whether it is one hour or a few minutes, tell yourself, “At last, I have some time to concentrate, to collect myself, to relive the purpose of my life, to offer myself to the True and the Eternal.” If you took care to do this each time you are not harassed by outer circumstances, you would find out that you were advancing very quickly on the path. Instead of wasting your time in chattering, in doing useless things, reading things that lower the consciousness — to choose only the best cases, I am not speaking of other imbecilities which are much more serious — instead of trying to make yourself giddy, to make time, that is already so short, still shorter only to realise at the end of your life that you have lost three-quarters of your chance — then you want to put in double time, but that does not work — it is better to be moderate, balanced, patient, quiet, but never to lose an opportunity that is given to you, that is to say, to utilise for the true purpose the unoccupied moment before you.

When you have nothing to do, you become restless, you run about, you meet friends, you take a walk, to speak only of the best; I am not referring to things that are obviously not to be done. Instead of that, sit down quietly before the sky, before the sea or under trees, whatever is possible (here you have all of them) and

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try to realise one of these things — to understand why you live, to learn how you must live, to ponder over what you want to do and what should be done, what is the best way of escaping from the ignorance and falsehood and pain in which you live.

16 May 1958

Happiness

Among those who hate, happy are we to live without hatred. Among men who hate, let us live free from hatred.

Among those who suffer, happy are we to live without suffering. Among men who suffer, let us live free from suffering.

Among those who are full of greed, happy are we to live without greed. Among the greedy, let us live free from greed.

Happy indeed are we who own nothing. We shall feed upon delight like the radiant gods.

Victory engenders enmity, and one who is vanquished lives in distress. The man of peace lives in gladness, disdaining both victory and defeat.

There is no greater fire than lust, no greater misfortune than hatred. There is no greater misery than existence, no bliss greater than the Supreme Peace.

Hunger is the worst malady; existence is the worst calamity. One who has understood this realises that Nirvana is the Supreme Happiness.

Health is the greatest acquisition, contentment the greatest treasure. A faithful friend is the best companion and Nirvana the Supreme Happiness.

Having tasted the sweetness of solitude and the Supreme Peace, a man is liberated from suffering and evil, for he partakes of the sweetness of devotion to the Truth.

It is good to contemplate the Noble Ones; to live near them is an endless happiness. One could be always happy by avoiding the sight of fools.

One who frequents fools is bound to suffer long; the company of fools is as painful as that of enemies. To live in the company of the sages is to share the happiness of one who lives among his kinsmen.

Seek therefore the company of the sage who is steadfast, learned, wise, devoted and noble. Follow the example of such a good and wise being, as the moon follows the path of the stars.

One of these verses is very beautiful. We could translate it like this: “Happy is he who possesses nothing, he will partake of the delight of the radiant gods.” To possess nothing does not at all mean not to make use of anything, not to have anything at one’s disposal. “Happy is he who possesses nothing”: he is someone who has no sense of possession, who can make use of things when they come to him, knowing that they are not his, that they belong to the Supreme, and who, for the same reason, does not regret it when things leave him; he finds it quite natural that the Lord who gave him these things should take them away from him for others to enjoy. Such a man finds equal joy in the use of things as in the absence of things. When you have them at your disposal, you receive them as a gift of Grace and when they leave you, when they have been taken away from you, you live in the joy of destitution. For it is the sense of ownership that makes you cling to things, makes you their slave, otherwise one could live in constant joy and in the ceaseless movement of things that come and go and pass, that bring with them both the sense of fullness when they are there and, when they go, the delight of detachment.

Delight! Delight means to live in the Truth, to live in communion with Eternity, with the true Life, the Light that never fails.

Questions and Answers

Delight means to be free, free with the true Freedom, the Freedom of the constant, invariable union with the Divine Will.

Gods are those that are immortal, who are not bound to the vicissitudes of material life in all its narrowness, pettiness, unreality and falsehood.

Gods are those who are turned to the Light, who live in the Power and the Knowledge; that is what the Buddha means, he does not mean the gods of religion. They are beings who have the divine nature, who may live in human bodies, but free from ignorance and falsehood.

When you no longer possess anything, you can become as vast as the universe.

23 May 1958

Pleasure

One who gives himself entirely to what is unprofitable, who does not give himself to what is profitable, who sacrifices true knowledge for the sake of pleasure, will envy those who have chosen the path of self-knowledge.

Therefore do not seek after pleasure, much less what is unpleasant, for it is painful to be deprived of what is pleasing and equally painful to see what is unpleasant.

Therefore one should hold nothing dear, for the loss of what one loves is painful. No bondage exists for those who have neither love nor hatred.

What is pleasing gives rise to grief; what is pleasing gives rise to fear. One who is freed from what is pleasing, who feels no grief, what has he to fear?

Affection gives rise to grief; affection gives rise to fear. One who is freed from affection, who feels no grief, what has he to fear?

Attachment gives rise to grief; attachment gives rise to fear. One who is freed from attachment, who feels no grief, what has he to fear?

Desire gives rise to grief; desire gives rise to fear. One who is freed from desire, who feels no grief, what has he to fear?

Craving gives rise to grief; craving gives rise to fear. One who is freed from craving, who feels no grief, what has he to fear?

Questions and Answers

One holds dear a man who acts rightly, possesses intuition, who is righteous and knows the Truth, who fulfils his duty.

One who aspires to the ineffable Peace, one whose mind is awakened, whose thoughts are not entangled in the net of desire, that one is said to be “bound upstream” (towards perfection).

Just as, after a long absence, a man returning safely home is received by his kinsmen and friends who welcome him, even so it is with one who acts rightly; when he passes from this world to the other, his own good actions welcome him like a kinsman.

It always seems to me that the reasons usually given for becoming wise are poor reasons: “Don’t do this, it will bring you suffering; don’t do that, it will give birth to fear in you” ... and the consciousness dries up more and more, it hardens, because it is afraid of grief, afraid of pain.

I think it would be better to say that there is a certain state of consciousness — which one can acquire by aspiration and a persistent inner effort — in which joy is unmixed and light shadowless, where all possibility of fear disappears. It is the state in which one does not live for oneself but where whatever one does, whatever one feels, all movements are an offering made to the Supreme, in an absolute trust, freeing oneself of all responsibility for oneself, handing over to Him all this burden which is no longer a burden.

It is an inexpressible joy not to have any responsibility for oneself, no longer to think of oneself. It is so dull and monotonous and insipid to be thinking of oneself, to be worrying about what to do and what not to do, what will be good for you and what will be bad for you, what to shun and what to pursue — oh, how wearisome it is! But when one lives like this, quite open, like a

flower blossoming in the sun before the Supreme Consciousness, the Supreme Wisdom, the Supreme Light, the Supreme Love, which knows all, which can do all, which takes charge of you and you have no more worries — that is the ideal condition.

And why is it not done?

One does not think of it, one forgets to do it, the old habits come back. And above all, behind, hidden somewhere in the unconscious or even in the subconscious, there is this insidious doubt that whispers in your ear: “Oh! if you are not careful, some misfortune will happen to you. If you forget to watch over yourself, you do not know what may happen” — and you are so silly, so silly, so obscure, so stupid that you listen and you begin to pay attention to yourself and everything is ruined.

You have to begin all over again to infuse into your cells a little wisdom, a little common sense and learn once more not to worry.

30 May 1958

Anger

One should cast away anger, one should reject pride, one should break all bonds. One who is not attached to name or form, who possesses nothing, is delivered from suffering.

Whosoever masters rising anger, as one who controls a moving chariot, that one indeed is worthy of being called a good charioteer. Others merely hold the reins.

Oppose anger with serenity, evil with good; conquer a miser by generosity and a liar by the truth.

Speak the truth; do not give way to anger; give the little you possess to one who asks of you; by these three attributes, men can approach the gods.

The sages who are void of violence, who are always in control of their senses, attain that imperishable state where pain is no more.

Those who are always vigilant and who discipline themselves day and night, whose minds are always turned towards Nirvana, will see their impurities disappear for ever.

