“... Reject too the false and indolent expectation that the divine Power will do even the surrender for you. The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving, if you are willing to suffer the spiritual consequence.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, p. 4

What does an “irrevocable transformation” mean?

The transformation is irrevocable when your consciousness is transformed in such a way that you can no longer go back to your old condition. There is a moment when the change is so complete that it is impossible to become once again what one was before.

Doesn’t transformation itself imply that it is irrevocable?

The transformation may be partial. The transformation Sri Aurobindo speaks about here is a reversal of consciousness: instead of being egoistical and turned towards personal satisfactions, the consciousness is turned towards the Divine in surrender. And he has explained clearly that the surrender could be partial at first — there are parts which surrender and parts which don’t. So it is only when the entire being, integrally, in all its movements, has made its surrender, that it is irrevocable. It is an irrevocable transformation of attitude.

What is the difference between the divine Shakti and the divine Power?
The divine Power is only a part of the divine Shakti; the divine Power is an attribute of the divine Shakti. Sri Aurobindo uses the word divine Shakti, here, in the sense of chit-tapas, the creative power, the creative consciousness; consequently, the divine Power is only a part of the Shakti.

“An inert passivity is constantly confused with the real surrender, but out of an inert passivity nothing true and powerful can come. It is the inert passivity of physical Nature that leaves it at the mercy of every obscure or undivine influence. A glad and strong and helpful submission is demanded to the working of the Divine Force....”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, pp. 4-5

**What is “a glad and strong and helpful submission”?**

Do you know what it means to be glad? Do you know what it means to be strong? Do you know what it means to be helpful? Well, the surrender, that is, the self-giving to the Divine, must be happy, joyful, made gladly; it must be strong, one must not give oneself through weakness and impotence but with an active and strong will. And then the surrender must not remain absolutely indolent: “I have made my surrender, I have nothing more to do in life, I have only to remain still, my surrender is made.” And it must be helpful, that is, it must be active — it must undertake the transformation of the being or do some useful work.

“Your surrender must be the surrender of a living being, not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool.”

*Ibid.*, p. 4

You may speak, for instance, of the surrender of your watch: you wind it up and it runs, but this is not a response of conscious collaboration.
Questions and Answers

“The transformation must be integral, and integral therefore the rejection of all that withstands it.”

Ibid.

That is well understood. It is not enough to have a positive movement, there must also be the negative movement of rejection. For you cannot attain a stable transformation as long as you harbour in your being elements which oppose it. If you keep obscurities within you, they may for a time remain silent and immobile, so well that you attach no importance to them, and one day they will wake up again and your transformation won’t be able to resist them. Not only is the positive movement of self-giving necessary but also the negative movement of rejection of everything in you that opposes this giving. You must not leave things “like that”, buried somewhere, in such a way that at the first opportunity they wake up and undo all your work. There are parts of the being which know very well how to do this, there are elements of the vital which are extraordinary from this point of view: they keep quiet, hide in a corner, remain so absolutely silent and motionless that you think they don’t exist; so you are no longer on your guard, you are satisfied with your transformation and your surrender, you think everything is going well, and then, suddenly, one fine day, without warning, the thing jumps up like a jack-in-the-box and makes you commit all the stupidities in the world. And it is the stronger for having remained repressed — repressed and closed tight in a corner — it has remained as though buried so as not to draw your attention, it has kept very, very quiet, and the moment you are not expecting it, it springs up and you tell yourself, “Oh! What was the good of all my transformation?” That thing was there, and so it happened. It is just like that, these things remain there and hide themselves so well, that if you do not go looking for them with a well-lit lantern, you will not know they are there till the day they come out and demolish all your work in one minute.
26 April 1951

*Does this happen even if one has a great aspiration?*

The aspiration must be very vigilant.

