Chapter One
Ego and Its Forms

Ego and Egoism

I suppose the ego came there [into human activity] first as a means of the outer consciousness individualising itself in the flux of Nature and, secondly, as an incentive for tamasic animal man to act and get something done. Otherwise he might merely have contented himself with food and sleep and done nothing else. With that incentive of ego (possession, vanity, ambition, eagerness for power etc. etc.) he began doing all sorts of things he might never otherwise have done. But now that he has to go higher, this ego comes badly in the way.

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Yes, ego is the reason of the difficulty in everybody.

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But that [pride of the ego] is the case with all human beings. All the action is shot through with ego, acts, feelings, thoughts, everything, big or small, good or bad. Even humility and what is called altruism is with most people only a form of ego. It does not depend on having something to be proud of.

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It is so with everybody. Human nature is shot through in all its stuff with the threads of the ego. Even when one tries to get away from it, it is in front or walks behind all the thoughts and actions like one’s shadow. To see that is the first step — to discern the falsity and absurdity of the ego movements is the second — to discourage and refuse it at every step is the third — but it goes entirely only when one sees, experiences and lives
the One in everything and equally everywhere.

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The human being is naturally egoistic and ego-centred — all he does, thinks, feels has the stamp of the ego on it and it cannot be otherwise until he learns to make not the ego but the Divine the centre of his existence and thinks, acts, feels only for the Divine — or until he enters into the higher or divine consciousness or the divine consciousness into him — for in the divine consciousness there is no ego.

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All human beings are full of ego. If you want to change, you must be very quiet and always aspire for a higher consciousness to come down into you in which there is not the ego. When it comes down, the real change will come. But you must be quiet within, not worried and restless — you must open confidently to the Mother's Force and let it work in you.

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The human consciousness is permeated in all its past ideas with this substance of egoism. It is only by a constant quiet vigilance and increasing consciousness that it can be got out — for if it is not allowed to play openly, it conceals itself and takes subtle and disguised forms.

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It is the ego that is showing itself in its true character. Formerly, it was associating with the sadhana because it either got something of what it desired or had great expectations. Now that these things are held back and the demand for the true attitude is made on it, it resists or non-cooperates, saying, “No value in such a sadhana.” In all the sadhaks here, the ego (in its physical or vital physical roots) is proving to be the stumbling block. No transformation is possible unless it changes.
Obviously, unless the object is Nirvana, the small ego has to be attended to — not indulged, but transformed out of existence.

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Yes, that is right — to remember constantly and live in the peace and calmness so that the Force may work and the Light may come. The small things of daily life must go on in the surface consciousness, not filling too large a place in it, until the Force and Light have taken possession and can lay direct hold of these also. It is the ego that gives them too big a place — the ego must be discouraged. “Not for myself, but for the Divine” should grow to be the law of the whole consciousness and thought and action. It cannot be done thoroughly all at once, but that must become the insistent note in the mind as soon as possible.

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I meant [by “thinking of the Divine”] the giving up of the pre-occupation with your ego and its rights and claims and ideas of unfair treatment and all the rest and to think more of the Divine and the seeking for the Divine for which you came here and make that your chief preoccupation. It is not in meditation alone, but in life and thought and act and feeling that that has to be done.

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Human nature has always been egoistic in its basis and so it brings in the ego motive into the work for the Divine also. That can only be overcome slowly, for what is ingrained in the human vital nature and has been active through hundreds of lives cannot disappear at once. To be conscious and to have the steady will to change and make the inner motive of bhakti and self-giving prevail over the outer motives is the one thing necessary.

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If you are becoming so conscious of the ego and the animal which fill so large a place in every human being, it is really a progress, because to be conscious is the first step. But along with
it you must have an aspiration and a confident faith in the Divine Power and Grace and in the divine element within you, psychic and spiritual, that through these the nature will be transformed and the ego replaced by the true person and the animal by the true vital and physical being become fit instruments of the Divine Mother.

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Yes, these experiences [of the smallness of the egoistic person] always come when one is opening into the wideness of the cosmic consciousness and your conclusions are correct. The self-importance of the ego has to dissolve — the importance of life or the progress of the being can come only from its being a vehicle of the Divine’s play, evolution, realisation and that is independent of the vastness of Space and Time.

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The right attitude is to see that as a separate being, as an ego, one has no importance whatever and the insistence on one’s own desires, pride, position etc. is an ignorance, but one matters only as a spirit, as a portion of the Divine, not more than others, but as all souls matter to the Soul of all.

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Impersonality in itself is not the Divine. All these mistakes can be and are made by many who claim to be in an impersonalised consciousness. A force may be impersonal but may be also a wrong force. Many think they are impersonal and free from ego because they are obeying a force or something bigger than their own personality — but that force or that something may be quite other than the Divine and it may hold them by something in their personality and ego.

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It [the degree of sensitivity] depends on the nature of the ego. Some egoists are hard-skinned and not sensitive at all; others are hyper-sensitive.
Ego in Different Parts of the Being

It [the ego] rises because it is its nature to do so; it wants to keep hold of the being which it considers its property and field of expression.

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Your ego does come up from time to time without your seeing that it is the ego. It comes up not in your higher parts but in your physical mind and consciousness and you think that because your higher parts are clear this also is clear.

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Ego, whatever its basis, can reproduce itself in different parts of the being, e.g. a vital ego, a mental ego, but fundamentally it is one.

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The mind and the vital are much more full of ego than the body — in the body the ego is obscure and instinctive only. There is no reason why ego should not be conquered in the end — although it is difficult — even in the external nature.

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The fight with the ego is part of the fight with the physical nature, for it is the superficial ego in the physical consciousness, irrational and instinctive, that refuses to go.

