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“If you want to be a true doer of divine works, your first aim must be to be totally free from all desire and self-regarding ego.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, p. 15

Sometimes we go to the bazaar to buy our things. Is that good?

One cannot make general rules. This depends on the spirit in which you make your purchases. It is said that you should have no desires — if this is not a desire, it is all right. You understand, there is no movement, no action which in itself is good or bad; it depends absolutely on the spirit in which it is done. If, for instance, you are in a state of total indifference about what you have and what you do not have (it is a condition a little difficult to realise, but after all, one can attain it — a state of detachment: “If I have it, I have it; if I don’t, I don’t”), there comes a moment when, if your state is quite sincere and you really need something (it must not be a fancy or a desire or a caprice but a true need), automatically the thing comes to you. Since I have been here — it is a long time, isn’t it? — I have known people who have never asked me for anything; I don’t even think (naturally there are always weaknesses in human nature), but I don’t even think they have had a violent desire for anything at all, but when it was a need, automatically it came to them. Suddenly the idea would come to me, “Ah! This must be given to so-and-so”, and if it was not directly through me, in some way, quite unexpectedly, the thing came to them. On the other hand, if one is preoccupied with one’s needs (I don’t want even to speak of desires, for that is quite another thing), but if one is preoccupied with one’s needs, if one thinks of them, tells oneself, “Truly I must have this”,
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it is not often that it comes to you; so you are obliged to do something to satisfy yourself and, if you have the means, to go and buy the thing. Now there are people who always take their desires for their needs, that... we do not speak of these, they form the great majority. They are convinced that without this or that one cannot live: “It is impossible, one can’t live without that.... I shall fall ill or something very unpleasant will happen to me or I shall not be able to do my work. It is impossible, if I don’t have this I can’t do my work.” So, the first step for these people is to try a small experiment (if they are sincere): “Well, I won’t have this thing and we are going to see what happens.” This is a very interesting experiment. And I can guarantee that 999 times out of a thousand, after a few days one asks oneself, “But why the devil did I think I had such a great need of this thing, I can do without it very well!” There you are. And like this, little by little, one makes progress.

It is a question of training — educating oneself. The sooner one begins, the easier it is. When one begins very young, it becomes very easy, for one gets accustomed to one’s inner reactions and so can act with wisdom and discernment — whereas for those who are accustomed from their childhood to take all their desires for needs or necessities, and have rushed into them with passionate zeal, the road is much more difficult, because first they must acquire discernment and distinguish a desire from what it is not; and sometimes this is very difficult, it is so mixed up that it can hardly be perceived.

But after all, I believe one doesn’t need much. Once, I remember, four of us had gone on a walking tour across the mountains of France. We had started from one town and had to reach another. It was about an eight or ten days’ journey across the mountain. Naturally, each of us carried a bag slung across our back, for one needs a few things. But then, before starting we had a little discussion to find out what things we really needed, what was quite indispensable. And always we came to this: “Let us see, that thing we can manage in this way” and everything
was reduced to so little.... I knew a Danish painter who used to say, “Do you know, when I travel, I need only one thing, a tooth-brush.” But somebody replied, “But no, if you don’t have a brush, you can rub with your finger!”

Before undertaking any action one tries to know whether the impulse comes from the Mother or not, but generally one doesn’t have enough discernment to know it and yet one acts. Can one know from the result of the action whether it came from the Mother or not?

