13 June 1956

“There already in the process of spiritualisation it [the spiritualised mind] will have begun to pass out of the brilliant poverty of the human intellect; it will mount successively into the pure broad reaches of a higher mind and next into the gleaming belts of a still greater free intelligence illumined with a Light from above. At this point it will begin to feel more freely, admit with a less mixed response the radiant beginnings of an Intuition, not illumined, but luminous in itself, true in itself, no longer entirely mental and therefore subjected to the abundant intrusion of error. Here too is not an end, for it must rise beyond into the very domain of that untruncated Intuition, the first direct light from the self-awareness of essential Being and, beyond it, attain that from which this light comes. For there is an Overmind behind Mind, a Power more original and dynamic which supports Mind, sees it as a diminished radiation from itself, uses it as a transmitting belt of passage downward or an instrument for the creations of the Ignorance. The last step of the ascension would be the surpassing of Overmind itself or its return into its own still greater origin, its conversion into the supramental light of the Divine Gnosis.”


There are two stages, you see. One may rise beyond the mind into a certain domain, then beyond that domain pass into yet another which is the origin of all things. This implies two successive stages.

Sweet Mother, now that the Supermind has descended,
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why can’t one pass from the rational mind directly to the Supermind?

Who said that one can’t?

Sri Aurobindo is describing here what was to be done to enter into contact with the Supermind and prepare the ground for its manifestation; but now that it has entered the earth-atmosphere, I don’t see why a single, precise procedure should be inflicted upon it in its manifestation. If it chooses to directly illuminate an instrument which it finds suitable or ready or adaptable, I don’t see why it should not do so.

And I repeat this: who has said that it cannot be otherwise? Nobody. What Sri Aurobindo has described here is quite another thing and, indeed, this is what did happen. It was the preparation necessary for the manifestation to take place. But now I don’t see why or on what basis a particular process should be imposed upon the supramental action and why it should not have the freedom to choose its own means.

I think that all possibilities are predictable and that all sincere aspiration and complete consecration will have a response, and that the processes, means, transitions, transformations will be innumerable in nature—not at all that things will happen only in a particular way and not otherwise.

In fact, anything, everything that is ready to receive even a particle or a particular aspect of the supramental consciousness and light must automatically receive it. And the effects of this consciousness and light will be innumerable, for they will certainly be adapted to the possibilities, the capacity of each one according to the sincerity of his aspiration.

The more total the consecration and the intenser the aspiration, the more integral and intense can be the result. But the effect of the supramental action will be countless in its manifestations—multiple, innumerable, infinitely varied, not necessarily following a precise line which is the same for all.
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That is impossible. For it is contrary to the very nature of the supramental consciousness.

The very quality of the atmosphere has changed.

The consequences are bound to be infinitely varied, but perceptible. That is to say, it will be possible to distinguish the consequences of ordinary movements from the consequences of the supramental action, for these will have a particular nature, a special character.

But that does not mean that anybody at all, at any moment and in any way, is suddenly going to become a supramental genius. That is not to be expected.

I was going to say, if one only noticed that one was a little less stupid than before, that would already be something!

Will this influence manifest in the field of education also?

Why do you want to deny it one field or another?

*Because the system of education we follow still remains, as Sri Aurobindo says, “a brilliant poverty of the human intellect.”*

You are speaking of the education which you give to your students, is that it? But it is high time it changed!

People have a lamentable habit of copying what has been done before and what is done by others. Long ago I told you this. That argument: “This must be done, because this is what is done everywhere!” I reply, “That is why perhaps it should not be done! For if all others do it, what is the use of doing it here also?”

*But without your intervention, how can we do anything?*

But why do you ask me that? You should first change your system of education in accordance with the principles of the
Supermind. At least you should try. You must not ask, you must do it. If you always move in the same rut, you can continue indefinitely in that rut. You must try to get out of it.

