Chapter Two

Interactions with Others and the Practice of Yoga

Cultivating Equality and Goodwill

The inequality of feelings towards others, liking and disliking, is ingrained in the nature of the human vital. This is because some harmonise with one’s own vital temperament, others do not; also there is the vital ego which gets displeased when it is hurt or when things do not go or people do not act according to its preferences or its idea of what they should do. In the self above there is a spiritual calm and equality, a goodwill to all or at a certain stage a quiet indifference to all except the Divine; in the psychic there is an equal kindness or love to all fundamentally, but there may be special relations with one—but the vital is always unequal and full of likes and dislikes. By the sadhana the vital must be quieted down; it must receive from the self above its quiet goodwill and equality to all things and from the psychic its general kindness or love. This will come, but it may take time to come. You must get rid of all inner as well as all outer movements of anger, impatience or dislike. If things go wrong or are done wrongly, you will simply say, “The Mother knows” and go on quietly doing or getting things done as well as you can without friction. At a later period we will show you how to use the Mother’s force so that things may go better, but first you must get your inner poise in a quiet vital, for only so can the Force be used with its full possible success.

There are two attitudes that a sadhak can have — either a quiet equality to all regardless of their friendliness or hostility or a general goodwill.

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I would ask you not to let resentment or anything else rise or dictate your conduct. Put these things aside and see that peace within and the seeking of the Divine are the one thing important — these clashes being only spurts of the ego. Turn yourself in the one direction, but for the rest keep a quiet goodwill to all.

* You must certainly give up all personal feelings of that kind [resentment, ill will]. Also you must not think if people differ from you and express their difference of opinion freely that that arises from personal hostility. In all things keep samatā and, if there are differences, try to see the other’s point of view as well as yours.

* As for the inconveniences, you should take them as a training in samata. To be able to bear inconveniences is one of the most elementary necessities if one wants to enter into the true spirit of Yoga.

* The proper thing is to see all with an unmoved calm, both the “good” and “bad”, but as a movement of Nature on the surface. But to do this truly without error or egoism or wrong reactions needs a consciousness and knowledge that is not personal and limited.

* If you want to have knowledge or see all as brothers or have peace, you must think less of yourself, your desires, feelings, people’s treatment of you, and think more of the Divine — living for the Divine, not for yourself.

**Indifference to What Others Think or Say**

It is not what others think of you that matters, but what you are yourself.

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When you are doing sadhana, you have not to care what others want or think or say, but only for what is right and what the Divine wants of you.

* It is no use listening to what people say or to suggestions. Both are things by which one must learn not to be affected. A certain samata in these matters is needed in order to get the true poise. The one thing that matters is realisation of the Divine.

* So long as you go on listening to what people say or listening to your own wrong imaginations or insisting on your desires, how do you hope to get peace? Nobody ever got peace in that way.

* To become entirely indifferent to the good and bad opinion of others, especially those who are or were near, and stand on the Truth alone is very difficult; some reaction of the old nature can easily come across; but if one remains calm and firm within, these surface reactions quickly disappear and their rejection helps the remnants of the old nature to disappear.

* If you look closely, you will see that all these things — the rudeness of one, the anger of another — are exceedingly slight things which should be received with indifference. Do not allow them to trouble you so much. The one thing of supreme importance is your sadhana and your spiritual growth. Let nothing touch or disturb that.

* It is not good to allow yourself to be upset so much by what others say or do — whether it be X or anybody else. There is a quietude and happiness which you can find by living in yourself in contact with the Divine which you will never get from outside.
I cannot quite say how far X is responsible — it is certainly always possible to get a lowering of consciousness from someone who is always gossiping or talking of her fears and difficulties. As for being kind, there is nothing harmful in kindness itself, but there is no reason why you should allow another to invade you with things you don’t want to feel or hear. There is a measure in all things — and besides one should keep oneself inwardly free and not admit that the vital movements of others should be a cause of difficulties — one has enough to do combating one’s own.

* Such reproaches (the stone etc.) are quite usual from those who do not understand against the sadhak when he remains firm in his path against the ordinary human vital demands upon him. But that should not perturb you. It is better to be a stone on the road to the Divine than soft and weak clay in the muddy paths of the ordinary vital human nature.

Overcoming Dependence

What you say about your dependence on others is true, because this dependence is accompanied by a demand on those others, the desire that they should always be occupied with you alone, think, feel and act according to your own ideas, feelings and desires. This is not possible and so this dependence brings disappointment and, if the feelings are excessive, despair.

But for this demand the remedy for this dependence, which is the character of many especially among women, would be to depend not on others but on the Divine. But here too the demand comes and spoils the dependence. A dependence without demand is what is needed, then the Divine Power comes in and at every moment guides, helps and sustains the being. When the sadhana was going on in you, you had periods when you had this right attitude and could get glimpses of the true happiness and dedication. But the physical mind became active and with it there began the period of obscuration and trouble. The physical
mind must become quiet and the heart open and the psychic become again active. It is for this you should aspire always and in time it will come.

It was not the Mother’s intention in putting you with X that you should depend on him alone, but that with his help you should come to depend on the Mother. Owing to your weakness and his, it turned out otherwise.

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If you wish to be free from people’s expectations and the sense of obligation, it is indeed best not to take from anybody; for the sense of claim will otherwise be there. Not that it will be entirely absent even if you take nothing, but you will not be bound any longer.

Overcoming Attachment

All attachment is a hindrance to sadhana. Goodwill you should have for all, psychic kindness for all, but no vital attachment.

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Yes, certainly, there should be no attachment \[to another person\]. The emotional feeling is safe only when it is governed by the psychic — for the psychic love is essentially a permanent soul-sympathy which is not attached but self-existent and self-content pouring itself out but asking for nothing.

