3 July 1957

I have been asked if we are doing a collective yoga and what the conditions for the collective yoga are.

I might tell you first of all that to do a collective yoga we must be a collectivity (!) and then speak to you about the different conditions required for being a collectivity. But last night (smiling) I had a symbolic vision of our collectivity.

I had this vision in the early part of the night, and it made me wake up with a rather unpleasant impression. Then I went back to sleep and had forgotten it, and just now when I thought of the question I have been asked, the vision suddenly came back. It returned with a great intensity and so imperatively that now when I wanted to tell you exactly what kind of a collectivity we want to realise in accordance with the ideal Sri Aurobindo has given in the last chapter of *The Life Divine* — a supramental, gnostic collectivity, the only one which can practise Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga and be physically realised in a progressive collective body that grows more and more divine — the memory of this vision became so imperative that it prevented me from speaking.

Its symbol was very clear though of quite a familiar kind, so to speak, but so unmistakably realistic in its familiarity... If I were to relate it to you in detail, probably you wouldn’t even be able to follow; it was very complicated. It was the image of a kind of — how to put it? — of an immense hotel in which all earthly possibilities were accommodated in different rooms. And all this was in a state of constant transformation: fragments or entire wings of the building were suddenly demolished and rebuilt while all the people were still staying in them, in such a way that if a person went somewhere even inside this huge hotel, he ran the risk of not finding his room again when he wanted to get back to it! For it had been demolished and was being rebuilt...
on another plan. There was order, organisation... and there was the fantastic chaos I have described, and in that there was a symbol. There was a symbol which certainly applies to what Sri Aurobindo writes here\(^1\) on the necessity of the transformation of the body, what kind of transformation should take place for life to become a divine life.

It was somewhat like this: somewhere in the centre of this huge building, a room was reserved — in the story, as it seemed, it was reserved for a mother and her daughter. The mother was a very old lady, a self-important matron with much authority and her own views on the whole organisation. The daughter had a sort of power of movement and activity which made it possible for her to be everywhere at once even while remaining in that room which was... well, a little more than a room; it was a sort of apartment, and its main feature was to be right in the centre. But she was in constant argument with her mother. The mother wanted to keep things as they were with the rhythm they had, that is, with precisely that habit of demolishing one thing to build another out of it, and then again demolishing another to rebuild another one — which gave the building an appearance of frightful confusion. And the daughter didn’t like that and had another plan. She wanted above all to bring something quite new into this organisation, a sort of super-organisation which would make all this confusion unnecessary. Finally, as it was impossible to come to an understanding, she had left the room to go on a sort of round of inspection.... She went her round, saw everything, then she wanted to go back to her own room — for it was her room as well — to take some decisive action. And it was then that something rather peculiar began to happen. She remembered quite well where her room was, but each time she set out to go there by one route either the stairs disappeared or things were so changed that she could no longer recognise her way! And so she went here and there, climbed up and down,

searched, went in and out... impossible to find the way back to her room! As all this was taking a physical appearance, which was, as I said, very familiar and very ordinary, as always in these symbolic visions, somewhere there was — how to put it? — the administration of this hotel, and a woman who was a kind of manager, who had all the keys and knew where everybody was staying. So the daughter went to this person and asked, “Can you show me the way to my room?” — “Oh, yes, certainly, it is very easy.” All the people around looked at her as though saying, “How can you say that?” But she got up and, with authority, asked for a key, the key of the room, and said, “I’ll take you there.” Then she took all sorts of routes, but all so complicated, so bizarre! And the daughter followed her very attentively so as not to lose sight of her. And just at the moment when obviously they should have reached the place where this so-called room was, suddenly the manager — we shall call her the manager — the manager with her key... disappeared! And this feeling of disappearance was so acute that... everything disappeared at the same time.