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No, it need not.¹ It is so thought because the old Yogas did not care about the liberation of the body and other instruments, and thought only of the separation of the soul from the Prakriti. If you do not liberate the Prakriti, ego and other forms of bondage will naturally remain so long as there is any action of Prakriti.

¹ The correspondent asked whether egoism remains, at least in the physical being, as long as the body remains. — Ed.
The Vital Ego

The earth-consciousness does not want to change, so it rejects what comes down to it from above — it has always done so. It is only if those who have taken this Yoga open themselves and are willing to change their lower nature that this unwillingness can disappear.

What stands in the way of course is always the vital ego with its ignorance and the pride of its ignorance and the physical consciousness with its inertia which resents and resists any call to change and its indolence which does not like to take the trouble — it finds it more comfortable to go on its own way repeating always the same old movements and, at best, expecting everything to be done for it in some way at some time.

The first thing is to have the right inner attitude — you have that; the rest is the will to transform oneself and the vigilance to perceive and reject all that belongs to the ego and the tamasic persistence of the lower nature. Finally, to keep oneself always open to the Mother in every part of the being so that the process of transformation may find no hindrance.

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Yes, even in ordinary life there must be a control over the vital and the ego — otherwise life would be impossible. Even many animals, those who live in groups, have their strict rules imposing a control on the play of the ego and those who disobey will have a bad time of it. The Europeans especially understand this and even though they are full of ego, yet when there is a question of team work or group life, they are adepts at keeping it in leash, even if it growls inside; it is the secret of their success. But in Yoga life of course it is a question not of controlling ego but of getting rid of it and rising to a higher principle, so demand is much more strongly and insistently discouraged.

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It is much better to tell [any feelings of dissatisfaction]. But you
are not alone in these feelings — two-thirds of the Asram have them in more or less vehemence — it is the unregenerate vital ego which is just the thing that stands most in the way of the transformation — other things are comparatively mild obstacles compared with this part of the being. It is much better that the Mother refused consideration to this part of you — consideration would have been a much more dangerous test than refusal.

* Yes, it [a false sense of importance] is a thing which comes to many; exaggerated and made a principal part of the vital attitude, it has been the cause of failure and departure of several who consider themselves great sadhaks — they made it an excuse for indulging and magnifying the vital ego. Since you see that it is ridiculous, you should have no difficulty in getting rid of it. The only truth in it is that each one who opens himself in such a way that the Force can get through to his material so as to change it, will by that be contributing to the victory of the Force — but it applies to everybody, not to any one individual.

* Yes, the talk about “advanced” sadhaks is a thing I have always discouraged — but people go on because that appeals to the vital ego.

* I have already told you the nature of the difficulty that has arisen in you, that it is nothing but the revolt of your vital mind and vital ego and I have pointed out to you the only way in which it can be overcome. You had by an effort supported by a special concentration from us arrived at a first psychic opening in your mind and heart which enabled you even to throw out for a time the sexual obsession from your vital consciousness. But, as often happens, soon after all that is obscure, egoistic, self-centred in the vital being rose up in revolt and created a confused farrago of desires, demands, disappointments, grievances, misapprehen-
sions,\textsuperscript{2} false reasonings and especially a wrong attitude of claim and demand which was the entire contradiction of the psychic and spiritual attitude and wholly inconsistent with the right conditions of sadhana. It is this of which your recent letters were full. The forces that use this kind of vital condition for the breaking of a sadhak’s spiritual chances became active and turned all into a drive to go away. Your only chance is to refuse to listen to all these ideas and suggestions and adopt resolutely an attitude of complete self-giving and the refusal of all feelings of desire, claim and ego and all justifications of these feelings by the vital mind which is full of a false view of things and therefore cannot be trusted even when its reasonings seem to be plausible.

Others before you have entered into this whirl of the vital mind and ego and have gone on justifying it and indulging it. The only result was a constant repetition of vital crises sometimes ending in departure and the failure of the sadhana; others by a repeated reaction of their psychic being finally succeeded in emerging out of the chaos. But we have found that to comply with the claims, demands, clamours, ultimatums of the vital mind in this condition is the worst way to meet the difficulty. It only increases the demands, revolts, outbursts of ego and makes the recurrence or continuance of the vital crises endless. You must get out of your head the idea that you have a right to demand this or that from the Mother because she is accepted by you as the Divine and that she is bound to satisfy you and any refusal is an offence and an outrage. The Mother acts and decides in all freedom according to her vision and judgment and she cannot be expected to act according to the desires, opinions or demands of the sadhaks nor can they judge by their minds her reasons or motives, for these do not belong to the ordinary consciousness in which the mind moves. For her to obey the dictates of the sadhaks or their claims and desires would be to make her work meaningless and a failure. Apart from that, the

\textsuperscript{2} Your present attitude to your poetry and painting is one of these misapprehensions of the vital mind and ego and is a mistake calculated to injure your sadhana.
basis of this Yoga is self-giving and surrender of the sadhak to
the Divine, his acceptance of guidance by a higher consciousness
than his own. A reversal of the position, an imposition of the
will of the lower consciousness on the Divine or the Guru is not
admissible; yet the position you have taken in your letters of
demand amounts to that and nothing else. This attitude must
cease if you want to get out of your difficulty.

I have tried to make the position clear to you. It is for you
to accept or not to accept what I have said; but it is the only
way possible for the sadhana.

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Once the universality [of the consciousness] is established, there
is no longer a secure fortress in the nature for the vital egoism
— the walls of it having been broken down. They [vital forces]
may still attack from outside, but it now lies in the power of the
sadhak to prevent their making a settled formation in him any
longer.

Rajasic and Tamasic Ego (Ahankara)

What you speak of as your nature, the distrust etc., is not the
nature but only a particular turn or habit that has got into it
like a crease in a dress. It can be smoothed out of the nature.
Of course it has to be smoothed out, for just as the rajasic
ahankara which exalts itself unduly is not good for the sadhana,
creating pride, vanity and delusion, so this opposite thing, called
often tamasic ahankara, is not good, for it creates diffidence,
despondency and in some people inertia.