The safest course in sadhana is to turn all to the Divine and to leave any other relation till all relations can be founded in the Divine; but that is not easy for everybody — only a few seem able to do it.

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Yes, that is the bother of these attachments — the reason why the Yogis were so down on them — the Vedantists especially with their insistence on the breaking of the heart-knots. They must have known from their own difficulties in the matter.
If you expect a return for your kindness, you are bound to be disappointed. It is only those who give love or kindness for its own sake without expecting a return who escape from this experience. A relation also can be established on a sure basis only when it is free from attachment or when it is predominantly psychic on both sides.

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When one deals with people there can be always a projection of consciousness to them or a reception of them into the consciousness, but that does not amount to an attachment — something more is needed, a grip of the vital on the person or a grip of the person on one's vital etc.

Helping Others

To concentrate most on one's own spiritual growth and experience is the first necessity of the sadhak — to be too eager to help others draws away from the inner work. There is also likely to be an overzeal and haste which clouds the discrimination and makes what help is given less effective than it should be. To grow in the spirit is the greatest help one can give to others, for then something flows out naturally to those around that helps them.

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It [trying to help someone through words] is a relative and partial help, of course, but it is sometimes useful. A radical help can only come from within through the action of the Divine Force and the assent of the being. It must be said of course that it is not everyone that thinks he is helping who is really doing it; also if the help is accompanied with the exercising of an “influence”, that influence may be of a mixed character and harm as well as help if the instrument is not pure.

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Yes, it is always so with human conduct — men want to help
each other with a motive behind or a feeling which proceeds from the ego.

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The idea of helping others is a subtle form of the ego. It is only the Divine Force that can help. One can be its instrument, but you should first learn to be a fit and egoless instrument.

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The idea of helping others is a delusion of the ego. It is only when the Mother commissions and gives the force that one can help and even then only within limits.

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The attempt to help people and clear things for others was an ego impulse. It magnified the ego and brought boasting, imagination, vital flattery. To clear yourself was the first necessity — afterwards to work not by one’s own initiative, but in obedience to the will of the Mother, without ego.

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As for helping [others], you can only be sure of that if you yourself have an assured basis, with the psychic being always prominent, full of faith and joy and strength, — then others can gather strength and faith and joy from such a one by speech or contact. But to arrive at that you must, as I have been telling you, open yourself to the Light and Force that come from myself and the Mother and to no other influence.

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This “helping others” is a perilous business — it brings the “guru” ego or else you very uncertainly rid others of their difficulties and very certainly get them yourself. “Why do you have all these disciples?” said a sage to some Maratha saint (I have forgotten the names); “to have disciples means to add all their difficulties to your own.” “Helping others” has the same disadvantage.
Of course it is the disadvantage of helping others that one comes into contact with their consciousness and their difficulties and also gets more externalised.

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In “helping” one often gets part of the other’s inconvenience and many Yogis refuse to take disciples because they will have to assume others’ burdens as well as their own. There are also other dangers — growth of ego etc.

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The bearing of others’ difficulties would, I fear, be a heavy burden for anybody and I doubt the efficacy of the method. What one can do much more usefully is, if one has strength to give out of one’s strength to the other, if one has peace to shed the peace on the other etc. This one can do without losing one’s strength or peace — if it is done in the right way.

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There are two possible attitudes in the matter [of helping others] and each has something to be said for it. There is much to be said for X’s attitude [of reserve] — first, because until one’s own siddhi is complete, the help one gives is always a little doubtful and imperfect and, secondly, there is the danger so often emphasised by experienced Yogis of taking on oneself the difficulties of those one helps. But all the same to wait for perfection is not always possible.

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These things [mixing with outsiders etc.] (most of them, to take a walk or write a letter home are different) can be described as not safe. If one has the strong spiritual condition secure in its basis one can do them without invasion from outside or a stumble; if one has the divine protection and can remain in it wherever he goes because the psychic being is in front and the vital obedient, then also one will not suffer. But otherwise in so acting one is opened to the influences that hang around
these outside people, one enters by sympathy with them into the
movement of other forces than those of the spiritual life — and
then it is quite possible that there may be untoward results as
with X and Y and others too, in the physical, or in the vital,
wherever there is most weakness.

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To give oneself to an outsider is to go out from the atmosphere
of sadhana and give oneself to the outer world forces.

One can have a psychic feeling of love for someone, a uni-
versal love for all creatures, but one has to give oneself only to
the Divine.

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To want unwaveringly the welfare of another both in the head
and the heart, is the best help one can give.

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It [a sense of harmony and delight and love] is in you and when
it is like that it spreads out in the atmosphere — but naturally
only those can share who are open and sensitive to the influence.
Still everyone who has peace or love in him becomes an added
influence for its increase in the atmosphere.

Receiving Help from Others

All change must come from within with the felt or the secret sup-
port of the Divine Power; it is only by one’s own inner opening
to that that one can receive help, not by mental, vital or physical
contact with others.

Concern for Others

Whatever or whomever you have handed over to the Divine,
you should not be any longer attached or anxious about him or
it but leave all to the Divine to do for the best.

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If your husband is in a perilous period of his life and suffering from ill-health and you feel for him, the best thing for him is still that you should tranquillise yourself and call the Divine to his help to pass through. Even in the ordinary life disquietude and depression create an unhelpful atmosphere for one who is ill or in difficulties. Once you are a sadhak, then whether for yourself or to help others for whom you still feel, the true spiritual attitude of reliance on the Divine Will and call for the help from above is always the best and most effective course.