Not only today but since ancient times, they have always been criticised, those who remain silent, those who speak much and those who speak little. None here below escapes criticism.

There has never been and never will be, nor is there now, one who receives only blame or only praise.

If a man is praised by the sages, who have observed him day after day, for being intelligent, without reproach, endowed with knowledge and virtue, who then would dare to blame him who is as pure as gold? Even the gods and Brahma praise him.

Be on your guard against the wrath of the body. Control your actions, and leaving behind wrong ways of acting, practise perfect conduct in action.

Be on your guard against wrath in speech. Control your words, and leaving behind wrong ways of speaking, practise good conduct in speech.

Be on your guard against wrath of mind. Control your thoughts, and leaving behind wrong ways of thinking, practise good conduct in thought.

The sages whose actions are controlled, whose words are controlled and whose thoughts are controlled, they in truth are perfectly controlled.

I suggest that every one of you should try — oh! not for long, just for one hour a day — to say nothing but the absolutely indispensable words. Not one more, not one less.

Take one hour of your life, the one which is most convenient for you, and during that time observe yourself closely and say only the absolutely indispensable words.

At the outset, the first difficulty will be to know what is absolutely indispensable and what is not. It is already a study in itself and every day you will do better.

Next, you will see that so long as one says nothing, it is not difficult to remain absolutely silent, but as soon as you begin to speak, always or almost always you say two or three or ten or twenty useless words which it was not at all necessary to say.

Questions and Answers

I give you this as an exercise till next Friday. We shall see how you succeed. You may, at the end of the week, on Friday, give me a brief note telling me how far you have succeeded — those who have tried. That's all.

6 June 1958

Impurity

Now you are like a withered leaf; the messengers of Yama await you. It is the eve of your departure, and you have made no provision for your journey!

Quickly make for yourself an island of refuge, strive hard and become wise. When you are cleansed and purified of all impurity, you will enter the heavenly home of the Noble Ones.

Now your days are numbered, you are in the presence of the God of death. You have no resting-place on the road, no provision for the journey.

Quickly make for yourself an island of refuge, strive hard and become wise. When you are cleansed and purified of all impurity, you will be reborn no more, you will no more be subject to decay.

Just as the smith refines the silver, so also, little by little from moment to moment, the wise man purifies himself of his impurities.

When rust appears on iron, the iron itself is corrupted by it. So also, a man's evil actions corrupt him and lead him to his doom.

Lack of repetition impairs the effect of mantras.¹ Neglect impairs the solidity of houses. Indolence impairs the beauty of the body. Lack of attention is the downfall of one who watches.

¹ Words charged with spiritual power.

Questions and Answers

Misconduct is the taint of a woman. Meanness is the taint of one who gives. Wrong-doing is a taint in this world and the other.

The greatest of all taints is ignorance. Cleanse yourselves of that taint alone and you will be free of all taints, O Bhikkhus.

Life is easy for one who is impudent as a crow, malicious, boastful, presumptuous and corrupt.

Life is hard for the modest one who seeks purity, who is detached, unassuming and whose judgment is correct.

Already in this world he is uprooted, the one who destroys life, who lies, who takes what he has not been given, who covets the wife of another and who is addicted to drink.

Know that evil things are difficult to master. Let not cravings and wickedness subject you to endless suffering.

Each one gives according to his faith or his liking; if you are discontented with the food and drink offered by another, you will not achieve concentration by night or by day.

But the one who uproots and destroys in himself the very root of such a feeling of resentment, achieves concentration by night and by day.

There is no fire like the fire of craving, no grip like that of hatred. There is no snare like that of delusion, no torrent like desire.

It is easy to see the faults of others, but difficult to perceive our own shortcomings. We winnow the faults of

others like chaff, but we hide our own like the wily gambler concealing his foul throw.

One who always criticises the faults of others and is irritated by them, far from becoming free of faults, increases his own vices.

There is no track in the sky, no Samana² outside the true path. Man delights in vanity. The Tathagatas³ have overcome these obstacles.

There is no track in the sky, no Samana outside the true path. No conditioned thing can last, but the Buddhas remain for ever immutable.

I have read your notes on the control of speech. Some have tried very seriously. I am happy with the result. I believe it will be good for everyone if you continue.

Someone has written me something which is very true: that when one begins, one has no reason to stop, one begins with one hour a day, but this becomes a kind of necessity, a habit and one continues quite naturally.

If your exercise truly has this result, then it will be an excellent thing.

We can select three things from what I have read this evening. The first is that you must persist in what you do if you want to get a result. The Dhammapada tells us, for example, that if you have a mantra and do not repeat it sufficiently, there is no use in having it and that if you are inattentive, you lose the benefit of vigilance, and that if you do not continue in the good habits that you acquire, they are useless — that is to say, you must persevere. As for example, with the exercise which I asked you to do last

² Ascetic.

³ The Buddhas who, according to tradition, came on earth to reveal the eternal Truth.

Questions and Answers

time; I asked you to do it with the idea that if you form the habit of doing it, that will help you much in overcoming your difficulties.

Already someone has told me, quite rightly, that while practising this half-silence, or at any rate this continence of speech, one achieves quite naturally the mastery of numerous difficulties in one's character and also one avoids a great many frictions and misunderstandings. This is true.

Another point to remember from our reading concerns impurity and the Dhammapada gives the example of bad will and wrong action. Wrong action, says our text, is a taint in this world as well as in others. In the next verse it is said that there is no greater impurity than ignorance, that is to say, ignorance is considered as the essential, the central fault, which urgently needs to be corrected, and what is called ignorance is not simply not knowing things, not having the superficial knowledge of things, it means forgetting the very reason of our existence, the truth that has to be discovered.

There was a third thing?... Yes, you must not cherish the illusion that if you want to follow the straight path, if you are modest, if you seek purity, if you are disinterested, if you want to lead a solitary existence and have a clear judgment, things will become easy.... It is quite the contrary! When you begin to advance towards inner and outer perfection, the difficulties start at the same time.

I have very often heard people saying, "Oh! now that I am trying to be good, everybody seems to be bad to me!" But this is precisely to teach you that one should not be good with an interested motive, one should not be good so that others will be good to you — one must be good for the sake of being good.

It is always the same lesson: one must do as well as one can, the best one can, but without expecting a result, without doing it with a view to the result. Just this attitude, to expect a reward for a good action — to become good because one thinks that this will make life easier — takes away all value from the good action.

You must be good for the love of goodness, you must be just

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for the love of justice, you must be pure for the love of purity and you must be disinterested for the love of disinterestedness; then you are sure to advance on the way.

13 June 1958

The Just Man

A man is not just if he judges arbitrarily. The wise man is one who distinguishes the just from the unjust, who judges others in full knowledge according to law and equity; this guardian of the Law is called a just man.

The sage is not the man who speaks most. The man who is compassionate, friendly, fearless, is called a sage.

It is not by much speaking that the Doctrine is upheld; but he who has studied the Doctrine, even a little, and mentally realised it, he alone upholds it. He does not neglect it.

A man is not a Thera¹ because his hair is grey. He is ripe in years but he has aged fruitlessly.

But one who possesses the truth, virtue, non-violence and self-mastery, who is free from all impurity, who is wise, is indeed a Thera.

Neither eloquence nor a beautiful appearance grace a man who is jealous, selfish, deceitful. But one in whom such faults are completely uprooted and destroyed, that wise man is fully graced by them.

As for the man who is undisciplined and untruthful, his shaven head does not make him an ascetic. Full of desire and greed, how can he be a Samana?

He who is purged of all evil, both great and small, can be called a Samana, for he is purified of all evil.

¹ A senior monk.

A man is not a Bhikkhu simply because he takes alms for his food. The observance of vows is not enough to make him a Bhikkhu.

But he who is above both good and evil, who leads a pure life, who walks with understanding in this world, he can be called a Bhikkhu.

One who observes silence does not by that become a sage, if he is ignorant and foolish; but he who can weigh good and evil as in a balance and make his choice, him one can call a sage.