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The tamasic ego is that which accepts and supports despondency,
weakness, inertia, self-deprecation, unwillingness to act, unwill-
ingness to know or be open, fatigue, indolence, do-nothingness.
Contrary to the rajasic it says, “I am so weak, so obscure, so
miserable, so oppressed and ill-used — there is no hope for me,
no success, I am denied everything, I am unsupported — how
can I do this, how can I do that, I have no power for it, no capacity, I am helpless; let me die; let me lie still and moan,” etc. etc. Of course not all that at once or in every case; but I am giving the general character of the thing.

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All that [self-depreciation and depression] is the usual play of the vital and the ego. It is the vital that can find satisfaction neither in talking with others nor in solitude — it has lost the old satisfaction in talks, but it cannot reconcile itself either to giving up the old attachment — it still feels a tie to it and so cannot get the joy of solitude.

It is the ego that is self-important and makes much of itself, but depression, self-depreciation and the feeling that others do not like or appreciate your company is also a working of the ego. The first is rajasic ego, the second tamasic ego. To be occupied always with oneself and the action of others on oneself is ego. One who is free from ego does not trouble about these things. In Yoga one must be unattached and indifferent to these things, concerned only with Sadhana and the Divine and towards others the attitude must be one of quiet goodwill without any demand or expectation. If one can’t arrive at this yet, one must always endeavour to arrive at that and not feed the lower vital movement by brooding on these other things.

To depend on letters from me for getting free from depression will only create a habit of depression, demand for a tonic in the shape of a letter, then again depression, tonic and revival and the circle will go on. It is only by a resolute will to get rid of the vital and the ego through their reactions that you can keep yourself open to the Mother. Success may take time, but the steady will and aspiration must be there.

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In spite of the outbreak of temper and violence with regard to the boy I do not think it can be said that you have not changed at all or made any progress. There are three obstacles that one has to overcome in the vital and they are very difficult to
overcome, lust (sexual desire), wrath and rajasic ego. I think you have progressed much in all three. Even in regard to anger, the outbreaks are surely less common, less overpowering and long-continued than they were before. It has been so much in your vital nature that you have to be on your guard against fits like these coming back; you have also to overcome excitement and violence of speech; but if you persevere without being discouraged, the freedom will come. Rajasic ego is the ground of the others. I think your idea about X is good for this purpose. If you can accustom yourself to do as scrupulously work not attractive to you as you do what attracts you and to do it in accordance with the ideas and standards of another, not insisting on your own, that should be an excellent discipline for the rajasic ego and bring into the vital a greater power of self-giving and peace.

* Do you mean to say that you never had any rajasic element in you? There is not a human being who has not got it in him so long as he is not divinised in his vital. What were all the vital suggestions coming to you so insistently always except appeals to the rajasic ego? When you threw out sex, jealousy, vanity, etc., what were you throwing out but the rajasic ego? What was the demand at the pranam or the disturbance caused there but a movement of the rajasic ego? Some of these things you threw out successfully — others still kept a response.

* So long as you had fully the attitude of surrender, the rajasic ego could only take the form of suggestions from outside, uprisings from the subconscient. It was suppressed in the vital. When the inertia rose and the energy of will receded, it began to try to come in again.

* These [feelings of hopelessness] are the feelings of the tamasic ego — the reaction to a disappointment in the rajasic ego. Mingled with the true attitude and experience or running
concurrently along with it was a demand of the vital, “What I am having now, I must always have, otherwise I can’t do sadhana; if I ever lose that, I shall die” — whereas the proper attitude is, “Even if I lose it for a time, it will be because something in me has to be changed in order that the Mother’s consciousness may be fulfilled in me not only in the self but in every part.” The lower forces attacked at this weak point, made demands through the vital and brought about a state of inertia in which what you had clung to seemed to be lost, went back behind the veil. So came the tamasic reaction of the ego, “What is the use of living, I prefer to die.” Obviously it is not the whole of you that says it, it is a part in the disappointed vital and tamasic physical. It is not enough that the active demands should be broken and removed; for this also is a passive way of demand, “I can’t have my demands; very well, I abdicate, don’t want to exist.” That must disappear.

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Tamas and tamasic ego are implied in each other. When one yields to tamas, one indulges the tamasic ego.

**Ego-centricity**

The ego-centric man feels and values things as they affect him. “Does this please me or displease, give me gladness or pain, flatter my pride, vanity, ambition or hurt it, satisfy my desires or thwart them?” etc. The unegoistic man does not look at things like that. He looks to see what things are in themselves and would be even if he were not there, what is their meaning, how they fit into the scheme of things — or else he feels calm and equal, refers everything to the Divine, or if he is a man of action how they will serve the work that has to be done or the life of the world or the cause he serves etc. etc. There can be many points of view which are not ego-centric.

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It is true about living and doing all for oneself, but that is the
nature of man, he is centred in his ego, ego-centric, and does all for his ego; even his love and liking is mostly based on ego. All that has to be changed and all has to be centred in the Divine, done for the Divine Mother. It is the work of the sadhana to get that done. The silence, the growth of the psychic and all else is meant to bring about that — but it cannot be done all at once. When the consciousness is ready, then the psychic love, the impulse for self-giving begins to open out in the heart and the change is made — more and more till there is the complete self-giving.

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But in what way do they \textit{internal and external things} belong to the Divine, so long as the ego appropriates and uses them for its own purposes? Self-giving in fact means a change from ego-centricity to God-centricity; also such a giving as would lead to a change of the whole base of the consciousness.