* It is very good that the condition you speak of has settled itself — that is a great progress. As for the prayers, the fact of praying and the attitude it brings, especially unselfish prayer for others, itself opens you to the higher Power, even if there is no corresponding result in the person prayed for. Nothing can be positively said about that, for the result must necessarily depend on the persons, whether they are open or receptive or something in them can respond to any Force the prayer brings down.

**Sympathy for Others**

By the sympathy you get into contact and receive what is in the other — or also you may give or let go or have drawn from you part of your force which goes to the other. It is the vital sympathy which has this effect; a calm spiritual or psychic goodwill does not bring these reactions.

* Yes, it is dangerous [*to sympathise with someone who has gone wrong*], because it puts one in touch with the adverse Force that upset him and that Force at once tries to touch you and make its suggestions and contaminate by a sort of contagion or infection.

**Mothering Others**

You need not trouble yourself much about X's ideas or attach
importance to them. The only truth about it is that a vital mixture does very easily get into the movements even of the sadhana, if one is not careful. The one safeguard against that is to turn all towards the Divine and draw all from the Divine, getting rid of attachment, ego and desire. In one’s relations with other sadhaks there should be neither stiffness and hardness nor attachment and sentimental leanings.

As for the motherly feeling — it has to be transformed like everything else. The danger of all these relations when they are untransformed is that they may minister in a subtle way to the ego. To avoid that, one has to make oneself an instrument merely, but without even the ego of the instrument, and to be conscious of the source, not insisting on the action or any relation, but simply allowing it to be useful whenever one can clearly feel that it is intended. Also one must be careful that no force comes through one except the right forces, those which are in harmony with the higher consciousness and help. If one does always in that spirit and with that care, then even if mistakes are made, it does not matter — the growing consciousness will set them right and progress towards a more perfect working.

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The real failing of the motherlike ambition — at least as it manifests in many — is that it conceals an ego movement, the desire to play a big part, to have people depending on one, to have the motherly reputation etc. etc. Most human altruism has really this ego basis. If one gets rid of that, then the will to help can take its true place as a movement of pure sympathy and psychic feeling.

Working with Others

Work is always best done in silence except so far as it is necessary to speak for the work itself. Conversation is best kept for leisure hours. So nobody should object to your silence during work.

For the rest what you should do is to keep your right attitude towards the others and not allow yourself to be upset, irritated
or displeased by anything they may say or do — in other words keep the samatā and universal goodwill proper to a sadhak of Yoga. If you do that and still others get upset or displeased, you must not mind as you will not be responsible for their wrong reaction.

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I have read your letter and I understand now what it is that you find trying — but they do not seem to us such serious things as to be rightly felt as a cause of disturbance. They are the kind of inconveniences that one always has when people live and work together. It arises from a misunderstanding between two minds or two wills, each pulling his own way and feeling hurt or vexed if the other does not follow. This can only be cured by a change of consciousness — for when one goes into a deeper consciousness, first, one sees the cause of these things and is not troubled; one acquires an understanding, patience and tolerance that makes one free from vexation and other reactions. If both or all grow in consciousness, then there arises a mutual understanding of each other’s view-points which makes it easier to bring in harmony and smooth working. It is this that should be sought by the change within — to create the same harmony from outside by exterior means is not so easy, as the human mind is stiff in its perceptions and the human vital insistent on its own way of action. Let this be your main will — to grow yourself within and let the clearer and deeper consciousness come and have a good will for the same change to come in others so that clarity and harmony may come in the place of friction and misunderstanding.

**Dispersion through Contact with Others**

Dispersion and sadhana are two things that cannot go together. In sadhana one has to have a control over the mind and all its actions; in dispersion one is on the contrary controlled and run away with by the mind and unable to keep it to its subject. If the mind is to be always dispersed, then you can’t concentrate
on reading either or any other occupation, you will be fit for nothing except perhaps talking, mixing, flirting with women and similar occupations.

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You are mistaken in thinking that the sadhana of X, Y and Z does not suffer by the dispersion of their minds in all directions. They would have been far farther on the path if they did a concentrated Yoga — even Y who has an enormous receptivity and is eager for progress might have gone thrice as far as he has done. Moreover, your nature is intense in all it does and it was therefore quite its natural path to take the straight way. Naturally, when once the higher consciousness is settled and both the vital and physical sufficiently ready for the sadhana to go on of itself, strict tapasya will no longer be necessary. But till then we consider it very useful and helpful and in many cases indispensable. But we do not insist on it when the nature is not willing. I see too that those who get into the direct line (there are not as yet very many), get of themselves the tendency to give up these mind-dispersing interests and occupations and throw themselves fully into the sadhana.

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Yes, certainly, dispersion is an inner fact. But certain outer things help the dispersion of the consciousness and if anybody like X says that he is not dispersed when he is wandering about with a companion like Y, I would say he is either not telling the truth or he is deceiving himself. If one is always in the inner consciousness, then one can be not dispersed even when doing outward things — or if one is conscious of the Divine at all times and in all one does, then also can one read newspapers or do much correspondence without dispersion. But even then though there is not dispersion, yet there is less intensity of consciousness when reading a newspaper or writing a letter than when one is not putting part of oneself into quite external things. It is only when the consciousness is quite siddha that there is not even this difference. That does not mean one should not do external
things at all, for then one gets no training in joining the two consciousnesses. But one must recognise that certain things do disperse the consciousness or lower it or externalise it more than others. Especially one should not deceive or pretend to oneself that one is not dispersed by them when one is. As for the people who want to draw others to the Yoga, I should say that if they draw themselves nearer to the inner goal that would be a much more fruitful activity. And in the end it would “draw” much more people and in a better way than the writing of many letters.