He who by contemplation measures this world and the other, he is a sage.

A man who does harm to living creatures does not become a Noble One. One who practises non-violence towards all creatures is called a Noble One.

It is neither by moral precepts and observances, nor by a wide knowledge, nor by practising meditation, nor by a solitary life, nor by thinking, "I have attained the bliss of liberation which is unknown to those who live in the world", that one can be called a Bhikkhu. Be on your guard, O Bhikkhus, until you have attained the extinction of all desire.

We shall take the last text. It is an interesting one.

"It is neither by moral precepts and observances, nor by a wide knowledge, nor by practising meditation, nor by a solitary life, nor by thinking", that one attains the true bliss; it is by getting rid of all desires. Certainly it is not easy to get rid of all desires, it sometimes needs a whole lifetime. But to tell the truth, it seems to be a very negative way, although at a certain stage of development, it is a discipline which is very useful, even indispensable

Questions and Answers

to practise, if one does not want to deceive oneself. Because at first you begin by getting rid of the major desires, those that are most obvious and trouble you so much that you cannot even have any illusions about them; then come subtler desires that take the form of things that have to be done, that are necessary, even at times of commands from within, and it requires time and much sincerity to discover and overcome them; at last it seems as if you had done away with these wretched desires in the material world, in external things, in the world of feelings, in the emotions and sentiments, in the mental world as regards ideas, and then you find them again in the spiritual world, and there they are far more dangerous, more subtle, more penetrating and much more invisible and covered by such a saintly appearance that one dare not call them desires.

And when one has succeeded in overcoming all that, in discovering, dislodging and getting rid of them, even then one has done only the negative side of the work.

The Buddha said or has been made to say that when one is free from all desire, one necessarily enters into infinite bliss. This bliss may be a little dry and anyway it does not seem to me to be the quickest way.

If at the outset one were to seize the problem bodily, jump into it with courage and determination and, instead of undertaking a long, arduous, painful, disappointing hunt after desires, one gives oneself simply, totally, unconditionally, if one surrenders to the Supreme Reality, to the Supreme Will, to the Supreme Being, putting oneself entirely in His hands, in an upsurge of the whole being and all the elements of the being, without calculating, that would be the swiftest and the most radical way to get rid of the ego. People will say that it is difficult to do it, but at least a warmth is there, an ardour, an enthusiasm, a light, a beauty, an ardent and creative life.

It is true that without desire nothing much remains to sustain the ego and one has the impression that the consciousness becomes so hardened that if the ego crumbles into dust, then something of

one's self also falls into dust and one is ready to enter into a Nirvana which is annihilation pure and simple.

But what we consider here as the true Nirvana is the disappearance of the ego into the splendour of the Supreme. And this way is what I call the positive way, the self-giving that is integral, total, perfect, without reserve, without bargaining.

In the mere fact of not thinking of oneself, not existing for oneself, referring nothing to oneself, thinking only of what is supremely beautiful, luminous, delightful, powerful, compassionate and infinite, there is such a profound delight that nothing can be compared to it.

This is the only thing that deserves... that is worthy of being attempted. All the rest is only marking time.

The difference is between climbing a mountain by going round and round, slowly, laboriously, step by step, for hundreds of years, and spreading invisible wings and soaring straight to the summit.

20 June 1958

The Path

The best of all paths is the Eightfold Path; the best of all truths is the Fourfold Truth; the best of all states is freedom from attachment; the best among men is the One who sees, the Buddha.

Truly, this is the Path; there is no other which leads to purification of vision. Follow this Path and Mara will be confounded.

By following this Path, you put an end to suffering. This Path I have made known, since I learned to remove the thorns (of life).

The effort must come from oneself. The Tathagatas only point out the Path. Those who meditate and tread this Path are delivered from the bondage of Mara.

“All conditioned things are impermanent.” When one has seen that by realisation, he is delivered from sorrow. That is the Path of purity.

“All conditioned things are subject to suffering.” When one has seen that by realisation, he is delivered from sorrow. That is the Path of purity.

“All things are insubstantial.” When one has seen that by realisation, he is delivered from sorrow. That is the Path of purity.

He who though young and strong, does not act when it is time to act, is given to indolence, and his mind is full of vain thoughts; one who is so indolent will not find the Path of wisdom.

Moderation in speech, control of the mind, abstention from evil actions, thus these three modes of action are to be purified first of all, to attain the Path shown by the sages.

From meditation wisdom springs, without meditation wisdom declines. Knowing the two paths of progress and decline, a man should choose the Path which will increase his wisdom.

Cut down all the forest (of desires) and not one tree alone; for from this forest springs fear. Cut down this forest of trees and undergrowth, O Bhikkhus. Be free from desire.

As long as one has not rooted out of oneself entirely the desire of a man for a woman, the mind is captive, as dependent as a suckling on its mother.

Root out self-love, as one plucks with his hand an autumn lotus. Cherish only the Path of the peace of Nirvana that the Sugata¹ has taught us.

Here shall I live in the rainy season; I shall stay there in the winter and elsewhere in the summer. Thus thinks the fool and knows not what may befall him.

And this man who is attached to his children and his cattle, is seized by death and carried off, as a sleeping village is swept away by torrential floods.

Neither children, nor father, nor family can save us. When death seizes us, our kinsmen cannot save us.

¹ The Buddha.

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Knowing this perfectly, the intelligent man, guided by good conduct, does not delay in taking up the path which leads to Nirvana.

Here are some very useful recommendations: moderation in speech, control of the mind, abstention from evil actions. This is very good.

Here is something radical, but it is also very good: “As long as one has not rooted out of oneself entirely the desire of a man for a woman, the mind is captive, as dependent as a suckling on its mother.”

And finally: “Root out self-love, as one plucks with his hand an autumn lotus.” These are good subjects for meditation.

These recommendations seem to have been meant for people who are just at the beginning of the Path from the intellectual point of view. We can easily imagine a gathering of country people, people with simple minds, to whom one has to say, “Listen carefully, it is no use making plans, for you do not know what will happen to you tomorrow. You are amassing wealth, you are taking your ease among your family, you are making schemes for tomorrow and for the day after, and you are not aware that death is on the watch and that at any moment it can fall on you.”

All the same, there is a slightly more advanced stage of intellectual development in which these things need not be said — one must live them! Live in the consciousness that things are altogether impermanent, never become attached, if you are to be free to progress with the universe and grow according to the eternal rhythm. This one understands. But what is important is to practise it. Here one has the impression that these things were told to people who had never thought of them before and so they had the full power of an active force.

After all, in spite of all appearances, humanity progresses; it has progressed particularly in the mind. There are things that no longer need to be said.... Or else one must go to countries that are at a very primitive stage, and even so... ideas have spread

everywhere, the mental light has spread everywhere and in the most unexpected places one finds instances of receptivity and understanding.

One really has the impression that during the last century a light came and spread upon the earth with the result that certain ideas, which were once idea-forces, new ideas with the power to stir up the consciousness in men, have lost their relevance, they are now old. A new light is at work.

In practice, the progress is not very great, even in some respects perhaps there has been a retrogression, but in the mind, in the understanding, in the intellectual vision of things, there has truly been a great change.

It seems we are marching on the way at an accelerated pace and these things which used to be of the first importance are becoming almost commonplace in the light of new discoveries. Life as it is is bad, disorder is everywhere, suffering is everywhere, confusion is everywhere, chaos is everywhere, ignorance is everywhere — we all know it, don't we? It seems so hackneyed.

But that one can emerge from it through a total realisation, a total transformation, through a new light that will establish order and harmony in things, is a message of hope that has to be given. This is the true, the dynamic message.

A new life must be built.

Then all these difficulties that seemed so unsurmountable — oh! they fall of themselves.

When you can live in light and joy, are you going to cling to shadow and suffering?

27 June 1958

Miscellany

If renouncing the slightest happiness enables him to realise a greater one, the intelligent man should renounce the lesser for the sake of the greater.