Indeed, I am constantly discussing this subject. I think it was just today or perhaps yesterday, I was pleading for the right of everyone to remain in ignorance if it pleases him—I am not speaking of ignorance from the spiritual point of view, the world of Ignorance in which we live, I am not speaking of that. I am speaking of ignorance according to the classical ideas of education. Well, I say that if there are people who don’t want to learn and don’t like to learn, they have the right not to learn.

The only thing it is our duty to tell them is this, “Now, you are of an age when your brain is in course of preparation. It is being formed. Each new thing you study makes one more little convolution in your brain. The more you study, the more you think, the more you reflect, the more you work, the more complex and complete does your brain become in its tiny convolutions. And as you are young, it is best done at this time. That is why it is common human practice to choose youth as the period of learning, for it is infinitely easier.” And it is obvious that until the child becomes at least a little conscious of itself, it must be subjected to a certain rule, for it has not yet the capacity of choosing for itself.

That age is very variable; it depends on people, depends on each individual. But still, it is understood that in the seven-year period between the age of seven and fourteen, one begins to reach the age of reason. If one is helped, one can become a reasoning being between seven and fourteen.

Before seven there are geniuses — there are always geniuses, everywhere — but as a general rule the child is not conscious of itself and doesn’t know why or how to do things. That is the time to cultivate its attention, teach it to concentrate on what it does, give it a small basis sufficient for it not to be entirely like a little animal, but to belong to the human race through an elementary intellectual development.
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After that, there is a period of seven years during which it must be taught to choose — to choose what it wants to be. If it chooses to have a rich, complex, well-developed brain, powerful in its functioning, well, it must be taught to work; for it is by work, by reflection, study, analysis and so on that the brain is formed. At fourteen you are ready — or ought to be ready — to know what you want to be.

And so I say: if at about that age some children declare categorically, “Intellectual growth does not interest me at all, I don’t want to learn, I want to remain ignorant in the ordinary way of ignorance”, I don’t see by what right one could impose studies on them nor why it should be necessary to standardise them.

There are those who are at the bottom and others who are at another level. There are people who may have very remarkable capacities and yet have no taste for intellectual growth. One may warn them that if they don’t work, don’t study, when they are grown up, they will perhaps feel embarrassed in front of others. But if that does not matter to them and they want to live a non-intellectual life, I believe one has no right to compel them. That is my constant quarrel with the teachers of the school! They come and tell me: “If they don’t work, when they are grown up they will be stupid and ignorant.” I say: “But if it pleases them to be stupid and ignorant, what right have you to interfere?”

One can’t make knowledge and intelligence compulsory. That’s all.

Now, if you believe that by abstaining from all effort and all study, you will become geniuses, and supramental geniuses at that, don’t have any illusions, it won’t happen to you. For even if you touch a higher light, through an inner aspiration or by a divine grace, you will have nothing in there, in your brain, to be able to express it. So it will remain quite nebulous and won’t in any way change your outer life. But if it pleases you to be like this, nobody has the right to compel you to be otherwise. You must wait till you are sufficiently conscious to be able to choose.
Of course, there are people who at fourteen are yet like children of five. But these—there’s little hope for them. Especially those who have lived here.

Here’s something then which already changes your outlook on education completely.

Essentially, the only thing you should do assiduously is to teach them to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves and to will what they want to be. That is infinitely more important than teaching them what happened on earth in former times, or even how the earth is built, or even... indeed, all sorts of things which are quite a necessary grounding if you want to live the ordinary life in the world, for if you don’t know them, anyone will immediately put you down intellectually: “Oh, he is an idiot, he knows nothing.”

But still, at any age, if you are studious and have the will to do it, you can also take up books and work; you don’t need to go to school for that. There are enough books in the world to teach you things. There are even many more books than necessary. You can exhaust all subjects simply by going there to Medhananda’s, to the Library. You will have enough to fill you up to here! (Gesture)

But what is very important is to know what you want. And for this a minimum of freedom is necessary. You must not be under a compulsion or an obligation. You must be able to do things whole-heartedly. If you are lazy, well, you will know what it means to be lazy.... You know, in life idlers are obliged to work ten times more than others, for what they do they do badly, so they are obliged to do it again. But these are things one must learn by experience. They can’t be instilled into you.