I have known people (many, not only a few, I mean among those who do yoga), I have known many who, every time they had a fine aspiration, and their aspiration was very strong and they received an answer to this aspiration, every time, the very same day or at the latest the next day, they had a complete setback of consciousness and were facing the exact opposite of their aspiration. Such things happen almost constantly. Well, these people have developed only the positive side. They make a kind of discipline of aspiration, they ask for help, they try to come into contact with higher forces, they succeed in this, they have experiences; but they have completely neglected cleaning their room; it has remained as dirty as ever, and so, naturally, when the experience has gone, this dirt becomes still more repulsive than before.

One must never neglect to clean one’s room, it is very important; inner cleanliness is at least as important as outer cleanliness.

Vivekananda has written (I don’t know the original, I have only read the French translation): “One must every morning clean one’s soul and one’s body, but if you don’t have time for both, it is better to clean the soul than clean the body.”

*How can one know whether the little dirty things have hidden themselves or have gone?*

One can always try little experiments. I have said that one must use a torch, a strong light; then one must take a round within one’s being. If one is very attentive, one can very easily find these ugly corners. Suppose you have a beautiful experience, that suddenly in answer to your aspiration a great light comes; you feel all flooded with joy, force, light, beauty, and have the impression that you are on the point of being transfigured... and then, it
passes away — it always passes away, doesn’t it? especially at the beginning — suddenly, it stops. Then you tell yourself, when you are not vigilant, “There, it came and it has gone! Poor me! It came and has gone, it just gave me a taste of the thing and then let me fall.” Well, that’s foolish. What you should tell yourself is, “Look, I was not able to keep it, and why was I not able to keep it?” So, you take your torch and go on a round within yourself trying to find a very close relation between the change of consciousness and the movements accompanying the cessation of the experience. And if you are very, very attentive, and make your round very scrupulously, you will find that suddenly some part of the vital or some part of the mind or of the body, something has not kept up, in this sense that mentally, instead of being immobile and attentive, something has begun to ask, “Wait a minute, what is this experience? What does it mean?” begun to try to find an explanation (what it calls an “understanding”). Or maybe in the vital something has begun to enjoy the experience: “How pleasant it is, how I would like it to grow, how good if it were constant, how…” Or something in the physical has said, “Oh! It is a bit hard to endure that, how long am I going to be able to keep it?” It is perhaps not as obvious as all this, but it is a wee bit hidden like this, somewhere. You will always find one of these three things or others analogous. Then, it is there the lantern is needed: where is the weak point? where is the egoism? where is the desire? where is that old dirt we do not want any longer? where is that thing which turns back upon itself instead of giving itself, opening itself, losing itself? which turns back upon itself, tries to take advantage of what has happened, wants to appropriate to itself the fruit of the experience? Or rather which is too weak, too hard, too rigid to be able to follow the movement?... It is that, you are now on the track, you begin precisely to put the light you have just acquired upon it; it is that you must do, focus the light upon it, turn it in such a way that the thing cannot resist it.
You won’t be able to succeed the very first day but you must do it persistently and little by little or perhaps suddenly one day it will vanish. Then you will find out after a time that you are another person.

But if you take the attitude I have already spoken about and throw the blame upon the Grace and the Light, if you say to yourself, “There, it has gone and left me in the lurch”, you may be sure that even thirty, forty, fifty years hence you will be still at the same place, you will not have changed. There will always be something which will rise suddenly and eat up your experience. And then, instead of progressing, you will be stuck there marking time because you cannot advance. But if, immediately, you take the opportunity.... Note, sometimes it hurts a little; if you go and brutally put the light upon the thing which wants to enjoy the experience or wants to get knowledge or control the experience by a mental understanding or is too lazy to make the necessary effort to receive the experience and bear it or to change quickly enough, if you put the will with the light of consciousness upon this thing, with firmness, it may hurt just a little. And you say, “Oh! Not so fast! I need rest, I tired myself uselessly.” Then everything has to be begun all over again. Sometimes days, even months, sometimes years will pass without its coming back. Sometimes, if you are a little more active and intense in your aspiration, it will return sooner. But if you commit the same stupidity again, the same thing will happen — while if, immediately, you are very vigilant and when the mind starts nosing around to understand what is happening you tell it, “Silence, keep quiet”, then the experience can continue. When the vital begins to say, “I want lots and lots, more and more”, you say, “Quiet, quiet, don’t move, calm yourself, don’t get excited.” Or when the physical being, “Oh! I shall be crushed....” — “A little endurance, if you please; you are a coward, you don’t know how to stand the test.” If you manage to do this in time, with the necessary calmness, with the necessary determination and will, you will arrive at something. But if you are like that, passive,
Questions and Answers