If he seeks his own happiness by harming others, bound by hate, he remains the slave of hatred.

To neglect what should be done and to do what should be neglected is to increase in arrogance and negligence.

To be constantly mindful of the true nature of the body, not to seek what is evil, to pursue with perseverance what is good, is to have right understanding; thus, all one's impurity disappears.

Having killed his father (ego), his mother (desire) and the two warrior kings (wrong views), having destroyed the kingdom (of the senses) and all its dependencies, the Brahmin lives free from evil.

Having killed father, mother, the two warrior kings and the tiger (mental hindrances), the Brahmin lives free from evil.

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, their attention is turned to the Buddha, the Dhamma¹ and the Sangha.²

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, their attention remains fixed on the Doctrine.

¹ The Law; the Teaching.

² The Community.

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, their attention remains fixed on the Sangha.

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, they remain aware of the true nature of the body.

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, they delight in compassion.

The disciples of Gautama are alert and truly awakened, for, day and night, they take pleasure in meditation.

It is hard to renounce the world; it is equally hard to enjoy the world. Difficult and sorrowful is household life. It is painful to be with those who are not our equals and it is painful to wander in the cycle of births. Therefore, do not follow after sorrow nor be a wanderer without a goal.

The man who is full of faith and goodness, who possesses glory and wealth, is revered wherever he goes.

Men of goodness shine afar like the snowy peaks of the Himalayas. Whereas wicked men are no more visible than arrows shot in the night.

The man who eats alone, sleeps alone, walks alone untiring in his self-mastery, will delight in the solitary life of the forests.

Still you should not be mistaken. For I believe all these are images rather than material facts, because it is quite certain that eating alone, sleeping alone, living in the forest all alone is not enough to give you freedom of spirit.

Questions and Answers

It has been noticed that most people who live alone in the forest become friendly with all the animals and plants around them; but it is not at all the fact of being all alone that gives you the power of entering into an inner contemplation and living in communion with the Supreme Truth. Perhaps it is easier, when by force of circumstance you have nothing else to do, but I am not convinced of it. One can always invent occupations and it seems to me, according to my experience of life, that if one succeeds in subduing one's nature in the midst of difficulties, if one endeavours to be all alone within oneself with the eternal Presence, while keeping the same surroundings which the Grace has given us, the realisation which one obtains then is infinitely more true, more profound, more lasting.

To run away from difficulties in order to conquer them is not a solution. It is very attractive. In those who seek the spiritual life, there is something which says, "Oh! to sit down under a tree, all alone, to remain in meditation, not to have the temptation to speak or act, how fine it must be!" It is because there is a very strong formation in this direction, but it is very illusory.

The best meditations are those that one has all of a sudden, because they take possession of you as an imperative necessity. You have no choice but to concentrate, to meditate, to look beyond the appearances. And it is not necessarily in the solitude of the forest that it seizes you, it happens when something in you is ready, when the time has come, when the true need is there, when the Grace is with you.

It seems to me that humanity has made some progress and the true victory must be won in life itself.

You must know how to live alone with the Eternal and Infinite in the midst of all circumstances. You must know how to be free, with the Supreme as your companion, in the midst of all occupations. That is indeed the true victory.

14 July 1958

Niraya (Hell)

One who speaks untruth goes to Hell like one who, when he has done a thing, says: "I did not do it." Both, after death, will share the same fate, for these are men of evil.

Though they wear the yellow robe, those who are dissolute and evil-natured, their evil actions will cause them to be reborn in Hell.

It would be better to swallow a red-hot iron ball than to live on alms while leading a dissolute life.

Four punishments await the unscrupulous man who covets the wife of another: shame, troubled sleep, condemnation and Hell.

So he acquires an evil reputation and an evil birth; brief is the pleasure of the anxious pair, heavy the punishment of the law-giver. Let no man therefore seek the wife of another.

Just as Kusa grass cuts the hand if wrongly handled, so also asceticism wrongly understood leads to Niraya.

A duty carelessly fulfilled, a rule wrongly observed and a virtuous life followed out of fear, none of these will bring good results.

If a thing is to be done, do it with zeal. An ascetic with lax habits will stir up the dust (of the passions).

An evil deed is better left undone, for he who does it will be tormented by it. It is better to do a good deed, for he who does it will not have cause to repent it.

Questions and Answers

As a frontier city is well fortified both within and without, so one should guard oneself, so as not to waste a single moment of wakefulness; for those who lose this opportunity, even if only for a moment, will suffer indeed for it when in Hell.

Those who feel shame when there is no cause for shame, and those who feel no shame when there is cause to be ashamed, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.

Those who are afraid of what should not be feared, and those who do not fear what is to be feared, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.

Those who see evil where there is none, and those who do not see it where it is, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.

Those who recognise evil to be evil, and good to be good, these who have right judgment are bound to enjoy happiness.

As in all these teachings there are always several ways of understanding them. The external way is quite commonplace. In all moral principles, the same thing is always said. This Niraya for example, which some take as a kind of hell where one is punished for one's sins, has also another sense. The true sense of Niraya is that particular kind of atmosphere which one creates around oneself when one acts in contradiction, not with outer moral rules or social principles, but with the inner law of one's being, the particular truth of each one which ought to govern all the movements of our consciousness and all the acts of our body. The inner law, the truth of the being is the divine Presence in every human being, which should be the master and guide of our life.

When you acquire the habit of listening to this inner law,

when you obey it, follow it, try more and more to let it guide your life, you create around you an atmosphere of truth and peace and harmony which naturally reacts upon circumstances and forms, so to say, the atmosphere in which you live. When you are a being of justice, truth, harmony, compassion, understanding, of perfect goodwill, this inner attitude, the more sincere and total it is, the more it reacts upon the external circumstances; not that it necessarily diminishes the difficulties of life, but it gives these difficulties a new meaning and that allows you to face them with a new strength and a new wisdom; whereas the man, the human being who follows his impulses, who obeys his desires, who has no time for scruples, who comes to live in complete cynicism, not caring for the effect that his life has upon others or for the more or less harmful consequences of his acts, creates for himself an atmosphere of ugliness, selfishness, conflict and bad will which necessarily acts more and more upon his consciousness and gives a bitterness to his life that in the end becomes a perpetual torment.

Of course this does not mean that such a man will not succeed in what he undertakes, that he will not be able to possess what he desires; these external advantages disappear only when there is within the inmost being a spark of sincerity which persists and makes him worthy of this misfortune.

If you see a bad man become unlucky and miserable, you must immediately respect him. It means that the flame of inner sincerity is not altogether extinguished and something still reacts to his bad actions.

Finally, that leads us again to the observation that you must never, never judge on appearances and that all the judgments you make from outward circumstances are always, necessarily false judgments.

To have a glimpse of the Truth, one must take at least one step back in one's consciousness, enter a little more deeply into one's being and try to perceive the play of forces behind the appearances and the divine Presence behind the play of forces.

25 July 1958

The Elephant

As the elephant on the battlefield endures the arrow shot from the bow, so also shall I patiently bear insult, for truly there are many of evil mind in the world.

It is a tamed elephant that is led to the battlefield; one whom the Raja rides. The best among men is he who patiently bears insult.

Trained mules are excellent, as also the thoroughbreds of Sindh and the mighty tuskers. Better yet is the man who has brought himself under control.

Not by mounting one of these animals does one attain the unexplored path, but by mastering oneself. By that mastery one attains it.

In the mating season it is difficult to control the mighty elephant Dhanapalako.¹ When he is chained he refuses to eat, he yearns only to be once more a wild elephant of the forest.

When a man is slothful and gluttonous, always sleepy and rolling from side to side like a fat hog in the mud — this fool is compelled to be born over and over again.

Once this mind wandered where it would from one thing to another, according to its pleasure, but now I shall master it completely as the mahout with his goad masters the elephant in rut.

¹ One who guards the treasure.

Delight in vigilance, guard carefully your mind. Lift yourself out of evil as the elephant sunk in a swamp.

