21 August 1957

Mother, for quite some time there has been a feeling that the general consciousness in our activities has fallen, especially since the Ashram has grown so large. What is the reason for it and how can we put it right?

Are you referring to all the activities of the Ashram or only to sports?... All the activities of the Ashram?

I don’t know very many, Mother: in the ones I see.

(After a long silence) It is something rather complicated. I shall try to explain it.

For a very long time the Ashram was only a gathering of individuals, each one representing something, but as an individual and without any collective organisation. They were like separate pawns on a chess-board — united only in appearance — or rather by the purely superficial fact of living together in the same place and having a few habits in common — not even very many, only a few. Each one progressed — or didn’t progress — according to his own capacity and with a minimum of relations with others. So, in accordance with the value of the individuals constituting this odd assemblage, one could say that there was a general value, but a very nebulous one, with no collective reality. This lasted a very long time — very long. And it is only quite recently that the need for a collective reality began to appear — which is not necessarily limited to the Ashram but embraces all who have declared themselves — I don’t mean materially but in their consciousness — to be disciples of Sri Aurobindo and have tried to live his teaching. Among all of them, and more strongly since the manifestation of the supramental Consciousness and Force, there has awakened the necessity for a true communal life,
which would not be based only on purely material circumstances but would represent a deeper truth, and be the beginning of what Sri Aurobindo calls a supramental or gnostic community... He has said, of course, that, for this, the individuals constituting this collectivity should themselves have this supramental consciousness; but even without attaining an individual perfection — even while very far from it — there was at the same time an inner effort to create this “collective individuality”, so to speak. The need for a real union, a deeper bond has been felt and the effort has been directed towards that realisation.

This has caused some... disturbance, for the tendency was formerly so individualistic that certain habits have been upset, I don’t mean materially, for things are not very different from what they were, but in a somewhat deeper consciousness. And above all — that is the point I want to emphasise — this has created a certain inner interdependence which has naturally lowered the individual level — a little — except for those who had already attained an inner realisation strong enough to be able to resist this movement of what I might call “levelling”. And this is what gives the impression that the general level has fallen, which is not correct. The general level is on a higher plane than it formerly was, but the individual level has dropped in many cases, and individuals who were capable of one realisation or another have felt, without understanding why, weighed down by a load they did not have to carry before, which is the result of this interdependence. It is just a temporary effect which, on the other hand, will lead to an improvement, a very tangible general progress.

Of course, if each individual was conscious, if instead of yielding to this kind of levelling effect, he resisted it in order to transform, transmute, uplift the elements, influences, currents he receives from the group, then the whole would rise up into a higher consciousness far ahead of where it was before.

This is what I was aiming at — without explaining the thing to you in detail — when I spoke to you of a more and more
urgent need to make an effort, and I intended, in fact, to explain
to you one day that the effort you could make individually,
instead of being for only an individual progress, will spread,
so to say, or have very important collective results. But I said
nothing because for months I wanted to prepare the individual
consciousness to admit, I might say, even perhaps to recognise,
this necessity for a collective individuality. This is what must
be explained now. There is no other reason for this kind of
apparent fall which, in fact, is not one. It is the spiral movement
of progress which makes it necessary to move away from a
certain realisation in order to make it not only vaster but also
higher. If every one collaborates consciously and with goodwill,
it will go much faster.

It was an imperative necessity if one wanted this Ashram
life to be viable. Everything that does not progress necessarily
declines and perishes, and for the Ashram to last it had to make
progress in its consciousness and become a living entity. There.

We are rather far away in the spiral from the line of realisa-
tion we had some years ago, but we shall come back to it on a
higher level.

So that is the answer.

There may appear to be movements which seem to con-
tradict what I have just told you, but that... it is always like
that, for every time one wants to realise something, the first
difficulty one meets is the opposition of all that was inactive
before and now rises up to resist. All that does not want to
accept this change naturally wakes up and revolts. But that is of
no importance. It is the same thing as in the individual being:
when you want to progress, the difficulty you want to conquer
immediately increases tenfold in importance and intensity in
your consciousness. There is but to persevere, that’s all. It will
pass.