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To be too sensitive and upset by any contact is excessive; but to have too many contacts and be always dispersing oneself prevents the sadhana from growing and solidifying in the inner being, since one is always being pulled out into the ordinary outer consciousness.

**Mixing with Others**

It is true that mixing with others too closely tends to lower the condition, if they are not themselves in the right attitude and live very much in the vital. In all contacts what you have to do is to remain within, keep a detached attitude and not allow yourself to be troubled by the difficulties that arise in work or the movements of people, but keep yourself the true movement. Do not be caught by the desire to “help” others — do and speak yourself the right thing from the inner poise and leave the help to come to them from the Divine. Nobody can really help — only the Divine Grace.

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It might not be prudent to mix freely and too often. Enough to relieve any tension of the sadhana, but not so much as to dissipate its intensity.

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Aloofness is very necessary at certain stages of the sadhana, —
but it cannot be maintained all through. One must be able to mix with others and act on them.

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It is right to mix a little with the others — it helps to keep the balance.

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You are quite right. Not to mix with others deprives of the test which contact with them imposes on the consciousness and the chance to progress in these respects. Mixing is unprofitable from the spiritual point of view when it is only to indulge the vital, chat, interchange vital movements etc.; but abstention from all mixing and contact is also not desirable. It is only when the consciousness truly needs a full retirement that such retirement can be made and even then it may be full, but not absolute. For in the absolute retirement one lives a purely subjective life and the opportunity for extending the spiritual progress to the outer life and testing it thoroughly is not there.

It is good that you got quickly the right attitude to what had happened; that indicates a good progress in the consciousness.

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To be able to remain back [while conversing with others], entering only superficially without being involved is really the first step towards the secret of mixing with others without lowering the inner consciousness.

Vital Expansiveness

That [mixing with people, laughing and joking with them] is a kind of vital expansiveness, it is not vital strength — this expansiveness is also expensive. For when there is this mixing, the vitally strong get strength from it but the vitally weak expend what strength they have and become weaker.
I think no rule can be laid down applicable to all. There are some who have the expansive tendency of the vital, others who have the concentrative. The latter are absorbed in their own intensity of endeavour and certainly they gather from that a great force for progress and are saved the expense and loss of energy which frequently comes to the more communicative and also make themselves less open to reactions from others (though this cannot be altogether avoided). The others need to communicate what is in them and cannot wait for the full fullness before they use what they have. Even they may need to give out as well as to take in in order to progress. The only thing is that they must balance the two tendencies, concentrating to receive from above as much or more than they open sideways to distribute.

X has a very strong and expansive vital, so it is quite natural that if he likes anybody he can produce this kind of effect on him by meeting. But I do not know that he is conscious of what he gives or receives; it is more likely a spontaneous action. He is not accustomed to give only though, for a strong expansive vital as opposed to a strong self-contained one needs to receive as well as to give.

As for living a free outer life it cannot be said that that is good for everybody at every stage any more than living a retired life is good for everybody or at every stage. The disadvantage of a free jolly outward social life without restrictions is that one becomes entirely or mostly externalised and that all sorts of vital interchanges are part of it which can hamper the inner growth or the total self-consecration to the Divine. The disadvantage of too complete a retirement is that it makes the person one-sided and shut up in himself, subjective, without the stabilising contact with earth and consequently with the danger of morbidity and self-delusion. A middle path with the rule of living more and more within, standing back from outward things but not throwing them aside, looking at them with a new consciousness,
a new view and acting on them from this inner consciousness is the best way. But there is need for some at some stages to minimise outward contacts without abolishing them during part of the process of this shifting of the consciousness. No absolute rule can be laid down in this matter.

**Vital Interchange**

Whenever one mixes with others, things are passing from one to the other. If I talk with a number of people, I bring away with me in my atmosphere many forces that were around them; they may affect me or not, but they remain for a time at least. If in that time I speak with another man, he may receive them from me. It is like a man carrying germs with him from a person he has visited; he may not fall ill himself (or he may), but, even if he does not, he can pass them on to another man he visits afterwards — who falls ill. It is the same thing here in the supraphysical parts.

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There is always an interchange of vital forces going on between people. If you sit near one who is weak and depressed and needs vital force, you may have your forces pulled from you by his or her need and yourself feel depressed or weak or empty.

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Small energies of that kind [vital influences] are always coming out from people and, if there is a connection, they can flow into another person sitting near. One has to live in one’s own consciousness and reject all such interchanges, accepting only what comes from the Mother.

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If someone throws something on you, you should throw it away and not keep it. It is like mud thrown on the body — immediately one washes it off.
You have to find that out [which people are bad influences] for yourself. There are people you mix with who have doubts, suggestions, depressions, jealousies, dissatisfactions with the Mother’s action. They can easily throw that on you without intending it. These influences are all around in the atmosphere. It is not sufficient to avoid this or that person. You have to learn to be on your guard and self-contained.

When one is with another for some time, talking etc., there is always some vital interchange unless one rejects what comes from the other, instinctively or deliberately. If one is impressionable, there may be a strong influence or impression from the other. Then if one goes to another person, it is possible to pass it on to that other; that is a thing which is constantly happening. But these things happen automatically — without the knowledge of the transmitter. When one is conscious, one can prevent it happening.

No, people are not conscious of these things, only a few are. The vital exchange is there, but they are not aware of it — because they live in the external mind (physical) and these things go on behind. Even if they feel more energetic after an interchange or depressed or tired, they would not attribute it to the talk or contact, because the interchange is unconscious, their external mind in which they live not being aware of it.