If for company you find a prudent friend, who leads a good life, who is intelligent and self-controlled, overcoming all obstacles, do not hesitate to set out with him joyfully and courageously.

And if you do not meet with such a friend, who leads a good life, who is intelligent and self-controlled, then like a king renouncing a kingdom he has conquered, or like a solitary elephant in the forest follow your path alone.

It is better to live alone, for one cannot take a fool as a companion. It is better to live alone and do no evil, carefree, like the elephant in the jungle.

It is good to have friends when need arises. It is good to be satisfied with what one has. It is good, at the hour of death, to have acquired merit. It is good to leave all grief behind you.

In this world it is a joy to respect one's mother; it is a joy to respect one's father; it is a joy to honour the monks; it is a joy to revere the Brahmins.²

It is a joy to live purely throughout one's life. It is a joy to have a steadfast faith. It is a joy to acquire wisdom. It is a joy to abstain from all evil.

The first verse gives some very wise advice: the war elephant who has been well trained does not start running away as soon as he receives an arrow. He continues to advance and bears the pain, with no change in his attitude of heroic resistance. Those who wish

² The holy men; the men of wisdom.

Questions and Answers

to follow the true path will naturally be exposed to the attacks of all forms of bad will, which not only do not understand, but generally hate what they do not understand.

If you are worried, grieved or even discouraged by the malicious stupidities that men say about you, you will not advance far on the way. And such things come to you, not because you are unlucky or because your lot is not a happy one, but because, on the contrary, the divine Consciousness and the divine Grace take your resolution seriously and allow the circumstances to become a touchstone on your way, to see whether your resolution is sincere and whether you are strong enough to face the difficulties.

Therefore, if anyone sneers at you or says something that is not very charitable, the first thing you should do is to look within yourself for whatever weakness or imperfection has allowed such a thing to happen and not to be disconsolate, indignant or aggrieved, because people do not appreciate you at what you think to be your true value; on the contrary, you must be thankful to the divine Grace for having pointed out to you the weakness or imperfection or deformation that you must correct.

Therefore, instead of being unhappy, you can be fully satisfied and derive advantage, a great advantage from the harm that was intended against you.

Besides, if you truly want to follow the path and practise yoga, you must not do it for appreciation or honour, you must do it because it is an imperative need of your being, because you cannot be happy in any other way. Whether people appreciate you or do not appreciate you, it is of absolutely no importance. You may tell yourself beforehand that the further you are from ordinary men, foreign to the ordinary mode of being, the less people will appreciate you, quite naturally, because they will not understand you. And I repeat, it has absolutely no importance.

True sincerity consists in advancing on the way because you cannot do otherwise, to consecrate yourself to the divine life

On the Dhammapada

because you cannot do otherwise, to seek to transform your being and come out into the light because you cannot do otherwise, because it is the purpose of your life.

When it is like that you may be sure that you are on the right path.

1 August 1958

Craving

The craving of a heedless man grows like the Maluva creeper. Like a monkey seeking fruits in the forest, he leaps from life to life.

For one who in the world is overcome by the craving that clings, his miseries increase like Birana grass after the rains.

For one who in this world can overcome this craving that clings and is so difficult to master, his sorrows fall away like water from a lotus leaf.

To all who are gathered here, I say for your welfare: pull out the roots of your craving, as you uproot Birana grass. Do not let Mara crush you again and again as a flood crushes a reed.

As a tree, though felled, springs up once more if the roots remain intact, even so sorrow will return again and again until all craving is rooted out.

The misguided man, who cannot resist the thirty-six strong currents of craving, is swept away by the flood of his eagerness for pleasure.

Everywhere these currents flow and the creeper (of craving) springs up and increases. Wherever you see it springing up, cut out its roots with the force of wisdom.

Allowing their minds to be attracted by the enjoyment of transient objects, men who crave pleasure become a prey to birth and to decay.

*Beset by craving, men run around like a hare in a trap.
Bound by the chains of attachment, they come again and
again to sorrow.*

*Beset by craving, men run around like a hare in a trap.
Therefore, O Bhikkhu, desiring deliverance from pas-
sion, destroy your craving.*

*One who, delivered from craving, yet runs back to it, lo,
he is like a freed man who returns to bondage.*

*What the wise call a strong bond is not made of iron,
wood or rope; but the craving for jewels and ornaments,
for wife and children, is a far stronger bond.*

*The wise say that it pulls you downward, and though it
seems to be loose, it is hard to be rid of. This too the
wise cut off; renouncing the pleasures of the senses, free
from craving, they take to the homeless life.*

*Those who are bound by their passions are drawn back
into the stream, like a spider caught in his own web.
This too the wise cut off; renouncing the pleasures of
the senses, free from craving, they take to the homeless
life.*

*Be free from the past, be free from the future, be free
from the present. Cross over to the other shore of exis-
tence; when the mind is wholly delivered, you shall come
no more to birth and death.*

*One who is troubled by evil thoughts, who is controlled
by his passions, who seeks only pleasure, his craving
grows steadily; he makes his bonds strong indeed.*

*One who delights in subduing evil thoughts, who is vig-
ilant and can distinguish impurities, he will put an end*

Questions and Answers

to his cravings, he shall break the bonds of Mara.

He who has reached the goal, who is without fear and free from craving and impurity, he has plucked out the thorns of existence; this is his last incarnation.

One who is free from craving, unattached, who knows the words and their meanings, who knows the arrangement of the texts in their sequence, he indeed has put on his last body. He alone is called "The Man of Great Wisdom."

I have vanquished all, I know all; unconditioned, all-renouncing, delivered by the extinction of craving, having understood all by myself, whom shall I call my teacher?

The gift of Truth excels all gifts; the savour of Truth excels all savours; delight in Truth excels all delights; deliverance from craving overcomes all suffering.

Riches ruin the fool, but not one who seeks the other shore. By craving for riches, the fool ruins himself and others with him.

Weeds are the bane of the fields; passion the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from passions yields abundant fruit.

Weeds are the bane of the fields; hatred the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from hatred yields abundant fruit.

Weeds are the bane of the fields; delusion the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from delusion yields abundant fruit.

On the Dhammapada

Weeds are the bane of the fields; desires the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from desires yields abundant fruit.

We shall keep the last one to meditate on.

8 August 1958

The Bhikkhu

To control the eye is good; to control the ear is good; to control the nose and the tongue is good.

It is good to control one's actions, words, mind. Control in all things is good. The Bhikkhu who controls himself entirely is delivered from all suffering.

The man who is master over his hands, his feet and his tongue, who controls himself wholly, who delights in meditation, who is calm and leads a solitary life, can be called a Bhikkhu.

The Bhikkhu who is master over his tongue and is moderate in speech, who is modest, who luminously interprets the Doctrine, in truth his words are as sweet as honey.

The Bhikkhu who lives by the Doctrine, who delights in the Doctrine, who meditates on the Doctrine, who knows the Doctrine thoroughly, surely cannot fall away from the Doctrine.

The Bhikkhu should not treat his own progress (in wisdom and goodness) lightly, nor envy the progress of others; for the Bhikkhu who is envious cannot achieve concentration.

Even if the progress he has made is slight, the Bhikkhu should not despise it; if his life is pure and his effort persevering, the gods themselves shall praise him for it.

One who is not attached to name and form, who does not think, "This belongs to me", and who does not

grieve over what does not exist, he, in truth, is called a Bhikkhu.

The Bhikkhu who lives a life of loving kindness and who is filled with faith in the teaching of the Enlightened One, that Bhikkhu will attain the peace of Nirvana, the supreme bliss from which every conditioned element has vanished.

Empty this boat, O Bhikkhu; once lightened, the boat of your body will sail more lightly and having rejected desire and hatred you shall enter Nirvana.

Break the five bonds (belief in the ego, doubt, belief in vain rites and ceremonies, craving and bad will). Renounce these five other bonds (the desire to live in the world of forms, the desire to live in the subtle world, pride, restlessness and ignorance). Cultivate these five (faith, energy, mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom). The Bhikkhu who is thus five times free is said to be "he who has crossed over the flood".