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Your nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one’s own sadhana, one’s own endeavour, one’s own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things — development, perfection or siddhi — can really come in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric, until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrumentation in this body — and that can only be when these things become secondary, and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body, become the sole aim — the rest is then only the fulfilment of the Divine Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front, you had
it in your central consciousness. But there were the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and physical and especially with the most external parts of them; for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual change) — but with the full consent of the being. As it was done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done.

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Obviously one must not get egoistic about it [one's sadhana], but withdrawal from the outer or lower consciousness into the inner is not in itself an egoistic movement. If it were so, all sadhana would be egoism and to be always social and on the surface would be the only thing!

The Egoism of the Instrument and the Magnified Ego

The form of ego has to be dissolved,\(^3\) it has not to be replaced by a bigger ego or another kind of ego. It has to be replaced by the true being which feels itself, even though individual, yet one with all and one with the Divine.

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\(^3\) The correspondent asked whether the ego has to be transformed or dissolved. — Ed.
The egoism of the instrument can be as dangerous or more dangerous to spiritual progress than the egoism of the doer. The ego-sense is contrary to spiritual realisation, so how can any kind of ego be a thing to be encouraged? As for the magnified ego, it is one of the most perilous obstacles to release and perfection. There should be no big I, not even a small one.

What is meant by the magnified ego is that when the limits of the ordinary mind and vital are broken, one feels a far vaster and more powerful consciousness and unlimited possibilities, but if one ties all that to the tail of one’s own ego, then one becomes a thousand times more egoistic than the ordinary man. The greatness of the Divine becomes an excuse and a support for one’s own greatness and the big I swells itself to fill not only the earth but the heavens. That magnification of the ego is a thing to be guarded against with a watchful care.

* What you say about the ahankara of the instrument is true — it is one of the most sticky of the ego’s self-deceptions and there are few who can detect it soon or get easily clear of it. I think I can congratulate you on your becoming aware of it at so early a stage. There are some who do not discover it even after ten or twenty years of sadhana.

* Yes — these [pride, a sense of superiority, the desire to show one’s worth] are small signs or little forms of the ego of the instrument — not very serious, but often rather sticky. There is a bigger kind of egoism which is not so common which can rise into a kind of megalomania: “I, I am the instrument — how great an instrument I am — through me all will be done”, — there are three or four who have had that in a distressingly acute form, secretly or openly; often it ends by their going away to do great things outside — great things which somehow do not get done.

* The Divine is there in all men, so the Divine and the ego do
live together. But the Divine is veiled by the ego and manifests in proportion as the ego first submits itself, then recedes and disappears. There can be no complete possession by the Divine without disappearance of the ego. Any man can be an instrument of the Divine — the thing is to be a perfectly conscious instrument.

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Well, it can hardly be that you alone are a chosen instrument. All who arrive at the realisation in this Yoga will be instruments — it is part of the realisation that the sadhak should turn himself into an instrument of the Divine Mother.

Getting Rid of the Ego and of Egoism

What you say [about the need to purify oneself of ego] is perfectly correct — I am glad you are becoming so lucid and clear-sighted, the result surely of a psychic change. Ego is a very curious thing and in nothing more than in its way of hiding itself and pretending it is not the ego. It can always hide even behind an aspiration to serve the Mother. The only way of getting rid of it is to chase it out of all its veils and corners.

You are right also in thinking that this is really the most important part of your Yoga. The Rajayogis are right in putting purification in front of everything and a preliminary to successful meditation — as I was also right in putting it in front along with concentration in the Synthesis. You have only to look around you to see that experiences and even realisations cannot bring one to the goal if this is not done — at any moment they can fall owing to the vital still being impure and full of ego.

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Yes, that [the elimination of egoism] is the first requisite of a true foundation in the sadhana. It is because people do not realise this and are satisfied with experiences, keeping the vital ego, not insisting on an egoless higher consciousness, that there is so much difficulty.

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Obviously all that must go — it is the old vital egoism of the human being always preoccupied with itself, so that the being cannot give itself simply and unquestioningly to the adoration of the Divine.

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Yes — it is from looking at things from the ego point of view that there comes all the confusion and trouble and ignorance. One has to think of the Divine, be still and let the divine consciousness come in and replace the egoistic human — then all that disappears.

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All attachment and ego must disappear. No temptation of power, for power is given only to do the Divine’s work and the power itself is the Divine’s. No attachment to work, for the work is not the ego’s, but the Divine’s. No attachment or insistence on the fruits, for that too belongs to the Divine and will come when mind and circumstances are ready. It is the same with sadhana. Only one thing is to be the aim, to be in union and contact with the Divine through love and surrender, — the rest will come out of that, whatever is needed for the manifestation.

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If the ego is gone and the full surrender is there, then there should be no obstacles [to following the sunlit path of sadhana]. If however the rajas of the vital is only quiescent, then its quiescence may bring up the tamas in its place, and that would be the obstacle.

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Only calm in the vital is hardly sufficient [to have psychic experiences]. There must be something throwing out the ego from the vital.

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Of course, they [the ego and the vital] always resist a pressure
to get rid of them — and if one fixes a given time, they are all the more resistant in the hope of creating disappointment and discouragement by the failure to do it in the given time.

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You cannot expect to drive the ego out of the movements in a short time. What is necessary is to see it quietly without being discouraged by its presence, and by a steady persistent action work it out of the system.

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It is not possible to get rid of the ego-movements all at once. They have to be worked out of the nature by a constant consciousness and rejection. Even when the central ego has gone, the habitual movements stick for a long time.

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These things [little expressions of egoism] either fade slowly out by constant rejection or else they drop off when the higher consciousness gets steadily down into the lower vital and, as it were, swallows it up. A sudden extinction is perhaps possible — at least there are reported cases of it — but usually they linger and go slowly, losing gradually force as if worn out.