The mind, if not controlled, is something wavering and imprecise. If one doesn’t have the habit of concentrating it upon something, it goes on wandering all the time. It goes on without a stop anywhere and wanders into a world of vagueness. And then, when one wants to fix one’s attention, it hurts! There is a
little effort there, like this: “Oh! how tiring it is, it hurts!” So one does not do it. And one lives in a kind of cloud. And your head is like a cloud; it’s like that, most brains are like clouds: there is no precision, no exactitude, no clarity, it is hazy — vague and hazy. You have impressions rather than a knowledge of things. You live in an approximation, and you can keep within you all sorts of contradictory ideas made up mostly of impressions, sensations, feelings, emotions — all sorts of things like that which have very little to do with thought and... which are just vague ramblings.

But if you want to succeed in having a precise, concrete, clear, definite thought on a certain subject, you must make an effort, gather yourself together, hold yourself firm, concentrate. And the first time you do it, it literally hurts, it is tiring! But if you don’t make a habit of it, all your life you will be living in a state of irresolution. And when it comes to practical things, when you are faced with — for, in spite of everything, one is always faced with — a number of problems to solve, of a very practical kind, well, instead of being able to take up the elements of the problem, to put them all face to face, look at the question from every side, and rising above and seeing the solution, instead of that you will be tossed about in the swirls of something grey and uncertain, and it will be like so many spiders running around in your head — but you won’t succeed in catching the thing.

I am speaking of the simplest of problems, you know; I am not speaking of deciding the fate of the world or humanity, or even of a country — nothing of the kind. I am speaking of the problems of your daily life, of every day. They become something quite woolly.

Well, it is to avoid this that you are told, when your brain is in course of being formed, “Instead of letting it be shaped by such habits and qualities, try to give it a little exactitude, precision, capacity of concentration, of choosing, deciding, putting things in order, try to use your reason.”

Of course, it is well understood that reason is not the
supreme capacity of man and must be surpassed, but it is quite obvious that if you don’t have it, you will live an altogether incoherent life, you won’t even know how to behave rationally. The least thing will upset you completely and you won’t even know why, and still less how to remedy it. While someone who has established within himself a state of active, clear reasoning, can face attacks of all kinds, emotional attacks or any trials whatever; for life is entirely made up of these things — unpleasantness, vexations — which are small but proportionate to the one who feels them, and so naturally felt by him as very big because they are proportionate to him. Well, reason can stand back a little, look at all that, smile and say, “Oh! no, one must not make a fuss over such a small thing.”

If you do not have reason, you will be like a cork on a stormy sea. I don’t know if the cork suffers from its condition, but it does not seem to me a very happy one.

There, then.

Now, after having said all this — and it’s not just once I have told you this but several times I think, and I am ready to tell it to you again as many times as you like — after having said this, I believe in leaving you entirely free to choose whether you want to be the cork on the stormy sea or whether you want to have a clear, precise perception and a sufficient knowledge of things to be able to walk to — well, simply to where you want to go.

For there is a clarity that’s indispensable in order to be able even to follow the path one has chosen.

I am not at all keen on your becoming scholars, far from it! For then one falls into the other extreme: one fills one’s head with so many things that there is no longer any room for the higher light; but there is a minimum that is indispensable for not... well, for not being the cork.

Mother, some say that our general inadequacy in studies comes from the fact that too much stress is laid on games, physical education. Is this true?
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Who said that? People who don’t like physical education? Stiff old teachers who can’t do exercises any longer? These? — I am not asking for names!

Well, I don’t think so.

