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This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature.

Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 1310

Everybody knows this; those who do not want to change their way of doing things or their way of being always say, “Oh! What do you expect, it is human nature.” This is what is called a “wilful indulgence”. That is to say, instead of becoming conscious that these are weaknesses and difficulties on the way, one justifies these things, saying, “Oh! It can’t be helped, it is human nature.” One wants to continue to do what one is doing, without changing, one is full of a wilful indulgence of one’s demands. For the lower nature of man always demands things; it says, “These are necessities, these are needs, I can’t do without them.” Then, the instincts — a sort of instinct for one’s own satisfaction — and pretensions: the lower being claims that it has a considerable importance and must be given what is necessary for it, otherwise it won’t be able to live; it asserts that it alone is important, and so on. It is all this which creates obstacles, all these obscure, ignorant movements, all these justifications of the old ways of being: those who fly into a temper and say, “What do you expect,
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it can’t be helped”, and everything one does saying, “Oh! It is human nature”, everything one justifies saying, “What can be done, people are like that, there is nothing to be done about it.”
It is the old idea that we are born with a particular nature and must get adjusted to it, for we cannot change it.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that if one cannot change the nature it is not worth the trouble of doing yoga, for yoga is done precisely in order to change the nature, otherwise it has no meaning.

_When the little ego is abolished, can’t one “find oneself in the Divine” directly?_

But one can find oneself in the Divine even before having completely abolished one’s little ego, for, to abolish one’s little ego is not a small matter!

_But how is it to be done?_

How is it to be done? How to abolish the ego? — First of all, you must want to do it, and there are very few people who want to. And that is exactly what they say, it is this justification of their way of being, “That is the way I am made, I can’t do otherwise. And then, if I change this, if I change that or if I do without this thing or if I get rid of that other, I shall no longer exist!” And if one doesn’t say this openly, one thinks it. And all these little desires, these little satisfactions, these little reactions, all these small ways of being, one clings to them, clings hard — one sticks to them, one doesn’t want to let them go. I have seen hundreds of cases where someone’s difficulty had been removed (with a particular power a certain difficulty had been removed), but after a few days he brought it back with enthusiasm. He said, “But without that I do not exist any longer!” I have known people who had been given mental silence almost spontaneously and who, after a day or two, came back frightened: “Have I
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become an idiot?" — for the mental machine was not working all the time.... You cannot imagine it, you don’t know how very difficult it is to separate oneself from this little ego; how much it gets into the way though it is so small. It takes up so much room while being so microscopic. It is very difficult. One pushes it away in certain very obvious things; for example, if there is something good and someone rushes forward to make sure of having it first, even jostling his neighbour (this happens very frequently in ordinary life), then here one becomes quite aware that this is not very, very elegant, so one begins to suppress these crudities, one makes a big effort — and one becomes highly self-satisfied: “I am not selfish, I give what is good to others, I don’t keep it for myself”, and one begins to get puffed up. And so one is filled with a moral egoism which is much worse than physical egoism, for it is conscious of its superiority. And then there are those who have left everything, given up everything, who have left their families, distributed their belongings, gone into solitude, who live an ascetic life, and who are terribly conscious of their superiority, who look down at poor humanity from the height of their spiritual grandeur — and they have, these people, such a formidable ego that unless it is broken into small bits, never, never will they see the Divine. So it is not such an easy task. It takes a lot of time. And I must tell you that even when the work is done, it must always be begun again.

Physically, we depend upon food to live — unfortunately. For with food, we daily and constantly take in a formidable amount of inconscience, of tamas, heaviness, stupidity. One can’t do otherwise — unless constantly, without a break, we remain completely aware and, as soon as an element is introduced into our body, we immediately work upon it to extract from it only the light and reject all that may darken our consciousness. This is the origin and rational explanation of the religious practice of consecrating one’s food to God before taking it. When eating one aspires that this food may not be taken for the little human ego but as an offering to the divine consciousness within oneself.
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In all yogas, all religions, this is encouraged. This is the origin of that practice, of contacting the consciousness behind, precisely to diminish as much as possible the absorption of an unconsciousness which increases daily, constantly, without one’s being aware of it.