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For the ego, however insistent it may be, one has to keep one’s eye on it and say no to all its suggestions so that each position it takes up proves to be a fruitless move. Treated in that way, it becomes ready for the moment when the psychic has only to give a slight push for it to fall away in each field of its activity from its loosened roots. Persevere steadily in the present movement and it cannot fail to be effective.

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Ego is not so easy to get rid of. It remains not only in spite of work, but in spite of knowledge or bhakti. The disappearance of ego means complete mukti. But even the Yogi who feels
his separate being swallowed up in cosmic consciousness or some kind of transcendental consciousness, yet when it comes to outward action and reaction finds the superficial ego still there. That is why the ascetic has a horror of action and says that without ego it can’t be done. It can, but fully only when even these outermost things are finally taken up by the higher Consciousness entirely.

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If you think there is no ego or desire in you, only pure devotion, that shows a great unconsciousness. To be free from ego and desire is a condition which needs a high siddhi in Yoga—even many Yogis of a great spiritual attainment are not free from it. For a sadhak at your stage of development to think he is free from ego and desire is to blind himself and prevent the clear perception of one’s own nature movements which is necessary for progress towards spiritual perfection.

The Mother does not need to have your writings before her in order to see what is in you.

If your writings show ego and desire, and they certainly do, it is because they are there without your perceiving it and express themselves without your intending it. What the surface mind thinks and intends is one thing and what is behind the thoughts and actions is another thing. A man’s surface mind shapes its own idea of oneself and one’s nature in an entire self-ignorance. The first thing one has to do to get rid of this ignorance is to draw back from the surface mind and get into contact with the psychic which does not allow such delusions and shows one clearly the truth about one’s movements.

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Even if there is no consciousness of ego in the higher parts where oneness of all things has been realised, it does not follow that in the lower parts ego has been abolished. It can on the contrary become very strong and the actions can be very egoistic even while the mind is thinking “I have no ego.”
Of course, such suggestions [that one can be an instrument to help someone else on the path of Yoga] are meant to wake the ego. I suppose they persist because they still have a hope of waking the ego. Even when one is quite free, all kinds of suggestions can come. One either takes no notice of them or else gives a glance to see whether there is any fragment of ego still lurking somewhere.

Getting Rid of the Ego Altogether

But what is this ego of which you speak? Everybody has the ego and it is impossible to get rid of it altogether except by two things — the opening of the psychic within and the descent of a wider ego-free consciousness from above. The psychic being opening does not get rid of the ego at once but purifies it and offers it and all the movements to the Divine, so that one becomes unegoistic through self-giving and surrender. At the same time the nature opens above and the wider ego-free consciousness comes down and ego disappears and by the power of the psychic you know your own true being which is a portion of the Mother. This is what has to happen, but it cannot happen in so short a time. Do not be always thinking of the vital movements and the ego — you have seen them and know that they are, it is enough. Concentrate rather in the heart on the opening there; concentrate persistently and aspire persistently and do not mind if it takes time. Call in any way, even if you cannot call yet deeply — then the deeper call will come.

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It is possible [to diminish the ego by the action of the Force] if your consciousness associates itself with the action; then at least one can get rid of its major action and leave only minor traces. To get rid of the ego altogether however comes usually only by the descent of Consciousness from above and its occupation of the whole being aided of course by the rule of the psychic in the nature.

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I think you still give an exaggerated importance and attention to the ego and other elements that are interwoven in the nature of humanity and cannot be entirely got rid of except by the coming of a new consciousness which replaces them by higher movements. If one rejects centrally and with all sincerity the ego and rajas, their roots get loosened and sattwa can prevail in the nature, but the expulsion of all ego and rajas cannot be done by the will and its effort. After a certain stage of preparation therefore one must stress more on the positive side of the sadhana than on the negative side of rejection,—though this of course must remain to help the other. Still what is important is to develop the psychic within and bring down the higher consciousness from above. The psychic as it grows and manifests detects immediately all wrong movements or elements and at the same time supplies almost automatically the true element or movement which will replace them—this psychic process is much easier and more effective than that of a severe tapasya of purification. The higher consciousness in descending brings peace and purity into all the inner parts; the inner being separates itself from the imperfect outer consciousness and at the same time the peace that comes carries in it a power which can throw out what contradicts the peace and purity. Ego can then slowly or swiftly but surely disappear—rajas and tamas change into their divine substitutes.

*It is rather a wider than a higher consciousness that is necessary for the liberation from the ego. Going high is necessary of course, but by itself it is not sufficient.

* Without persistent rejection it [liberation from movements of the ego] cannot be done. Going up into the self liberates the higher parts but the ego remains in the lower parts. The most effective force for this liberation is the psychic control along with steady rejection.

*
The sense of ego can disappear into that of the Self or the Purusha but that of itself does not bring about the disappearance of the old ego reactions in the Prakriti. The Purusha has to get rid of these by a process of constant rejection and remoulding. The remoulding consists in throwing everything into a consecration to the Mother and doing all for her without regard to oneself, one’s desires, opinions, vital reactions as if they were the things to be fulfilled. This is most easily done if the psychic being becomes quite awake.

* Without the liberation of the psychic and the realisation of the true Self the ego cannot go, both are necessary. If there is no consciousness of the Self how can the ego disappear? The psychic can be liberated by love and devotion, but I was speaking of a case in which it is not so liberated, and the realisation of the Self seems more easy — a case like yours.

**Selfishness**

To go away and suffer the consequences is not a solution. As for the rest, the selfishness of the ego is not a reason for not calling down the higher (divine) consciousness of which the peace and the force are as it were the front or the basis. How can you get rid of the selfish ego unless you call down that higher consciousness to which the ego is not a necessity?