Meditate, O Bhikkhus, do not be negligent. Your minds should not turn towards the pleasures of the senses; for if by negligence you swallowed a red-hot iron ball, when you felt the burning you would lament, crying, "Oh, how painful it is!"

For one without knowledge there is no meditation; without meditation there is no knowledge. One in whom there is both meditation and knowledge is near to Nirvana.

The Bhikkhu who has entered the abode of emptiness, the Bhikkhu of serene mind, enjoys delight beyond the human, in the clear vision of the Doctrine.

Questions and Answers

Each time that he concentrates on the appearance and disappearance of all conditioned things, he enjoys the happiness and the delight of those who have attained immortality.

These things are for the wise Bhikkhu the very basis of the religious life: mastery of the senses, contentment, conduct according to the code of discipline, association with noble friends who lead a life of constant purity.

The Bhikkhu should be cordial, kind and polite; thus in the fullness of his joy, he will put an end to suffering.

Just as the jasmine sheds its faded petals, so also the Bhikkhu sheds desire and hatred.

Calm in action, calm in speech, calm in mind, serene, emptied of all earthly appetites, this Bhikkhu is called "The Serene One".

Let him arouse himself, let him examine himself; thus self-guarded and vigilant, the Bhikkhu will live in happiness.

In truth, one is one's own protector, one's own refuge. Know therefore how to control yourself as the horse-dealer controls a noble steed.

Filled with gladness and faith by the teaching of the Buddha, the Bhikkhu attains the state of perfect peace, cessation of all compounded existence.

The young Bhikkhu who consecrates himself to the Teaching of the Enlightened One, illumines this world like the moon coming forth from behind the clouds.

On the Dhammapada

One piece of advice given here is that one should always be kind. It should not be mistaken for the sort of advice people normally give. It says something interesting, even very interesting. My comment is: Always be kind and you will be free from suffering, always be contented and happy, and you will radiate your quiet happiness.

It is particularly noticeable that all the digestive functions are extremely sensitive to an attitude that is critical, bitter, full of ill-will, to a sour judgment. Nothing disturbs the functioning of the digestion more than that. And it is a vicious circle: the more the digestive function is disturbed, the more unkind you become, critical, dissatisfied with life and things and people. So you can't find any way out. And there is only one cure: to deliberately drop this attitude, to absolutely forbid yourself to have it and to impose upon yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness. Just try and you will see that you feel much better.

22 August 1958

The Brahmin

Strive, O Brahmin! Seal up the current (of craving), cast away all pleasures of the senses. Knowing how to uproot the elements of existence you shall know the Uncreated.

When the Brahmin has attained the summit of the two paths (concentration and insight), all bonds fall away and he possesses the Knowledge.

One for whom neither the inner nor the outer exist, neither one nor the other, who is free from fear and bondage, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who is given to meditation and is freed of impurities, who is without stain, who has fulfilled his duty, who has attained the highest goal, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

By day the sun shines; by night the moon. In his armour the warrior shines; in meditation the Brahmin shines. Day and night, without ceasing, the Buddha is radiant.

The man who has rejected evil is a Brahmin. One whose behaviour is disciplined is a monk; an ascetic is one who is purged of impurities.

One should not strike a Brahmin, and the Brahmin should not strike back. Shame on one who strikes a Brahmin. Shame on the Brahmin who strikes back.

For a Brahmin there is nothing better than to restrain the mind from the pleasures of life. As he removes bad intentions, so he appeases his sufferings.

One who does no evil by act, word or thought, the man who is restrained in these three, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

Whosoever teaches you the Doctrine of the Perfectly Enlightened One, render him homage and venerate him as the Brahmin does the sacred fire.

Neither by matted hair, nor ancestry, nor by birth does one become a Brahmin. One in whom abide truth and righteousness, he is pure, he is a true Brahmin.

What value has your matted hair, O foolish man? What value has the antelope skin you wear? Within you lies a jungle of passions, you have only the appearance of purity.

The man dressed in cast-off robes, who is emaciated, whose veins stand out on his body, who meditates alone in the forest, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

But I do not call him a Brahmin, although he is of brahmin origin or born of a brahmin mother, he who is rich and arrogant. He who possesses nothing, who is attached to nothing, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who has broken all bonds, who no longer fears anything, who has overcome all ties, who is liberated, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who little by little has broken the thong (of mind) and the straps (of attachment), who has cut the chain (of doubt) with its links (of evil tendencies) and who has rejected the yoke (of ignorance), who is enlightened, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

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He who is without resentment, who bears reproaches, blows and chains, whose patience is his true strength, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who is free from anger, who is faithful to his faith, good and without craving, who has mastered himself and taken a body for the last time, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who is no more attached to the pleasures of the senses than a drop of water to the lotus leaf, or a mustard seed to the point of a needle, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who, in this life, has realised the cessation of suffering, who has laid down the burden and has liberated himself (from the yoke of attachment), him I consider to be a Brahmin.

The intelligent man, gifted with profound wisdom, discerning the good and the evil path, who has attained the supreme goal, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who seeks the company neither of householders nor of monks, who has no home and few needs, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who does no harm to any creature, whether strong or weak, who does not kill nor cause to be killed, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

Friendly amid the unfriendly, calm amid the violent, unselfish amid the selfish, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He from whom passion and hatred, pride and pretence have fallen away, as a mustard seed falls from the point of a needle, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who speaks only words that are sweet, instructive, true, and who offends no one, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who in this world takes nothing but what he is given, whether it be little or much, short or long, good or bad, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who has no more desires in this world or the other, who has no more craving, who is free, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One in whom desire exists no more, one who has attained the perfection of knowledge, who has cast away all doubt and who has sounded the depths of immortality, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who in this world has broken all ties (of good and evil) and who is delivered from grief, from taints and impurities, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who, like the moon, is spotless, pure, clear, serene, from whom the thirst of earthly desires has vanished, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who has escaped from the cycle of births, this muddy path, this thorny road, and who has attained the other shore, is given to meditation, void of desire, free from doubt, detached from all things and at peace, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One in whom all passion is destroyed and who, renouncing worldly pleasures, has left the household life and taken to the homeless life, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

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He in whom all craving is dead and who, renouncing worldly pleasures, has left the household life, who has quenched the thirst of becoming, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who has rejected all earthly ties and has gone beyond all heavenly ties, who is delivered from all ties, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who has put aside liking and disliking, who is indifferent, who is freed from all attachment and all fetters, who has conquered all the worlds, this hero I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who possesses the perfect knowledge of the birth and death of all beings and who is freed from all ties, he is a Blessed One, an Awakened One, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He whose future state is unknown to the gods, the demigods and mortals, who is without desire and without impurity, who has become an adept, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

He who no longer possesses anything, neither past nor present nor future, who owns nothing, who no longer clings to anything, that one I consider to be a Brahmin.

The Noble, the Excellent, the Hero, the great Sage, the Victor, the Impassive, the Pure, the Enlightened, him I consider to be a Brahmin.

One who knows his previous lives, one who perceives the heavens and the hells, who has come to the end of births, who has attained perfect vision, the Sage accomplished

in all accomplishments, him in truth I consider to be a Brahmin.

Such is the conclusion of the Dhammapada and if we have put into practice — to use its image — only a mustard seed of all that has been taught to us, well, we have not wasted our time.

There is one thing which is not spoken of here, in the Dhammapada: a supreme disinterestedness and a supreme liberation is to follow the discipline of self-perfection, the march of progress, not with a precise end in view as described here, the liberation of Nirvana, but because this march of progress is the profound law and the purpose of earthly life, the truth of universal existence and because you put yourself in harmony with it, spontaneously, whatever the result may be.

There is a deep trust in the divine Grace, a total surrender to the divine Will, an integral adhesion to the divine Plan which makes one do the thing to be done without concern for the result. That is the perfect liberation.