I don’t suppose people are at all aware of this occult commerce [of vital energies]. Some like Daudet may observe the expenditure or throwing out of forces, but not the pulling or the effect on others. The idea of mental interchange is familiar though only of the superficial kind, not the silent action of mind on

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1 The correspondent wrote that while talking with others he was often conscious of an exchange of vital energies. Sometimes he felt that energy was emptying out of him, sometimes that it was entering in. — Ed.
mind which is always going on, but the vital impacts are known only to a few occultists. If one becomes very conscious one can become aware of the forces acting in and from all around, e.g. forces of joy or depression or anger.

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The utility of knowing the effects of a vital interchange with someone depends upon the development of an inner power based upon peace which will act upon these things and prevent them. So long as one is unconscious, one undergoes the action in the Ignorance and there is no possibility of going out of the circle because there is no knowledge. The consciousness comes with a growing inner development in the being which makes the peace, the liberation a necessity — with that one opens to a higher Force of a new consciousness which puts an end to the vital interchange and creates a new poise for the vital as well as the mental life. If one stops with the increased sensitivity and does not go farther, then of course there is no proper use of it. There are some people like X and Y who got so absorbed in the “occult” knowledge that they stopped there going round and round in it and making all sorts of blunders because the spiritual light was not there. One has not to stop there, but go on and beyond to the spiritual consciousness and the greater light, strength and poise it brings.

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The consciousness of these things such as the forces one feels coming from others is intended for knowledge — a psycho-occult knowledge, necessary for the fullness of consciousness and experience. It is not intended that what is felt should be allowed to become an influence, whether a good one or a bad one.

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There must necessarily be a difference between the vital energy of a cultured and well-educated man and of one who is rough and ignorant. If nothing else, a greater refinement and subtlety in the vital substance and therefore in the energy is there. Drinking
if excessive affects the substance and quality of the energy — but probably a moderate drinking and smoking would have a less perceptible effect. I don't think people in ordinary life notice clearly, but they have often a general impression which they cannot explain or particularise.

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It is mainly an inner guard that you must keep. At the same time, if you feel unease in crowds it is better to avoid them — except in case of music if you feel secure there. A crowd of people engaged in purely social interchange is necessarily on a lower level of consciousness in which undesirable forces may move, if there is anyone there open to them, and one who is in a stage of consciousness opening to higher things but not yet fixed in steady and self-supporting calm is safer away from it.

In sadhana one is supposed to keep outward forces at a distance or at least not to allow them to invade one. If one faces a difficulty in the right spirit and overcomes it, naturally one progresses, but that is a different thing from letting alien forces or influences enter into the conscious being. No one need invite that, — they are only too ready to do it without being invited. One can look at and become conscious of all forces, even the worst, darkest and most hostile, provided one remains on guard and refuses all credence or support to their suggestions and rejects all claim of theirs to a place in the consciousness and nature. But all cannot do that in the earlier stages.

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It is not necessary to be so careful as all that. Ordinary vital interchanges are of a slight character. Nobody can take away another's vital, for the very good reason that if that happened, the person from whom it was taken would die. It is possible of course for one person to drain another's vital forces so as to leave him limp or weak or dry, but it is only the vampire kind

2 The correspondent had been warned about someone who could “take away one's vital when he talks”. If that is possible, he said, then one must be very careful in one's exchange with others. — Ed.
that do that. It is possible also for one to give out too much of
one’s vital forces so as to weaken oneself or exhaust of energy,
a thing which should not be done, — it is only those who know
how to draw or can draw freely from the universal vital Force
and replenish their life energies that can give out freely. All of
course draw to some extent, otherwise they would not remain
alive, for expenditure of vital energy is always going on and
one has to replace it; but for most the capacity for drawing is
limited and the capacity for giving without exhaustion is also
limited.

But the ordinary movements of interchange are harmless
provided they are kept within moderate limits. What creates a
difficulty in the sadhana is that one may easily draw in undesir-
able influences or pass them on to others. It is the reason why at
certain stages a limitation of talk, intercourse etc. is often advis-
able. But the true remedy is to become inwardly conscious, to
know and be able to repel any undesirable incursion or influence,
to be able when speaking, mixing etc. to keep a defence round
one and allow to pass in only what one can accept and nothing
else. Also to measure what one can give out safely and what one
cannot. When one has the consciousness and the practice, this
working becomes almost automatic.

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As for what you say about the stimulus of vital interchange, it
is true of the vital life. Men are constantly spending their vital
energy and need to renew it; one way to do it is by pulling from
others in a vital interchange. This however is not necessary if
one knows how to draw from the universal Nature or from the
Divine, i.e. from above. Moreover when the psychic is active —
there is always more lost than gained by the vital interchange.

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I suppose it depends upon the person [whether contact with
him is harmful] and upon your reactions to him. If he gives sex
vibrations or is an appropriator of vital energy, then opening to
him may not be good. But in the ordinary superficial interchange
one need not lose anything or what is lost is so little and so automatically repaired that it does not matter.

* 

It is not that you have to speak to no one—that is not possible. But you must keep your body free and pure and reject all vital interchanges with men—do not speak too much or freely; do not allow yourself too much freedom or laughter, be simple and quiet and straight in all your actions and behaviour. Touch no sadhak and let none touch you. Above all, turn to the Divine only and form no relations or attachments with others.

* 

It [intimate vital contact with another person] gives a temporary pleasure, but that does not last and it is certainly not profitable. After a time the vital interchange can no longer satisfy and the vital itself gets tired of it and turns away elsewhere. Of course for the spiritual aim it is a great interference.

* 

A human vital interchange cannot be a true support for the sadhana and is, on the contrary, sure to impair and distort it, leading to self-deception in the consciousness and a wrong turn of the emotional being and vital nature.