In the evolution of the lower consciousness here ego and selfishness were a necessity. So long as the higher consciousness above ordinary mind does not descend, ego remains a necessity even in aspiring towards the Divine or towards Mukti, even if it becomes a sattwic ego. It is only in the higher consciousness that ego can dissolve, either by ascending there or by its descent into the consciousness below.

* Why is it selfishness [to be concentrated on the Divine]? Selfishness is to live for oneself and not for something greater than the
self. To be concentrated on the Divine at all times is to get out of the personal self and its aims into something greater and serve the aims of that greater Existence. It is no more selfishness than to live for others always would be selfishness.

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As to egoism and selfishness, one can be generous and yet egoistic — one can be generous with vanity, pride etc. in the generosity; one can even be egoistic in self-sacrifice.

**Ambition**

Ambition is always a force of the vital.

* 

A kind of siddhi or siddhis can come [*even if there is ambition in the nature*] — siddhis of power etc. There are Yogins who have great powers and also a big ego. Of course there can be no liberation without overcoming ambition and ego.

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Suggestions of ambition etc. are always born in the vital mind or, as it might be called, the mind of the vital and from there they rush up to the thinking mind and claim its assent and the sanction of the mental will. When the thinking mind gets clouded by the uprush, it gets carried away and gives its assent. The thinking mind (reason) has always to remain unmoved above and judge what is right without being caught and carried away by the vital.

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Ambition and vanity are things so natural to the human consciousness — they have even their use in ordinary life — that it is quite natural that at first they should enter into the sadhana also and linger even when they are rejected. But they have to be pushed out, before one is far on the path — otherwise they are very dangerous attendants and can pervert both aspiration and siddhi.
Vanity

It [vanity] is one of the things most difficult to get rid of. Even when the mind is unmoved, something in the vital or physical or perhaps even some little bit on the surface at once starts vibrating.

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It is possible that X has experiences for he has probably some mental force and through that can build up mental realisations of what he reads, but he lives in the vital and whatever he experiences or receives the vital takes it and makes it a hundred times bigger in its construction than it really is. His claims are preposterous. It is evident that, like most people, he has no idea what the supramental is or he would never talk like that. People who live in the vital and have much vanity (there have been several examples here too) easily get the idea that they have attained everything, are without ego, all they receive is from the Divine (even when a magnified ego is driving them) etc. etc., for the vital ego is eager to arrive, to be big, to be siddha, and it persuades itself very easily that it is all these things. Let him however go on his own way; it is no use disturbing his self-content, as probably it is the only kind of self-expression he can do.

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When vanity is there on a big scale, it usually works like that. The man feels the energy in all he does and mistakes the energy for high accomplishment. It is a common error. The high accomplishment is in only one or two fields.

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It is vanity, but it is not humbug, unless he does not believe in it. If he does not believe in it, it is humbug, but it is not vanity.

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4 A doctor went about claiming that he could cure people because the Mother’s Force worked through him. The correspondent asked, “Is not all this humbug?” — Ed.
Pride and Self-Esteem

Pride is only one form of ego — there are ten thousand others. Every action of man is full of ego — the good ones as well as the bad, his humility as much as his pride, his virtues as much as his vices.

To get the ego out of the human nature is not so simple as that. If one is free from ego, does nothing with reference to himself or for his own sake but only for the Divine and all his thoughts and feelings are for the Divine, then he is Jivanmukta and a Siddha Yogi.

* *

For many sadhaks there is a first stage governed by the mind or higher vital in which they go on very well, because in the mind and higher vital there are elements that are strong enough to control the rest while the first experiences or first progress is made. But a time comes when the sadhak has to deal with the lower parts of the being, then all the vital difficulties arise. If the early progress or experiences have engendered pride or ego or if there is a serious flaw somewhere, then they are unable to deal with these so long as the ego is not removed or broken or the flaw mended. X developed a pride of self-righteousness that stood in his way altogether; he has also the flaw of a narrow obstinate mind that sticks to its own ideas as if they alone were right — the instances you give of his conduct are illustrations of this defect. That is why here he quarrels with everyone thinking that he is right and they are very bad and mischievous, cannot see his own faults and mistakes and when he is not heard by the Mother or myself feels hurt and offended because we do not support his saintliness and righteousness against the wicked who oppress him. He is a good and clever worker but he cannot progress in sadhana so long as he keeps this stiffness and ego.

* *

But that [inability to recognise one’s defects] is a very common human weakness, although it ought not to exist in a sadhak
whose progress depends largely on his recognising what has to be changed in him. Not that the recognition by itself is sufficient, but it is a necessary element. It is of course a kind of pride or vanity which considers this necessary for strength and standing. Not only will they not recognise it before others but they hide their defects from themselves or even if obliged to look at it with one eye look away from it with the other. Or they weave a veil of words and excuses and justifications trying to make it something other than it really is. X’s saying [“I would die if I had to admit my faults.”] is very characteristic of him — that has been his main stumbling block in the path of Yoga.

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It is little use our trying to convey to you our will (in words), because what your vital seeks after is a sanction for your own will and its way of action, — and it is little use our trying to give you light, because your mind follows always its own light. Any attempt to correct from us you have always rejected as our error, our misunderstanding of you, an attempt to give you kicks, as you express it. In such a case we can only be silent, try to help your sadhana silently as much as you will allow and for the rest leave you to learn by experience as far as you may become willing to do so. You have capacities and Yogic stuff, but along with them goes a very strong self-esteem and a self-righteous spirit which stand in the way of perfection and constitute a very serious obstacle. So long as a sadhak has that, the attempt of the Truth to manifest in him will always be baffled by his changing it into mental and vital constructions which distort it, turn it into ineffective half-truth or even make truth itself a source of error.

I would not have written even so much if you had not pressed so persistently for an answer. I hope you will not take it as misunderstanding or merely another “kick”. If you do not want criticism or correction from us, you should at least develop better the power of self-criticism and self-correction in yourself without which no perfection is possible.