You remember the first article Sri Aurobindo wrote in the Bulletin? He answers these people quite categorically.

I don’t think it is that. I am quite sure it is not that, I believe, rather — and I put all the blame on myself — that you have been given a fantastic freedom, my children; oh! I don’t think there is any other place in the world where children are so free. And, indeed, it is very difficult to know how to make use of a freedom like that.

However, it was worthwhile trying the experiment. You don’t appreciate it because you don’t know how it is when it is not like that; it seems quite natural to you. But it is very difficult to know how to organise one’s own freedom oneself. Still, if you were to succeed in doing that, in giving yourself your own discipline — and for higher reasons, not in order to pass exams, to make a career, please your teachers, win many prizes, or all the ordinary reasons children have: in order not to be scolded, not to be punished, for all that; we leave out all those reasons — if you manage to impose a discipline upon yourself — each one his own, there is no need to follow someone else’s — a discipline simply because you want to progress and draw the best out of yourself, then... Oh! you will be far superior to those who follow the ordinary school disciplines. That is what I wanted to try. Mind you, I don’t say I have failed; I still have great hope that you will know how to profit by this unique opportunity. But all the same, there is something you must find out; it is the necessity of an inner discipline. Without discipline you won’t be able to get anywhere, without discipline you can’t even live the normal life of a normal man. But instead of having the conventional discipline of ordinary societies or ordinary institutions, I would have liked and I still want you to have the discipline you set yourselves, for the
love of perfection, your own perfection, the perfection of your being.

But without that... Note that if one didn’t discipline the body, one would not even be able to stand on two legs, one would continue like a child on all fours. You could do nothing. You are obliged to discipline yourself; you could not live in society, you could not live at all, except all alone in the forest; and even then, I don’t quite know. It is absolutely indispensable, I have told you this I don’t know how often. And because I have a very marked aversion for conventional disciplines, social and others, it does not mean that you must abstain from all discipline. I would like everyone to find his own, in the sincerity of his inner aspiration and the will to realise himself.

And so, the aim of all those who know, whether they are teachers, instructors or any others, the very purpose of those who know, is to inform you, to help you. When you are in a situation which seems difficult to you, you put your problem and, from their personal experience, they can tell you, “No, it is like this or it is like that, and you must do this, you must try that.” So, instead of forcing you to absorb theories, principles and so-called laws, and a more or less abstract knowledge, they would be there to give you information about things, from the most material to the most spiritual, each one within his own province and according to his capacity.

It is quite obvious that if you are thrown into the world without the least technical knowledge, you may do the most dangerous things. Take a child who knows nothing, the first thing he will do if he has any matches, for instance, is to burn himself. So, in that field, from the purely material point of view, it is good that there are people who know and who can inform you; for otherwise, if each one had to learn from his own experience, he would spend several lives learning the most indispensable things. That is the usefulness, the true usefulness of teachers and instructors. They have learnt more or less by practice or through a special study, and they can teach you those things it is
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indispensable to know. That makes you save time, a lot of time. But that is their only usefulness: to be able to answer questions. And, in fact, you should have a brain which is lively enough to ask questions. I don’t know, but you never have anything to ask me or it is so seldom. But that shows a terrible mental laziness!

At times I tell you, “Don’t question, try to find out by yourselves certain inner things”, that is understood; but when I am here and tell you, “Haven't you any questions to ask?” — Silence.... So, that proves that you have no mental curiosity. And I don’t ask you necessarily to put questions on what I have just read; I am always ready to answer any question whatsoever, asked by anyone. Well, I must say we are not very rich in questions! It is not often that I have an opportunity of telling you something.

I hasten to tell you that if you ask me technical questions on the sciences, physics or whatever, I could very well answer, “I know nothing about it, study your books or ask your teacher”; but if you ask me questions in my field, I shall always answer you.

So, one last attempt: Has anyone here a question to ask me?

(Silence)

Wonderful! (Mother laughs) Well, that’s all then.