Talking, Letter-Writing and Vital Interchange

It is quite possible for one person to get depressed by talking with another. Talking means a vital interchange, so that can always happen. Whether they have observed rightly in a particular case is another matter.

* 

The disturbance in talking to people comes of course because they throw their own vibrations upon you and revive your old movements. Once the true consciousness is well fixed in your
physical being, that effect need no longer happen.

* 

To discuss with others, especially when they are in a bad state, is always a mistake. It is very easy for the disturbance in them to fall upon you while you speak even without your noticing it; it is afterwards that you feel it. That is why I told you to ignore X and what he says when he is in a bad state.

* 

Every letter means an interchange with the person who writes it — for something is there behind the words, something of his person or of the forces he has put out or had around him while writing. Our thoughts and feelings are also forces and can have effects upon others. One has to grow conscious of the movement of these forces and then one can control one’s own mental and vital formations and cease to be affected by those of others.

**Talking or Thinking about Others**

Talking about somebody may very well have an effect on him; it often does, for it can be an effective formulation of a thought or feeling which, so embodied, will reach him. But I don’t suppose mere mechanical thoughts or ill-formed imaginations would do that — at any rate it must be rare and need exceptional conditions or a play of forces in which a trifle counts.

* 

Yes, one’s bad thoughts and good thoughts can have a bad or a good effect on others, though they have not always because they are not strong enough — but still that is the tendency. It is therefore always said by those who have this knowledge that we should abstain from bad thoughts of others for this reason. It is true that both kinds of thought come equally to the mind in its ordinary state; but if the mind and mental will are well developed, one can establish a control over one’s thoughts as well as over one’s acts and prevent the bad ones from having
their play. But this mental control is not enough for the sadhak. He must attain to a quiet mind and in the silence of the mind receive only the Divine thought-forces or other divine Forces and be their field and instrument.

To silence the mind it is not enough to throw back each thought as it comes, that can only be a subordinate movement. One must get back from all thought and be separate from it, a silent consciousness observing the thoughts if they come, but not oneself thinking or identified with the thoughts. Thoughts must be felt as outside things altogether. It is then easier to reject thoughts or let them pass without their disturbing the quietude of the mind.

Not to be disturbed by either joy or grief, pleasure or displeasure by what people say or do or by any outward things is called in Yoga a state of samatā, equality to all things. It is of immense importance in sadhana to be able to reach this state. It helps the mental quietude and silence as well as the vital to come. It means indeed that the vital itself and the vital mind are already falling silent and becoming quiet. The thinking mind is sure to follow.

The Drawing of Vital Forces by Others

When people mix together there is generally some interchange of vital forces which is quite involuntary. X himself suffers from physical weakness and he complains of his vital forces being drawn out of him without knowing why it happens. Vampirising is a special phenomenon — a person who lives upon the vital of others and flourishes vitally at their expense.

* The tired feeling which the people felt after seeing this X is a sign of vampirism, but very often there is no such feeling but there is an after-effect on the whole. The nerves get gradually wrong — what is called the nervous envelope becomes weak or in one way or another the vitality becomes weak or gets into an abnormal condition — excitable and unstable. There are many
such ways in which the effect shows itself. Sex-vampirism is a different matter — in sex interchange the normal thing is to give and take, but the sex-vampire eats up the other’s vital and gives nothing or very little.

* 

There is always a drawing of vital forces from one to another in all human social mixture; it takes place automatically. Love-making is one of the most powerful ways of each drawing up the other’s vital force, — or of one drawing the other’s, which also often happens in a one-sided way to the great detriment of the “other”. In the passage come many things good and bad, elation, feelings of strength, fullness, support or weakness and depletion, infiltration of good and bad qualities, interchange of psychological moods, states and movements, ideas helpful and harmful, depression, exhaustion — the whole gamut. In the ordinary consciousness one is not aware of these things; the effects come into the surface being, but the cause and process remain unknown and unnoticed because the interchange is subtle and covert, it takes place through what is called the subconscious, but is rather a behind-consciousness covered by the surface waking mind. When one gets into a certain Yogic consciousness, one becomes very much aware of this covert movement, very sensitive to all this interchange and action and reaction; but one has this advantage that one can consciously build a wall against them, reject, refuse, accept what helps, throw out or throw back what injures or hinders. Illnesses can also pass in this way from one to another, even those which are not medically regarded as contagious or infectious; one can even by will draw another’s illness into oneself as did Antigonus of Macedon accepting death in this way in order to save his son Demetrius. This fact of vital interchange, which seems strange and unfamiliar to you, becomes quite intelligible if one realises that ideas, feelings etc. are not abstract things but in their way quite concrete, not confining their movements to the individual’s mind or body but moving out very much like the “waves” of science and communicating themselves to anyone who can serve as a receiver. Just as people
are not conscious of the material waves, so it is and still more with these mental or vital waves; but if the subtle mind and senses become active on the surface — and that is what takes place in Yoga — then the consciousness becomes aware in its reception of them and records accurately and automatically their vibrations.

* It is quite possible that X pulls [vital energy] unconsciously, as he is vitally weak and people who are vitally weak do unconsciously and automatically pull on others.

**Limiting Contacts with Others**

It is certainly a great help to be able to limit one’s contacts provided it is not carried too far. I must note however that even with limited contacts undesirable waves can get in — it is a measure of precaution but does not make you absolutely safe. On the other hand complete withdrawal carries one to another extreme and has its own dangers. The complete safety from “stuff” distracting, disturbing, externalising etc., can only come from a growth of the consciousness within. In the interim absorption and limitation of contacts like that can be a helpful measure if used in a judicious way.