*
The egoism in yourself of which you speak belongs to the relation of one human being with another and is common to almost all men and women; it is extremely difficult to get rid of, but if one sees it clearly and determines not to have it, then it can first be brought under control and then dismissed from the nature. But the egoism which made people go away from here through pride in their sadhana and attachment to the supposed greatness of their experiences is another kind and far more dangerous spiritually. You do not have it and I do not think you are in danger of ever having it.

**Self-Respect, Amour-Propre, Superiority**

Self-respect and a sense of superiority are two very different things. Self-respect is not necessarily a sign of egoism any more than its absence is a sign of liberation from egoism. Self-respect means observing a certain standard of conduct which is proper to the level of manhood to which I belong — e.g. I cannot make a false statement out of self-respect though it would be advantageous to do it and most people under the circumstances would make it. Amour-propre is different and belongs to the sattwic type of ego. When one is not free from ego, then amour-propre (as well as self-respect — for that can be with ego or without ego) is a necessary support for the maintenance of the personality at its proper level.

* Amour-propre does not mean conceit. It means at its best the feeling not to make mistakes and to do as well as possible — at its worst it means to try to appear well and without mistakes or faults to others and not to like faults being pointed out.

* Ideas of superiority and inferiority are not of much use or validity. Each one is himself with his own possibilities to which there need be no limit except that of will and development and time. Each nature has its own lines and own things that are more
developed or less developed, but the standard should be set by what he in himself aims to be. Comparison with others brings in a wrong standard of values.

Jealousy and Abhiman

This is a very common disease with the sadhaks — making comparisons with feelings of jealousy and envy — in some it leads to revolt and self-assertion, in others to self-depreciation and depression. Naturally, these feelings are quite out of place and the judgments created are out of focus. Each sadhak has his own movement, his own relation with the Divine, his own place in the work or the general sadhana and to compare with others immediately brings in a wrong standard. It is on the truth of his own inner movement that he has to take his base — swadharma.

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Jealousy should not be there if there is no ground for it, for then it is absurd and meaningless — but also when there is reason for it according to common standards, it should not be there, for it is a sentiment lacking in nobility and quite unyogic.

As for getting rid of lobha, certainly the Mother’s full help will be with you.

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It is jealousy of course.\(^5\) Fame and success always create a great amount of jealousy and ill-will anywhere but most in countries where there has been a suppressed public life and solidarity does not exist.

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This jealousy (which is a very common affliction of the vital) will go like the rest. If you have the aspiration to get rid of it, it

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\(^5\) An Indian philosopher was invited to Europe to deliver several lectures and was received well everywhere. When he returned to India, he found that the number of his critics had greatly increased. He wrote to ask Sri Aurobindo the reason. — Ed.
can only come by force of habit, and with the psychic growing in you and the Mother’s force acting, the power of the habit is sure to diminish and fade away. Do not be discouraged by its occasional return, but reject it so that it may be unable to stay long and will be obliged to retire. Very soon then it will cease to come at all.

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All that [vanity, jealousy, the sense of not being loved] of course is not love, but self-love. Jealousy is only an ugly form of self-love. That is what people do not understand — they even think that demands and jealousy and wounded vanity are signs of love or at least natural attendants of it.

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The sooner you get rid of that [abhiman] the better. Anyone who indulges abhiman puts himself under the influence of the hostile forces. Abhiman has nothing to do with true love; it is like jealousy a part of the vital egoism.

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The feeling of jealousy and abhiman was of course a survival from the past movements of the nature. It is so that these things go out if they are rejected; they lose their force, can stay less and less, can affect less and less the consciousness, — finally, they are able to touch no longer and so come no longer.

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It is of course the old reaction — jealousy is certainly there, or you would not feel this violent sorrow. That it subsists still in the recesses and rises with such vehemence shows how deeply rooted this movement was in your physical consciousness. You have not been able to root it out, because when it comes you associate yourself entirely with it and abandon yourself to its outcries and violence. You must have the strength to stand back from it in that part of your nature which is free — only then will you be able to push it away from you; and it is only if it is
pushed away from you each time it rises that it will consent to disappear and return no more. As for our support and help it is there, but you must remain conscious of it — and you must not allow any wrong ideas like those of this morning to diminish the sense of unity and contact with the Mother.

* 

I do not see why you make such a big difference between the quarrels and jealousy over other women and quarrels and jealousy over other attractions not of a sexual character. They both spring from the same primary impulse, the possessive instinct which is at the base of ordinary vital love. In the latter case, as often sexual jealousy is not possible, the mind supports itself on other motives which seem to it quite reasonable and justifiable — it may not be conscious that it is being pushed by the vital, but the quarrels and the vivacity of the disagreement are there all the same. Whether you had or had not both forms of it, is not very material and does not make things better or worse. It is the getting rid of the instinct itself that matters, whether from the psychological point of view or from that of a spiritual change.

The one thing that is of any importance is the fact that the old personality which you were throwing out has reasserted itself for the moment, as you yourself see. It has confused your mind, otherwise you would not ask the question whether it is there still and how that agrees with my description of your aspiration and glimpse of turning entirely to the Mother as true and real. Of course, they were true and real and sincere and they are still there even if for a moment clouded over. You know well enough by this time that the whole being is not one block so that if one part changes, all changes miraculously at the same time. Something of the old things may be there submerged and rise up again if the pressure and fixed resolution to get rid of them slackens. I do not know to what you refer when you speak of the statement that “Light and Darkness, truth and falsehood cannot dwell together”, but certainly it can only mean that in the spiritual endeavour one cannot allow them to dwell together, — the Light, the Truth must be kept, the Darkness, the falsehood
or error pushed out altogether. It certainly did not mean that in the human being there can be either only all light or only all darkness and whoever has any weakness in him has no light and no sincere aspiration and no truth in his nature. If that were so, Yoga would be impossible. All the sadhaks in this Asram would be convicted of insincerity and of having no true sadhana — for who is there in whom there is no obscurity and no movement of ignorance?