If... To help you to understand this riddle, I could tell you that the mother is physical Nature as it is and the daughter is the new creation. The manager is the mental consciousness, organiser of the world as Nature has made it until now, that is, the highest sense of organisation manifested in material Nature as it is now. This is the key to the vision. Naturally, when I woke up I knew immediately what could solve this problem which had seemed absolutely insoluble. The disappearance of the manager and her key was a clear indication that she was quite incapable of leading to its true place what could be called the creative consciousness of the new world.

I knew it but I didn't have the vision of the solution, which means that this is something which is yet to be manifested; this was not yet manifested in that building — that fantastic structure — and this is precisely the mode of consciousness which would transform this incoherent creation into something real, truly
conceived, willed, executed, with a centre which is in its true place, a recognised place, with a real effective power.

(Silence)

It is quite clear in its symbolism, in the sense that all possibilities are there, all activities are there, but in disorder and confusion. They are neither coordinated nor centralised nor unified around the single central truth and consciousness and will. And we come back, then, to... precisely this question of a collective yoga and the collectivity which will be able to realise it. And what should this collectivity be?

It is certainly not an arbitrary structure like those made by men, in which they put everything pell-mell, without order or reality, and the whole thing is held together only by illusory links, which were symbolised here by the walls of the hotel, and which, in fact, in ordinary human constructions — if we take as an example a religious community — are symbolised by the monastery building, identical clothes, identical activities, even identical movements — I’ll make it more clear: everybody wears the same uniform, everybody rises at the same hour, eats the same things, offers the same prayers together, etc., there is a general uniformity. And naturally, inside, there is a chaos of consciousnesses, each one going according to its own mode, for this uniformity which goes as far as an identity of belief and dogma, is an altogether illusory identity.

This is one of the most usual types of human collectivity: to be grouped, linked, united around a common ideal, a common action, a common realisation, but in a completely artificial way. As opposed to this, Sri Aurobindo tells us that a true community — what he calls a gnostic or supramental community — can exist only on the basis of the inner realisation of each of its members, each one realising his real, concrete unity and identity with all the other members of the community, that is, each one should feel not like just one member united in some way with all
the others, but all as one, within himself. For each one the others must be himself as much as his own body, and not mentally and artificially, but by a fact of consciousness, by an inner realisation.

(Silence)

That means that before hoping to realise this gnostic collectivity, each one should first become — or at least begin to become — a gnostic being. This is obvious; the individual work should go on ahead and the collective work should follow; but it so happens that spontaneously, without any arbitrary intervention of the will, the individual progress is controlled, so to speak, or held back by the collective state. Between the individual and the collectivity there is an interdependence from which one can’t totally free oneself, granting that one tries. And even a person who tried in his yoga to liberate himself totally from the terrestrial and human state of consciousness, would be tied down, in his subconscious at least, to the state of the mass, which acts as a brake and actually pulls backwards. One can try to go much faster, try to drop all the weight of attachments and responsibilities, but despite everything, the realisation, even of one who is at the very summit and is the very first in the evolutionary march, is dependent on the realisation of the whole, dependent on the state of the terrestrial collectivity. And that indeed pulls one back, to such an extent that at times one must wait for centuries for the Earth to be ready, in order to be able to realise what is to be realised.

And that is why Sri Aurobindo also says, somewhere else, that a double movement is necessary, and that the effort for individual progress and realisation should be combined with an effort to try to uplift the whole mass and enable it to make the progress that’s indispensable for the greater progress of the individual: a mass-progress, it could be called, which would allow the individual to take one more step forward.

And now, I shall tell you that this is why I thought it would
be useful to have some group meditations, in order to work on the creation of a common atmosphere that’s a little more organised than... my big hotel of last night!

So, the best use one can make of these meditations — which are gradually becoming more frequent since now we are also going to replace the “distributions” by short meditations — is to go within, into the depths of one’s being, as far as one can go, and find the place where one can feel, perceive and perhaps even create an atmosphere of unity in which a force for order and organisation will be able to put each element in its place and make a new coordinated world arise out of the present chaos. That’s all.