* One has to go inside into the inner being and one can minimise contacts, *if necessary*, not as an absolute rule — provided there is a real living in the inner being and sufficient contact with outside things not to lose one’s hold of practical realities. But if there is an isolation which brings depression, inertia, unhappiness, gloom or else morbidity of any kind, then it is evident that the retirement is not wholesome.

* The avoiding of contacts does not by itself bring the fundamental immunity, it is only a change of that part of the consciousness
that can do it. But it may be advisable to minimise the contacts
that strongly bring the trouble so long as the change is not there.
It is not certain that a long retirement brings about the change of
the subconscient, — the long retirement of the Sannyasin is part
preparation of a retirement from life altogether — it is different
in our Yoga which wants to change, but not reject life.

* 

It is true that one has to try to keep the inner condition under all
circumstances, even the most adverse; but that does not mean
that one has to accept, unnecessarily, unfavourable conditions
when there is no good reason for their being allowed to go
on. Especially, the nervous system and the physical cannot bear
an excessive strain as well as the mind and higher vital; your
fatigue came from the strain of living in one consciousness
and at the same time exposing yourself too much to prolonged
contacts from the ordinary consciousness. A certain amount of
self-defence is necessary — so that the consciousness may not be
pulled down or out constantly into the ordinary atmosphere or
the physical strained by being forced into activities that have be-
come foreign to you. Those who practise Yoga often seek refuge
in solitude from these difficulties; that is unnecessary here, but
all the same you need not submit to being put under this kind
of useless strain always.

**Inner Detachment Preferable to Outer Withdrawal**

Inner withdrawal is always much better than physical with-
drawal.

* 

I say that all that *[no vital relations with anyone]* is magnificent,
if you can do it. But can’t you see that it is the inward change
that is wanted — the inward plunge? These dramatic outward
breaks lead only to new joinings. Neither you nor she can keep it
up. If there comes a strong ingoing movement, then it is another
matter. That of itself would make it possible to readjust the
relations or to withdraw if necessary. But splashing about on
the surface — will it lead to anything? It does not look like it.

* 

It is not a physical retirement that is needed, but an inner de-
tachment from the mental formations and vital desires. To find
the real self above and within and live in that, not in the mind’s
conceptions or the vital’s reactions. These must be observed
and looked at not as one’s own but as movements of a surface
ignorant nature.

Qualified Utility of Retirement for Sadhana

You can see whether such a retirement suits you or not. It is not
the same for all. Most cannot stand retirement.

There is no harm in that kind of seclusion [to find a deeper
contact with the Mother] and it can help provided you main-
tain the inner peace and a simple quietude turned towards the
Mother.

* 

We have no objection to your doing this [withdrawing from
social contacts] for a week, as you propose; I understand that
it is not a retirement, but a cessation of social visits. My ob-
jection to retirement is that so many have “gone morbid” by
it or gone astray into zones of false vital experiences; secondly,
that absolute retirement is not necessary for the spiritual life. It
is different however for people like X who are to the manner
born or at least perfectly trained. A “restriction of publicity” is
quite another matter. Also to be capable of solitude and to have
the Ananda of solitude can always be helpful to sadhana, and a
power of inner solitude is natural to the Yogi.

We will give our help and hope you will succeed — at least,
you will have established a precedent for withdrawing whenever
you want in the future.

*
Retirement is not necessary for passing from one plane to another. It is needed only in rare cases and with certain temperaments for a time.

* 

The impulse to retire comes from some push to concentrate within — but the cause of the push varies in different cases. There are certain cases in which there was a desire to isolate oneself from the Mother’s influence (Pranam, meditation etc.) and follow one’s own fancies, e.g. X, Y, also perhaps with a sense of superiority = “no need of these things for so great a Yogi as I”. In other cases there was a marked desire for isolation, but that was where the brain was already upset (Z) or a wrong influence at work (A). But others have simply desired concentration or wished not to spend themselves in externalisation (B, C in their periods of retirement). So all cannot come under one sentence.

* 

How are you going to find the right external relations by withdrawing altogether from external relations? And how do you propose to be *thoroughly* transformed and unified by living only in the internal life, without any test of the transformation and unity by external contact and the ordeals of the external work and life? Thoroughness includes external work and relations and not a retired inner life only.

It is only by the vital ego giving up its demands and claims and the reactions these produce when not satisfied, that the transformation and unification can come, and there is no other way.

* 

You must make up your mind what you want. There is no harm in drawing back from all vital and physical relations and wanting only the true relation — that is in fact what happens to everybody who wants the true relation — the only thing kept is the universal goodwill (not vital affection) to all. But if you swing about from one mood to another — then of course they
will not understand and have some ground to say that they are perplexed by your variations. This matter of touching and caressing is one on which you ought to take a firm and unvarying stand. If you don’t want it, you should repel it always with the utmost firmness, otherwise there will necessarily be clash and disturbance. All depends upon your inner will and establishing a unity of will in yourself turned exclusively towards the Divine.

I think I have told you that an entire physical retirement is seldom healthy, although a comparative retirement is often helpful. But the main thing is the inner detachment and complete turning to the Divine.

**Dangers of Complete Retirement**

To live in the self is of course the proper object of withdrawal and to live in the self brings the higher experiences which must obviously be helpful and not harmful. What I wrote was only to explain what I meant by the danger of too complete retirement and why it turned out to be harmful to X, Y and others. There are some like Z who derived unmixed profit from it. It altogether depends on one’s temperament and on one’s attitude and aim and inner poise during the silence.

*  

Retirement in the sense of all meditation without work is not suitable to this sadhana — it is one-sided and those who resort to it, unless they are very strong, often lose their balance.

*  

To have no contact with people and shut oneself entirely is not healthy. But one can for a time diminish outward contacts so as to concentrate.