Vitally, it is the same thing. You live vitally in the vital world with all the currents of vital force entering, going out, joining and opposing each other, quarrelling and intermingling in your consciousness, and even if you have made a personal effort to purify your vital consciousness, to master in it the desire-being and the little human ego, you are constantly under a sort of obligation to absorb all the contrary vibrations which come from those with whom you live. One can’t shut oneself up in an ivory tower, it is yet more difficult vitally than physically, and one takes in all sorts of things; and unless one is constantly wide awake, constantly on one’s guard, and has quite an efficient control over all that enters, so as not to admit in one’s consciousness unwanted elements, one catches the constant contagion of all desires, all the lower movements, all the small obscure reactions, all the unwanted vibrations which come to us from those around us.

Mentally, it is still worse. The human mind is a public place open on all sides, and in this public place, things come, go, cross from all directions; and some settle there and these are not always the best. And there, to obtain control over that multitude is the most difficult of all controls. Try to control the thought coming into your mind, you will see. Simply, you will see to what a degree you have to be watchful, like a sentinel, with the eyes of the mind wide open, and then keep an extremely clear vision of the ideas which conform to your aspirations and those which do not. And you must police at every minute that public place where roads from all sides meet, so that all passers-by do not rush in. It is a big job. Then, don’t forget that even if you make sincere efforts, it is not in a day, not in a month, not in a year that you will reach the end of all these difficulties. When one begins, one must begin with an unshakable patience. One
must say, “Even if it takes fifty years, even if it takes a hundred years, even if it takes several lives, what I want to accomplish, I shall accomplish.”

Once you have decided upon this, once you are quite conscious that it is so and that the goal is worth the trouble of a constant and sustained effort, you may begin. Otherwise, after a time you will fall flat; you will get discouraged, you will tell yourself, “Oh! It is very difficult — I do it and then it is undone, I do it again and it is once again undone, and then I do it again and it is perpetually undone.... Then what? When will I get there?” One must have plenty of patience. The work may be undone a hundred times, you will do it again a hundred and one times; it may be undone a thousand times, you will re-do it a thousand and one times, until finally it is no longer undone. And finally it is no longer undone.

Only, you see, if one were made all of a piece, it would be very easy, but one is made of many pieces. Then, there is one piece which is ahead, which has worked hard, is very conscious, altogether awake, and when it is there, all goes well, one does not allow anything to enter, one is on one’s guard, and then... one goes to sleep and the next day when one gets up it is another part which is there and one tells oneself, “But where then is all the work I had done?...” And one must begin all over again. Begin all over again until all the parts, one after another, enter the field of consciousness and each one can be changed. And when you reach your limit, there is a change, you have made progress — afterwards, you must make another, but still that one is made. But it is completely made only when all the pieces of the being are brought like that, one after another, to the front, and upon all without exception you have applied the consciousness, the light, the will and the goal, in such a way that everything changes.