One does not have the discernment because one does not care to have it! Listen, I don’t think there is a single instance in which one does not find within oneself something very clear, but you must sincerely want to know — we always come back to the same thing — you must sincerely want it. The first condition is not to begin thinking about the subject and building all sorts of ideas: opposing ideas, possibilities, and entering into a formidable mental activity. First of all, you must put the problem as though you were putting it to someone else, then keep silent, remain like that, immobile. And then, after a little while you will see that at least three different things may happen, sometimes more. Take the case of an intellectual, one who acts in accordance with the indications of his head. He has put the problem and he waits. Well, if he is indeed attentive, he will notice that there is (the chronological order is not absolute, it may come in a different order) at first (what is most prominent in an intellectual) a certain idea: “If I do that in this way, it will be all right; it must be like that”, that is to say, a mental construction. A second thing which is a kind of impulse: “That will have to be done. That is good, it must be done.” Then a third which does not make any noise at all, does not try to impose itself on the others, but has the tranquillity of a certitude — not very active, not giving a shock, not pushing to action, but something that knows and is very quiet, very still. This will
not contradict the others, will not come and say, “No, that’s wrong”; it says simply, “See, it is like this”, that’s all, and then it does not insist. The majority of men are not silent enough or attentive enough to be aware of it, for it makes no noise. But I assure you it is there in everybody and if one is truly sincere and succeeds in being truly quiet, one will become aware of it. The thinking part begins to argue, “But after all, this thing will have this consequence and that thing will have that consequence, and if one does this...” and this, and that... and its noise begins again. The other (the vital) will say, “Yes, it must be done like that, it must be done, you don’t understand, it must, it is indispensable.” There! Then you will know. And according to your nature you will choose either the vital impulse or the mental leading, but very seldom do you say quite calmly, “Good, it is this I am going to do, whatever happens”, and even if you don’t like it very much. But it is always there. I am sure that it is there even in the murderer before he kills, you understand, but his outer being makes such a lot of noise that it never even occurs to him to listen. But it is always there, always there. In every circumstance, there is in the depth of every being, just this little (one can’t call it “voice”, for it makes no sound) this little indication of the divine Grace, and sometimes to obey it requires a tremendous effort, for all the rest of the being opposes it violently, one part with the conviction that what it thinks is true, another with all the power, the strength of its desire. But don’t tell me that one can’t know, for that is not true. One can know. But one does not always know what is necessary, and sometimes, if one knows what is to be done, well, one finds some excuse or other for not doing it. One tells oneself, “Oh! I am not so sure, after all, of this inner indication; it does not assert itself with sufficient force for me to trust it.” But if you were quite indifferent, that is, if you had no desire, either mental or vital or physical desire, you would know with certainty that it is that which must be done and nothing else. What comes and gets in the way is preference — preferences and desires. Every day one may have hundreds and
hundreds of examples. When people begin to say, “Truly I don’t know what to do”, it always means that they have a preference. But as here in the Ashram they know there is something else and as at times they have been a little attentive, they have a vague sensation that it is not quite that: “It is not quite that, I don’t feel quite at ease.” Besides, you were saying a while ago that it is the result which gives you the indication; it has even been said (it has been written in books) that one judges the divine Will by the results! All that succeeds has been willed by the Divine; all that doesn’t, well, He has not willed it! This is yet again one of those stupidities big as a mountain. It is a mental simplification of the problem, which is quite comic. That’s not it. If one can have an indication (in proportion to one’s sincerity), it is uneasiness, a little uneasiness — not a great uneasiness, just a little uneasiness.

Here, you know, you have another means, quite simple (I don’t know why you do not use it, because it is quite elementary); you imagine I am in front of you and then ask yourself, “Would I do this before Mother, without difficulty, without any effort, without something holding me back?” That will never deceive you. If you are sincere you will know immediately. That would stop many people on the verge of folly.

*It sometimes happens that when one is playing one does not remember the Divine, then suddenly one remembers and has the feeling that something breaks and one no longer plays well. Why?*

Because everything is upset. That’s the problem! So you think that when you are playing and do not remember, you play well! No, it is not quite that. It is that you do something with a certain concentration — work or play — and you are concentrated, but you have not developed the habit of mixing the remembrance of the Divine with the concentration (which is not difficult, but anyway, you do not have the habit) and then, suddenly the remembrance comes; then two things may happen: either the
concentration is broken because you make an abrupt movement to seize the new attitude entering the consciousness, or else you feel a little remorse, a regret, a disquiet: “Oh! I did not remember”; that suffices, it upsets all you have done. For you change conditions completely. It is not the fact of remembering which makes you no longer play well, it is the fact of having disturbed your concentration. If you could remember without disturbing the concentration (which is not difficult), you would not only play well but would play better.