*  

I doubt whether an entire retirement is very healthy except for certain people who have a contemplative nature coupled with a very sound and solid nervous system and firm balance of the
mind — but a restriction of intercourse so as to go more in oneself and limit or select the contacts often has a good effect.

* 

Yes, it is better [not to talk with others except when necessary] if you want to do sadhana seriously — but if your vital cannot do without these things, it is no use forcing it. Entire retirement is not good — it makes people morbid and they plunge into a world of imaginations without any check from life and actuality. But to avoid useless talk and unhelpful social interchange is good, if the vital can be made to acquiesce in an applied and serious sadhana.

* 

Not speaking or contacting when one is in the intensity of the peace is one thing — that can be done. Remaining isolated at other times as a rule of life does not seem to me necessary — it is safe only for those who can live entirely within without losing their hold on outer reality. If one has always a solid poise of peace one can do that or a clear mind balanced and discriminating along with constant experiences which it is able to put in the right place. But some get absorbed in inner experiences which they get lost in and get passionately attached to and this inner life becomes for them the sole reality without the outer to poise it and keep it under check and test — there lies a danger. Again if one remains isolated without the support of a settled inner poise and constant experience over which one has a discriminating control, then in periods of emptiness the vital can arise bringing struggles, difficulties, unrest, suggestions of all kinds, a troubled and turbid state — rather than spend the time in that, as some do, it is better to mix with others or do some work or otherwise externalise oneself in a healthy way.

* 

People will certainly regard it [maintaining absolute silence] as unnatural and there will be a lot of hubbub for a time. As to the dangers, the one real danger in these retirements (apart from
the pride) is the becoming a prey of subjective influences and
imaginations and losing the hold of reality which work and
contact with others help to keep up. Of course one can lose that
even while keeping contact as happened to X and others. But I
suppose you have a sufficiently cool and critical head to avoid
that danger.

*  *

And if some find that retirement is the best way of giving oneself
to the Higher, to the Divine by avoiding as much as possible oc-
casions for the bubbling up of the lower, why not? The aim they
have come for is that and why blame or look with distrust and
suspicion on the means they find best or daub it with disparaging
adjectives to discredit it — grim, inhuman and the rest? It is your
vital that shrinks from it and your vital mind that supplies these
epithets which express only your shrinking and not what the
retirement really is. For it is the vital or the social part of it that
shrinks from solitude; the thinking mind does not but rather
courts it. The poet seeks solitude with himself or with Nature
to listen to his inspiration; the thinker plunges into solitude to
meditate on things and commune with a deeper knowledge; the
scientist shuts himself up in his laboratory to pore by experi-
ment into the secrets of Nature; these retirements are not grim
and inhuman. Neither is the retirement of the sadhak into the
exclusive concentration of which he feels the need; it is a means
to an end, to the end on which his whole heart is set. As for the
Yogin or bhakta who has already begun to have the fundamental
experience, he is not in a grim and inhuman solitude. The Divine
and all the world are there in the being of the one, the supreme
Beloved or his Ananda is there in the heart of the other.

I say this as against your depreciation of retirement founded
on ignorance of what it really is; but I do not, as I have often said,
recommend a total seclusion, for I hold that to be a dangerous
expedient which may lead to morbidity and much error. Nor
do I impose retirement on anyone as a method or approve of
it unless the person himself seeks it, feels its necessity, has the
joy of it and the personal proof that it helps to the spiritual
experience. It is not to be imposed on anyone as a principle, for that is the mental way of doing things, the way of the ordinary mind — it is as a need that it has to be accepted, when it is felt as a need, not as a general law or rule.

**Relations in Ordinary Life**

The best way to prepare oneself for the spiritual life when one has to live in the ordinary occupations and surroundings is to cultivate an entire equality and detachment and the *samatā* of the Gita with the faith that the Divine is there and the Divine Will at work in all things even though at present under the conditions of a world of Ignorance. Beyond this are the Light and Ananda towards which life is working, but the best way for their advent and foundation in the individual being and nature is to grow in this spiritual equality. That would also solve your difficulty about things unpleasant and disagreeable. All unpleasantness should be faced with this spirit of *samatā*.

*When one is living in the world, one cannot do as in an Asram — one has to mix with others and keep up outwardly at least ordinary relations with others. The important thing is to keep the inner consciousness open to the Divine and grow in it. As one does that, more or less rapidly according to the inner intensity of the sadhana, the attitude towards others will change. All will be seen more and more in the Divine and the feeling, action, etc. will more and more be determined, not by the old external reactions, but by the growing consciousness within you.*

*The difficulty which you experience from relatives and others is always one that intervenes as an obstacle when one has to practise the sadhana in ordinary or unfavourable surroundings. The only way to escape from it is to be able to live in oneself in one’s inner being — which becomes possible when the responsiveness and luminosity of which you speak in your letter increase and
become normal, for then you are constantly aware of your inner being and even live in it—the outer becomes an instrument, a means of communication and action in the outer world. It is then possible to make the relations with people outside free from tie or necessary reaction—one can determine from within one’s own reaction or absence of reaction; there is a fundamental liberation from the external nexuses,—of course, if one wills it to be so.

*  
The life of saṁsāra is in its nature a field of unrest—to go through it in the right way one has to offer one’s life and actions to the Divine and pray for the peace of the Divine within. When the mind becomes quiet, one can feel the Divine Mother supporting the life and put everything into her hands.

*  
In her condition the one thing by which she can enter into the sadhana is to remember the Divine always, taking her difficulties as ordeals to be passed through, to pray constantly and seek the Divine help and protection and ask for the opening of her heart and consciousness to the supporting Divine Presence.