If you have fallen down from the consciousness you had, it is because instead of dismissing the dispute with X as a moment’s movement, you begin to brood on it and prolong the wrong turn it gave. It is no use persisting in the feelings that it created in you. You have only to do what I have been trying to tell you. Draw back from them and, having seen what was lingering in the nature, dismiss them quietly and turn back again to the true consciousness, opening yourself to receive once more the Truth that is creating you anew and let it come down into all your nature.

**Wounded Feeling**

Your letter of the morning came entirely from the disturbed and wounded vital; that was why I was in no hurry to answer. I do not know why you are so ready to believe that myself or the Mother act from ordinary movements of anger, vexation or displeasure; there was nothing of the kind in what I wrote. You had been repeatedly falling from your attained level of a higher consciousness and, in spite of our suggestions to you to see what was pulling you down, your only reply was that you could see nothing. We knew perfectly well that it was part of the vital which did not want to change and, not wanting to change, was hiding itself from the mind and the mind itself did not seem very willing to see, — so we thought it necessary when you gave us a chance by what you wrote — first about X and secondly about the thoughts of the past — to indicate plainly and strongly the nature of the obstacle — on one side your old sentiment persisting in the *vīparīta* form of anger, resentment and wounded feeling, on the other the vital’s habit of self-esteem,
censorious judgment of others, a sense of superiority in sadhana or in other respects, a wish to appear well before others and before yourself also. This especially has a blinding influence and prevents the clear examination of oneself and the perception of the obstacles that are interfering with the spiritual progress. Even if the mind aspires to know and change, a habit of that kind acting concealed in the vital is quite enough to stand in the way and prevent both the knowledge and the change. I was therefore careful to speak plainly of vanity and self-righteousness — so that this part of the vital might not try not to see. The Mother speaks or writes much more pointedly and sharply to those whom she wishes to push rapidly on the way because they are capable of it and they do not resent or suffer but are glad of the pressure and the plainness because they know by experience that it helps them to see their obstacles and change. If you wish to progress rapidly, you must get rid of this vital reaction of abhināna, suffering, wounded feeling, seeking for arguments of self-justification, outcry against the touch that is intended to liberate, — for so long as you have these, it is difficult for us to deal openly and firmly with the obstacles created by the vital nature.

In regard to the difference between you and X, the Mother’s warning to you against the undesirability of too much talk, loose chat and gossip, social self-dispersion was entirely meant and stands; when you indulge in these things, you throw yourself out into a very small and ignorant consciousness in which your vital defects get free play and this is likely to bring you out of what you have developed in your inner consciousness. That was why we said that if you felt a reaction against these things when you went to X’s, it was a sign of (psychic) sensitiveness coming into you — into your vital and nervous being — and we meant that it was all for the good. But in dealing with others, in withdrawing from these things you should not allow any sense of superiority to creep in or force on them by your manner or spirit a sense of disapproval or condemnation or pressure on them to change. It is for your personal inward need that you draw back from these things, that is all. As for them what they
do in these matters, right or wrong, is their affair — and ours; we will deal with them according to what we see as necessary and possible for them at the moment and for that purpose we can not only deal quite differently with different people, allowing for one what we forbid for another, but we may deal differently with the same person at different times, allowing or even encouraging today what we shall forbid tomorrow. X’s case is quite different from yours, for there is no resemblance in your natures. I told you that or something like it long ago and I emphasised in my letter to X that what might be the rule for myself or Y was not to be applied or going to be applied to his case. To deal otherwise would be to create difficulties in his sadhana and not to make it easier for him or swifter. I have also told him quite clearly in my letter that the attempt at meeting and mixing with others — which in the ordinary human life is attempted by sociableness and other contacts — has to be realised in Yoga on another plane of consciousness and without the lower mixture — for a higher unity with all on a spiritual and psychic basis. But the way, the time, the order of movements by which this is done, need not be the same for everybody. If he attempted to force himself it would lead to gloom, despondency and an artificial movement which would not be the true way to success. A human soul and nature cannot be dealt with by a set of mental rules applicable to everybody in the same way; if it were so, there would be no need of a Guru, each could set his chart of Yogic rules before him like the rules of Sandow’s exercise and follow them till he became the perfect siddha!

I have said so much in order to let you understand why we do not deal in the same way with X as with you or another. The tendency to take what I lay down for one and apply it without discrimination to another is responsible for much misunderstanding. A general statement too, true in itself, cannot be applied to everyone alike or applied now and immediately without consideration of condition or circumstance or person or time. I may say generally that to bring down the supermind is my aim in the Yoga or that to do that one has first to rise out of mind into overmind, but if on the strength of that, anybody and
everybody began trying to pull down the supermind or force his way immediately out of mind into overmind, the result would be disaster.

Therefore concern yourself with your own progress and follow there the lead the Mother gives you. Leave X or others to do the same; the Mother is there to guide and help them according to their need and their nature. It does not in the least matter if the way she follows with him seems different or the opposite of that which she takes with you. That is the right one for him as this is the right one for you.

You have now begun to see the difficulties that are still there in your vital; keep to that clear perception, let it grow clearer and more precise. Concentrate on what you have to do and do not let yourself be distracted this way and that by irrelevant preoccupations or any other influence.

**Ingratitude**

Your surprise at your cousin X’s behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him: “Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn (upakāra).” The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander, fault-finding or abuse. In all these dealings of your uncles and cousins with you there is nothing unusual, nothing, as you think, peculiar to you. Most have this kind of experience, few escape it altogether. Of course, people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful and do not behave in this way.