And then, you may also take another attitude. When you are playing and suddenly become aware that something is going wrong — you are making mistakes, are inattentive, sometimes opposing currents come across what you are doing — if you develop the habit, automatically at this moment, of calling as by a mantra, of repeating a word, that has an extraordinary effect. You choose your mantra; or rather, one day it comes to you spontaneously in a moment of difficulty. At a time when things are very difficult, when you have a sort of anguish, anxiety, when you don’t know what is going to happen, suddenly this springs up in you, the word springs up in you. For each one it may be different. But if you mark this and each time you face a difficulty you repeat it, it becomes irresistible. For instance, if you feel you are about to fall ill, if you feel you are doing badly what you are doing, if you feel something evil is going to attack you, then.... But it must be a spontaneity in the being, it must spring up from you without your needing to think about it: you choose your mantra because it is a spontaneous expression of your aspiration; it may be one word, two or three words, a sentence, that depends on each one, but it must be a sound which awakens in you a certain condition. Then, when you have that, I assure you that you can pass through everything without difficulty. Even in the face of a real, veritable danger, an attack, for instance, by someone who wants to kill you, if, without getting excited, without being perturbed, you quietly repeat your mantra, one can do nothing to you. Naturally, you must
truly be master of yourself; one part of the being must not be
triumphant there like a leaf; no, you must do it entirely, sincerely,
then it is all-powerful. The best is when the word comes to you
spontaneously: you call in a moment of great difficulty (mental,
vital, physical, emotional, whatever it may be) and suddenly that
springs up in you, two or three words, like magical words. You
must remember these and form the habit of repeating them in
moments when difficulties come. If you form the habit, one day
it will come to you spontaneously: when the difficulty comes,
at the same time the mantra will come. Then you will see that
the results are wonderful. But it must not be an artificial thing
or something you arbitrarily decide: “I shall use those words”;
or should somebody else tell you, “Oh! You know, this is very
good” — it is perhaps very good for him but not for everyone.

“Your only object in action shall be to serve, to receive, to
fulfil, to become a manifesting instrument of the Divine
Shakti in her works.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, p. 15

When you act your only object is to serve, that is, instead of
acting for your personal good, you act with the feeling of serving,
of receiving the Divine Force, not from outside (you must not
at all believe in that) but from within you, of opening yourself
to the Divine Force which will use you for its action, and of
fulfilling what that Force wants you to fulfil. There is no place
there for egoism. It is not a matter of giving one thing and
receiving another in exchange, it is not that; it is not a question
of receiving from outside.

There are disciplines which make it a rule (we don’t like
rules, for they are always arbitrary and artificial) that one should
receive absolutely nothing from anybody except the Divine or
the Guru who represents the Divine. Some people would not
receive even a fruit from anybody because it does not come
from the Guru. That is an exaggeration — this depends on
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circumstances, on conditions, and it also depends very much on the attitude one takes oneself, it depends on many things, it would take very long to explain — but there is one thing you must learn, never to rely on anyone or anything whatever except the Divine. For if you lean upon anyone for support, that support will break, you may be sure of that. From the minute you start doing yoga (I always speak of those who do yoga, I do not speak about ordinary life), for those who do yoga, to depend upon someone else is like wanting to transform that person into a representative of the Divine Force; now you may be sure there is not one in a hundred millions who can carry the weight: he will break immediately. So never take the attitude of hoping for support, help, comfort from anyone except the Divine. That is absolute; I have never, not once, met anyone who tried to cling to something to find a support there (someone doing yoga or who has been put into touch with yoga) and who was not deceived — it breaks, it stops, one loses one’s support. Then one says, “Life is difficult” — it is not difficult but one must know what one is doing. Never seek a support elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek satisfaction elsewhere than in the Divine. Never seek the satisfaction of your needs in anyone else except the Divine — never, for anything at all. All your needs can be satisfied only by the Divine. All your weaknesses can be borne and healed only by the Divine. He alone is capable of giving you what you need in everything, always, and if you try to find any satisfaction or support or help or joy or... heaven knows what, in anyone else, you will always fall on your nose one day, and that always hurts, sometimes even hurts very much.