That is truly the abolition of suffering. The consciousness is filled with an unchanging delight and each step you take reveals a marvel of splendour.

We are grateful to the Buddha for what he has brought for human progress and, as I told you at the beginning, we shall try to realise a little of all the beautiful things he has taught us, but we shall leave the goal and the result of our endeavour to the Supreme Wisdom that surpasses all understanding.

5 September 1958

Appendix
to
Questions and Answers 1929

Sri Aurobindo's explanations of certain phrases
and passages in *Questions and Answers 1929*

Appendix to Questions and Answers 1929

The Mother asks: “What do you want the Yoga for? To get power?”¹ Does “power” here mean the power to communicate one’s own experience to others? What does it precisely mean?

Power is a general term — it is not confined to a power to communicate. The most usual form of power is control over things, persons, events, forces.

The Mother says: “What is required is concentration — concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.”² Is its Will different from its Purpose?

The two words have not the same meaning. Purpose means the intention, the object in view towards which the Divine is working. Will is a wider term than that.

“Concentrate in the heart.”³ What is concentration? What is meditation?

Concentration means gathering of the consciousness into one centre and fixing it in one object or in one idea or in one condition. Meditation is a general term which can include many kinds of inner activity.

¹ *Questions and Answers 1929*, page 1. The page number in this and the following footnotes refers to the present volume.

² Page 1. ³ Page 1.

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“A fire is burning there.... It is the divinity in you — your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.”⁴

I have never seen this fire in me. Yet I feel I know the divinity in me. I feel I hear its voice and I try my utmost to follow its dictates. Should I doubt my feeling?

No, what you feel is probably the intimation from the psychic being through the mind. To be directly conscious of the psychic fire, one must have the subtle vision and subtle sense active or else the direct action of the psychic acting as a manifest power in the consciousness.

“We have all met in previous lives.”⁵

Who precisely are “we”? Do both of you remember me? Did I often serve you for this work in the past?

It is a general principle announced which covers all who are called to the work. At the time the Mother was seeing the past (or part of it) of those to whom she spoke and that is why she said this. At present we are too much occupied with the crucial work in the physical consciousness to go into these things. Moreover we find that it encouraged a sort of vital romanticism in the Sadhaks which made them attach more importance to these things than to the hard work of Sadhana, so we have stopped speaking of past lives and personalities.

“There are two paths of Yoga, one of tapasyā (discipline) and the other of surrender.”⁶

Once you interpreted my vision as Agni, the fire of purification and tapasyā producing the Sun of Truth. What path do I follow? What place has tapasyā in the path of surrender? Can one do absolutely without tapasyā in the path of surrender?

⁴ Page 1.

⁵ Page 3.

⁶ Page 4.

There is a *tapasyā* that takes place automatically as the result of surrender and there is a discipline that one carries out by one's own unaided effort — it is the latter that is meant in the “two paths of Yoga”. But Agni as the fire of *tapasyā* can burn in either case.

*The Mother says that the first effect of Yoga is to take away the mental control so that the ideas and desires which were so long checked become surprisingly prominent and create difficulties.*⁷

They were not prominent because they were getting some satisfaction or at least the vital generally was getting indulged in one way or another. When they are no longer indulged then they become obstreperous. But they are not new forces created by the Yoga — they were there all the time.

What is meant by the mental control being removed is that the mental simply kept them in check but could not remove them. So in Yoga the mental has to be replaced by the psychic or spiritual self-control which could do what the vital cannot, only many Sadhaks do not make this exchange in time and withdraw the mental control merely.

*“The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them.”*⁸
What are the other impulses referred to?

It refers to strong vital impulses.

*“The whole world is full of the poison. You take it in with every breath.”*⁹
How long is a Sadhak subject to this fear of catching contagion? I feel I won't catch such a contagion now. Is my feeling trustworthy?

⁷ Page 5. ⁸ Page 5. ⁹ Page 6.

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I don't know that it is. One has to go very far on the path before one is so secure as that.

The Mother says: "One who dances and jumps and screams has the feeling that he is somehow very unusual in his excitement; and his vital nature takes great pleasure in that."¹⁰ Does she mean that one should be usual instead of unusual in one's excitement during spiritual experience?

The Mother did not mean that one must be usual in one's excitement at all — she meant that the man is not only excited but also wants to be unusual (extraordinary) in his excitement. The excitement itself is bad and the desire to seem extraordinary is worse.

*"But to those who possess the necessary basis and foundation we say, on the contrary, 'aspire and draw.'"¹¹
Does this capacity to aspire and draw indicate a great advance already made?*

No. It is a comparatively elementary stage.

How can one distinguish between a dream of deeper origin and a vision?¹²

There is no criterion, but one can easily distinguish if one is in the inward condition, not sleep, in which most visions take place, by the nature of the impression made. A vision in dream is more difficult to distinguish from a vivid dream-experience but one gets to feel the difference.

Sometimes one remembers the dreams, sometimes one does not.¹³ Why is it so?

¹⁰ Page 11. ¹¹ Page 11. ¹² Pages 13-14. ¹³ Page 14.

It depends on the connection between the two states of consciousness at the time of waking. Usually there is a turn over of the consciousness in which the dream-state disappears more or less abruptly, effacing the fugitive impression made by the dream events (or rather their transcription) on the physical sheath. If the waking is more composed (less abrupt) or, if the impression is very strong, then the memory remains at least of the last dream. In the last case one may remember the dream for a long time, but usually after getting up the dream memories fade away. Those who want to remember their dreams sometimes make a practice of lying quiet and tracing backwards, recovering the dreams one by one. When the dream-state is very light, one can remember more dreams than when it is heavy.

“Spiritual experience means the contact with the Divine in oneself (or without, which comes to the same thing in that domain).”¹⁴

What is meant by the Divine “without”? Does it mean the cosmic Divine or the transcendental or both?

It means the Divine seen outside in things, beings, events etc., etc.

Was Jeanne d’Arc’s nature transformed even a little because of her relation with the two Archangels, the two beings of the Overmind?¹⁵

I don’t see how the question of transformation comes in. Jeanne d’Arc was not practising Yoga or seeking transformation.

“You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which

¹⁴ Page 17. ¹⁵ Pages 17-18.

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*you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond.*¹⁶

Is this as elementary a stage as the stage of “aspire and draw” ?

Not so elementary.

*What does Mother mean by the sentence: “When you eat, you must feel that it is the Divine who is eating through you”?*¹⁷

It means an offering of the food not to the ego or desire but to the Divine, who is behind all action.

*“But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine.”*¹⁸

If one does this completely has he anything more to do?

No. But it is not easy to do it completely.

*The Mother says: “Même ceux qui ont la volonté de s’enfuir, quand ils arrivent de l’autre côté, peuvent trouver que la fuite ne sert pas à grand-chose après tout.”*¹⁹

What does “arrivent de l’autre côté” mean in this sentence? Does it mean “when they come into this world” or “when they go into the world of silence which they realised”?

¹⁶ Page 23. ¹⁷ Page 23-24. ¹⁸ Page 25.

¹⁹ See *Entretiens* 1929, the French translation of *Questions and Answers* 1929. The original English (page 25 of the present volume) is: “And as for those who have the will of running away, even they when they go over to the other side, may find the flight was not of much use after all.”

No — “arrivent de l’autre côté” simply means “when they die”. What Mother intended was that when they actually arrive at their Nirvana they find it is not the ultimate solution or largest realisation of the Supreme and they must eventually come back and have their share of the world action to reach that largest realisation.

How can we recognise who gives all he has and is and does to the Divine?

You can’t, unless you have the inner vision.

“For there is nothing in the world which has not its ultimate truth and support in the Divine.”²⁰

To know this perfectly by experience is to have a very great attainment, perhaps the final attainment; am I right?

Yes.

“Obviously, what has happened had to happen; it would not have been, if it had not been intended.”²¹

Then, what is the place of repentance in man’s life? Has it any place in the life of a Sadhak?