This is not to discourage you, but to warn you. I do not want you to say afterwards, “Oh! If I had known it was so difficult, I would not have started.” You must know that it is
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excessively difficult and begin with great firmness and continue
to the end, even if the end is a very long way off — there are
many things to do. Now, I may tell you that if you do it sincerely,
with application and care, it is extremely interesting. Even those
whose life is quite monotonous, without interest (there are, you
know, poor people who have to do utterly uninteresting work
and always the same thing, and always in the same conditions,
and whose mind is not sufficiently awakened to be able to find an
interest in anything whatever), even those people, if they begin
to do this little work upon themselves, of control, of elimination,
that is to say, if each element which comes with its ignorance, its
unconsciousness, its egoism, is put before the will to change and
one remains awake, compares, observes, studies and slowly acts,
that becomes infinitely interesting, one makes marvellous and
quite unexpected discoveries. One finds in oneself lots of small
hidden folds, little things one had not seen at the beginning;
one undertakes a sort of inner chase, goes hunting into small
dark corners and tells oneself: “What, I was like that! This was
there in me, I am harbouring this little thing!” — sometimes so
sordid, so mean, so nasty. And once it has been discovered,
how wonderful! One puts the light upon it and it disappears
and you no longer have those reactions which made you so sad
before, when you used to say, “Oh! I shall never get there.”
For instance, you take a very simple resolution (apparently very
simple): “I shall never tell a lie again.” And suddenly, without
your knowing why or how, the lie springs up all by itself and you
notice it after you have uttered it: “But this is not correct — what
I have just said; it was something else I meant to say.” So you
search, search.... “How did it happen? How did I think like that
and speak like that? Who spoke in me, who pushed me?...” You
may give yourself quite a satisfactory explanation and say, “It
came from outside” or “It was a moment of unconsciousness”;
and not think any longer about it. And the next time, it begins
again. Instead of that, you search: “What can be the motive of
one who tells lies?...” and you push — you push and all of a
sudden you discover in a little corner something which wants to justify itself, thrust itself forward or assert its own way of seeing (no matter what, there are a number of reasons), show itself a little different from what it is so that people may have a good opinion of you and think you someone very remarkable.... It was that which spoke in you — not your active consciousness, but what was there and pushed the consciousness from behind. When you were not quite on your guard, it made use of your mouth, your tongue, and then there you were! The lie came out. I am giving you this example — there are a million others. And it is extremely interesting. And to the extent one discovers this within oneself and says sincerely, “It must change”, one finds that one acquires a sort of inner clear-sightedness, one gradually becomes aware of what goes on in others, and instead of getting angry when they are not quite what one would like them to be, one begins to understand how things happen, how it is that one is “like this”, how reactions are produced.... Then, with the indulgence of knowledge, one smiles. One no longer judges severely, one offers the difficulty in oneself or in others, whatever may be its centre of manifestation, to the divine Consciousness, asking for its transformation.

On June 8, 1966, at the time of the publication of this talk, Mother spoke about the same question in terms of her present experience which forms the basis of the “yoga of the body”.

Precisely this is what I have been doing for the last two days. The last two days I have spent all my time seeing all this accumulation, oh! heaps of little sordid things which one lives constantly, very tiny sordid things. And so there is only one way — there is only one way, always the same: to offer.

It is almost as though this Supreme Consciousness were putting you in touch with things long forgotten, which belong to the past, which even are or were or seemed to be completely effaced, with which you no longer have any contact, all sorts
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of little circumstances, which yet are seen in the new consciousness, in their true place, and make such a poor, miserable, mean, sordid whole of the entire life, the entire general human life. And so, it is a luminous joy of offering all this for transformation, for transfiguration.

Now it has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions (I mean the smallest things of every minute in the cells), are taken in the same movement of offering (and these come sometimes in waves, to such an extent that the body feels it will swoon before this assault), and then comes a light, so warm, so deep, so powerful, which puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to transformation.

These periods are very difficult periods of the bodily life; one feels that there is now only one thing which decides, the Supreme Will. There is no longer any support — any support, from the support of habit to the support of knowledge and of will, all the supports have vanished — there is only the Supreme.

(Silence)

Aspiration in the cellular consciousness for perfect sincerity of consecration.

And the lived experience — lived intensely — that it is only this absolute sincerity of consecration which allows existence. The least pretension is an alliance with the forces of dissolution and of death.

Well, it is like a song of the cells — but they must not even have the insincerity of watching themselves do it — the song of the cells: “Thy Will, O Lord, Thy Will.”

And the great habit of depending upon the will of others, the consciousness of others, the reactions of others (of others and of all things), this kind of universal comedy which all play with all and everything plays to everything, ought to be replaced by an absolute, spontaneous sincerity of consecration.
It is evident that this perfection of sincerity is possible only in the most material part of the consciousness. It is there that one can succeed in being, existing, doing, without watching oneself being, watching oneself existing, watching oneself doing, with an absolute sincerity.