indolent, fatalistic, and tell yourself, “Now I have surrendered myself, what will happen will happen, we shall see what is going to happen, that’s all”, then, you understand, I give you fifty years not to change by half a step.

In the last lesson I told you it was not so easy.... If you want to do it, you must do it properly, otherwise it is not worth the trouble; it is useless to do things by halves, one must do them well.

Of course, there are other roads. One may simply not try to perfect oneself. One may try to forget oneself in an ever more absorbing work, that is, do what one does as a consecration to the Divine, altogether disinterestedly, but with a plenitude, a self-giving, a total self-forgetfulness: no longer thinking about oneself but about what one is doing. You know this, I have already told you this: if you want to do something well, whatever it may be, any kind of work, the least thing, play a game, write a book, do painting or music or run a race, anything at all, if you want to do it well, you must become what you are doing and not remain a small person looking at himself doing it; for if one looks at oneself acting, one is... one is still in complicity with the ego. If, in oneself, one succeeds in becoming what one does, it is a great progress. In the least little details, one must learn this. Take a very amusing instance: you want to fill a bottle from another bottle; you concentrate (you may try it as a discipline, as a gymnastic); well, as long as you are the bottle to be filled, the bottle from which one pours, and the movement of pouring, as long as you are only this, all goes well. But if unfortunately you think at a given moment: “Ah! It is getting on well, I am managing well”, the next moment it spills over! It is the same for everything, for everything. That is why work is a good means of discipline, for if you want to do the work properly, you must become the work instead of being someone who works, otherwise you will never do it well. If you remain “someone who works” and, besides, if your thoughts go vagabonding, then you may be sure that if you are
handling fragile things they will break, if you are cooking, you will burn something, or if you are playing a game, you will miss all the balls! It is here, in this, that work is a great discipline. For if truly you want to do it well, this is the only way of doing it.

Take someone who is writing a book, for instance. If he looks at himself writing the book, you can’t imagine how dull the book will become; it smells immediately of the small human personality which is there and it loses all its value. When a painter paints a picture, if he observes himself painting the picture, the picture will never be good, it will always be a kind of projection of the painter’s personality; it will be without life, without force, without beauty. But if, all of a sudden, he becomes the thing he wants to express, if he becomes the brushes, the painting, the canvas, the subject, the image, the colours, the value, the whole thing, and is entirely inside it and lives it, he will make something magnificent.

For everything, everything, it is the same. There is nothing which cannot be a yogic discipline if one does it properly. And if it is not done properly, even tapasya will be of no use and will lead you nowhere. For it is the same thing, if you do your tapasya, all the time observing yourself doing it and telling yourself, “Am I making any progress, is this going to be better, am I going to succeed?”, then it is your ego, you know, which becomes more and more enormous and occupies the whole place, and there is no room for anything else. And we said the other day that the spiritual ego is the worst of all, for it is altogether unconscious of its inferiority, it is convinced it is something very superior, if not absolutely divine!

There we are. When you are at school, you must become the concentration which tries to catch what the teacher is saying, or the thought which enters you or the knowledge you are given. That is what you must be. You must not think of yourself but only of what you want to learn. And you will see that your capacities will immediately be doubled.
Questions and Answers

What gives most the feeling of inferiority, of limitation, smallness, impotence, is always this turning back upon oneself, this shutting oneself up in the bounds of a microscopic ego. One must widen oneself, open the doors. And the best way is to be able to concentrate upon what one is doing instead of concentrating upon oneself.