The place of repentance is in its effect for the future — if it induces the nature to turn from the state of things that brought about the happening. For the Sadhak however it is not repentance but recognition of a wrong movement and the necessity of its not recurring that is needed.

“You are tied to the chain of Karma, and there, in that chain, whatever happens is rigorously the consequence of what has been done before.”²²

²⁰ Page 27. ²¹ Pages 27-28. ²² Page 30.

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Does “before” mean all the past lives, beginning from the very first up to this one?

That is taking things in the mass. In a metaphysical sense whatever happens is the consequence of all that has gone before up to the moment of the action. Practically particular consequences have particular antecedents in the past and it is these that are said to determine it.

The Mother has said: “En fait, la mort a été attachée à toute vie sur terre.”²³ The words “En fait” and “attachée” tend to give the impression that after all death is inevitable. But the preceding sentence — “Si cette croyance pouvait être rejetée, d’abord de la mentalité consciente... la mort ne serait plus inévitable”²⁴ — brings in an ambiguity because it does not make death so inevitable; it introduces a condition — an “if” — by which it could be avoided. But the categoricity of the sentence with “En fait” rather dilutes one’s expectation of a material immortality. Moreover, the “if” in the other sentence is too formidable to be satisfied.

There is no ambiguity that I can see. “En fait” and “attachée” do not convey any sense of inevitability. “En fait” means simply that in fact, actually, as things are at present all life (on earth) has death attached to it as its end; but it does not in the least convey the idea that it can never be otherwise or that this is the unalterable law of all existence. It is at present a fact for certain reasons which are stated, — due to certain mental and physical circumstances — if these are changed, death is not inevitable any longer. Obviously the alteration can only come “if” certain conditions are satisfied, — all progress and change by evolution depends upon an “if” which

²³ See *Entretiens* 1929. The original English (page 36) is: “Death as a fact has been attached to all life upon earth.”

²⁴ Page 36: “If this belief could be cast out first from the conscious mind... death would no longer be inevitable.”

gets satisfied. If the animal mind had not been pushed to develop speech and reason, mental man would never have come into existence, — but the “if”, — a stupendous and formidable one, was satisfied. So with the “ifs” that condition a farther progress.

“Many people would tell you wonderful tales of how the world was built and how it will proceed in the future, how and where you were born in the past and what you will be hereafter, the lives you have lived and the lives you will still live. All this has nothing to do with spiritual life.”²⁵

Is what such people say a complete humbug? Is there a process other than the spiritual by which one can know all these things?

Often it is, but even if it is correct, it has nothing spiritual in it. Many mediums, clairvoyants or people with a special faculty, tell you these things. That faculty is no more spiritual than the capacity to build a bridge or to cook a nice dish or to solve a mathematical problem. There are intellectual capacities, there are occult capacities — that is all.

“They [vampires] are not human; there is only a human form or appearance.... Their method is to try first to cast their influence upon a man; then they enter slowly into his atmosphere and in the end may get complete possession of him, driving out entirely the real human soul and personality.”²⁶

X has married a girl who, the Mother has said, is vampire-like to some extent. Is he then under all these risks? What precautions should he take? Shall I warn him?

First of all what is meant is not that the vampire or vital being even

²⁵ Page 40. ²⁶ Page 42.

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in possession of a human body tries to possess yet another human being. All that is the description of how a disembodied (vampire) vital being takes possession of a human body without being born into it in the ordinary way — for that is their desire, to possess a human body but not by the way of birth. Once thus human, the danger they are for others is that they feed on the vitality of those who are in contact with them — that is all.

Secondly in this case, Mother only said vampire-like to some extent. That does not mean that she is one of these beings, but has to some extent the habit of feeding on the vitality of others. There is no need to say anything to X. It would only disturb him and not help in the least.

The Mother speaks of the power of thoughts and gives the example that if “you have a keen desire for a certain person to come and that, along with this vital impulse of desire, a strong imagination accompanies the mental formation you have made.... And if there is a sufficient power of will in your thought-form, if it is a well-built formation, it will arrive at its own realisation.”²⁷

In the example given, suppose there is no strong desire in the vital but only thoughts or vague imaginations in the mind, would that go and induce the person to come?

It might; especially if that person were himself desirous of coming, it could give the decisive push. But in most cases desire or will behind the thought-force would be necessary.

The Mother says that depression or discouragement cuts holes in the nervous envelope and makes hostile attacks more easy.²⁸ In one sense this means that a man with goodwill should not discourage anyone’s wrong ideas,

²⁷ Pages 50-51. ²⁸ Page 89.

impulses or movements. But would this not be against the principles in ordinary life as well as in Sadhana? There is the way of keeping silent when dealing with such people, but even that sometimes hurts them more than a point-blank discouragement.

Would the bad effects of depression and discouragement indicated by the Mother happen in ordinary life also?

The knowledge about the bad effect of depressions is meant for the Sadhak to learn to avoid these things. He cannot expect people to flatter his failures or mistakes or indulge his foibles merely because he has the self-habit of indulging in depression and hurting his nervous envelope if that is done. To keep himself free from depression is his business, not that of others. For instance some people have the habit of getting into depression if the Mother does not comply with their desires — it does not follow that the Mother must comply with their desires in order to keep them jolly — they must learn to get rid of this habit of mind. So with people's wish of encouragement or praise for all they do. One can be silent or non-intervening, but if even that depresses them, it is their own fault and nobody else's.

Of course, it is the same in ordinary life — depression is always hurtful. But in Sadhana it is more serious because it becomes a strong obstacle to the smooth and rapid progress towards the goal.

Note on the Texts

Questions and Answers 1929. This collection of fifteen conversations of 1929 was first published in 1931 for private circulation under the title *Conversations of the Mother*. The conversations were first made available to the public in 1940 as the main part of the book *Words of the Mother*. This book was reprinted in 1943, 1946 and 1949. The 1929 conversations appeared separately in 1956 under the title *Conversations*. That book was reprinted in 1961, 1966, 1971, 1973 and 1982. In 1989 it was printed together with the Mother's conversations of 1930–1931 under the title *Conversations 1929, 1930–1931*; a second impression of that book was issued in 1997.

The conversations of 1929 were also published in 1977 as the first part of *Questions and Answers*, Volume 3 of the Collected Works of the Mother (first edition); in that volume the conversations were titled *Questions and Answers 1929*. The present volume contains the same text.

Questions and Answers 1930–1931. These twenty-six reports of the Mother's conversations with disciples in 1930 and 1931 were recorded by a disciple in abbreviated long-hand and later reconstructed and elaborated. Several of them were published in 1949 in two journals of the Ashram, the monthly *Mother India* and the annual *Sri Aurobindo Circle*. Twenty-five talks were published under the title *Words of the Mother: Third Series* in 1951 and in 1966. A new talk, "Difficulties in Yoga", was included in the collection when it was brought out in 1977 as part of *Questions and Answers*, Volume 3 of the Collected Works of the Mother (first edition). In that volume the talks were entitled *Questions and Answers 1930–1931*. The present volume contains the same text. In 1989 these talks were printed together with the Mother's 1929 conversations under the title *Conversations 1929, 1930–1931*; a second impression was printed in 1997.

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Commentaries on the Dhammapada. The Mother based her commentaries on the *Dhammapada* on a French translation of the Pali text made by a French disciple. The commentaries, given in French, were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The text and commentaries were first published in 1960 under the title *Commentaires sur le Dhammapada*. A second edition appeared in 1964. An English translation was serialised in the quarterly journal *Advent* from November 1960 to February 1965. This translation was revised when the work was published in 1977 as part of *Questions and Answers*, Volume 3 of the Collected Works of the Mother. The present volume contains the same text. In 1989 the text and commentaries were first published independently as a book in English; a second impression of the book was issued in 1995.

Appendix to *Questions and Answers* 1929. These explanations by Sri Aurobindo were written in answer to queries posed by various disciples between 1933 and 1937. Most of them were addressed to a particular disciple in January 1937. The collection was published in 1972 in *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, Volume 25 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.