14 November 1956

Mother finishes reading Part One of The Synthesis of Yoga.

Now we have finished. Do you have something to ask about this subject, in conclusion? What are your reflections? Your comments?

(Silence)

All right. What effect has this had on you? Has it helped you, did you have the impression that it put you on the way, that it gave you the key of the discovery?

Didn’t you think anything? Didn’t you feel anything, experience anything? You did not... did you listen?

(Long silence)

Now the last question; if you do not answer, we won’t talk about it any more: Did this make you want to do yoga or not?

(Mother looks around.) A nod of the head but, all the same, that’s something.

Yes or no? A little, much, not at all?... So (turning to a child) it is your turn to speak. Has it made you want to do yoga or not?

There were chapters — when I read and understood it well, then I felt a great aspiration. But at other times...

Why? Because you did not follow or because there was no response?
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I think sometimes because I did not follow and sometimes because I did not concentrate properly.

Has anyone else anything to say?

Mother, when you read, it gives a great encouragement to do yoga, but when one tries to visualise the effort that must be put in, one doesn't have much confidence in oneself.

When I read it is all right and then it burns out... Then I must read to you about that very often in order to re-light the spark!

Very well, next time we shall take Thoughts and Glimpses.

Is that all? Has anyone a question to ask on the subject?

Mother, how can one conquer the desire to appear good in the eyes of others?

Oh, Lord!... To appear good in others’ eyes, to have public approval? Is that it?

First, the best way is to ask oneself why one values others’ approval. For what particular reason, because there are many reasons.... If you have a career and your career depends on the good opinion others have of you, then that’s a utilitarian reason. If you have a little, or much, vanity and like compliments, that’s another reason. If you attach great value to others’ opinion of you because you feel they are wiser or more enlightened or have more knowledge, that’s yet another reason. There are many others still, but these are the three chief reasons: utility, vanity — usually this is the strongest — and progress.

Naturally, when it is a reason of progress, the attitude is not quite the same, for instead of trying to make a good impression, one must first endeavour to know the impression one is actually making, in all humility, in order to profit by the lesson this gives. That is quite rare, and in fact, if one isn’t too naive, one
usually attaches importance only to the opinion of those who have more experience, more knowledge and more wisdom than oneself. And so that leads us straight to one of the best methods of cure. It is precisely to come to understand that the opinion of those who are as ignorant and blind as ourselves cannot have a very great value for us from the point of view of the deeper reality and the will to progress, and so one stops attaching much importance to that.

Finally, if one is sincere one desires no other approval except that of one’s teacher or one’s guru or of the Divine Himself. And that’s the first step towards a total cure of this little weakness of wishing to make a good impression on people. Now, if the movement comes from a motive of utility, the one I spoke of first, the question does not arise here, for here we do not depend upon the opinion others have of us, either for living or for our development. So there remains the most frequent instance, the one most difficult to cure: that kind of small, very foolish vanity which makes you like to be complimented and dislike being criticised. So the best way is to look at yourself, to see how very ridiculous you are, how petty, paltry, stupid and all that, to laugh a little at yourself and resolve to do without the compliments of others.

That is all I have to offer.

It is obvious that if it is a matter of yoga, of yogic discipline, an indispensable preliminary condition is to free oneself from this little stupidity of wanting to be appreciated by others. That is not the first step on the path, it is one of the first steps in the preparation for being able to enter on the path. For so long as one needs to be appreciated and complimented, one is a slavish being and a deplorable weakling.

Indeed, it is better not to care at all about what others think of you, whether it is good or bad. But in any case, before reaching this stage, it would be less ridiculous to try to find out the impression you make on others simply by taking them as a mirror in which you see your reflection more exactly than in
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your own consciousness which is always over-indulgent to all your weakness, blindness, passions, ignorance. There is always quite a charming and pleasant mental explanation to give you a good impression of yourself. But to conclude, when you have the chance of getting information that’s a little more trustworthy and reliable about the condition you are in, it is better not to ask the opinion of others, but only to refer all to the vision of the guru. If you really want to progress, this is the surest path.

There we are. Is that all?

Mother, I had a question. The control of one’s own movements and the control of the vast life around oneself — are these interdependent or independent?

Self-control and the control of what surrounds you?... That depends on your standpoint. The police superintendent, for instance, has a certain control over the circumstances around him, but he doesn’t usually have much self-control! (Laughter)

What exactly do you want to know?

To understand the meaning of “control over the vast life around it.”

Oh! it is a phrase from the book!

It is quite obvious that one must first begin by self-control, otherwise one has no effect on the surroundings except to increase the confusion.

To give an example, Vivekananda had no control over his own anger, but he had great control over the life around him.

1 “It is thus by an integralisation of our divided being that the Divine Shakti in the Yoga will proceed to its object; for liberation, perfection, mastery are dependent on this integralisation, since the little wave on the surface cannot control its own movement, much less have any true control over the vast life around it.”

This is the first time I’ve heard that. He had no control over his anger? Who told you that story?

*It is in his biography.*

Did he say it himself? Is it authentic, this story?

(Another disciple) *Yes, sometimes he used to get carried away.*

But he knew it himself?

*Yes, he knew it.*

Anyway, he did not have a “great control” over his surroundings: he had a great influence, which is something very different. One can’t control outer matter if one does not control inner matter, for they are the same thing. But he had an influence, which is quite different. It is not a mastery, it is an influence. That is, he could awaken certain movements in others, but he could not control them, it was they who had to control themselves with the awakening, it was not — I say “he”, it can be anyone you see, it is a general rule.

Besides, it is childishly simple, for mastery means the knowledge of handling certain vibrations; if you know how to handle these vibrations you have the mastery. The best field of experimentation is yourself: first you have the control in yourself and once you have it in yourself you can transmit the vibration to others, to the extent you are capable of identifying yourself with them and of thus creating this vibration in them. And if you cannot handle a vibration in yourself, you don’t even know the procedure; you don’t even know what to do, so how can you manipulate it in others? You may encourage them by words, by an influence over them, to do what is needed to learn self-control, but you cannot control them directly.
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To control something, a movement, is simply to replace by one's presence, without words or explanations, the bad vibration by the true one. This is what constitutes the power of mastery. It does not lie in speaking, in explaining; with words and explanations and even a certain emanation of force, you may have an influence on someone, but you do not control his movement. The control of the movement is the capacity to oppose the vibration of this movement by a stronger, truer vibration which can stop the other one... I could give you an example, you know, a very easy one. Two people are arguing in front of you; not only are they arguing, but they are on the point of coming to blows; so you explain to them that this is not the thing to do, you give them good reasons for stopping and they come to a stop. You will have had an influence on them. But if you simply stand before them and look at them and send out a vibration of peace, calm, quietude, without saying a word, without any explanation, the other vibration will no longer be able to last, it will fall away of itself. That is mastery.

The same thing applies to the cure of ignorance. If you need words to explain something, that is not true knowledge. If I have to say all that I do say for you to understand me, that is not mastery, it is simply that I am able to exercise an influence on your intelligence and help you to understand and awaken in you the desire to know and discipline yourselves, etc. But if by looking at you, without saying anything I am not able to make the light enter into you, the light which will make you understand, I won't have mastered the movement or the state of ignorance. Do you understand this?

So I can tell you with certainty that at least in this matter, if it is historically correct that Vivekananda had movements of anger which he could not control, that is, that he was carried away either in word or action, well, in this matter he was incapable of controlling those around him. He could only awaken similar vibrations in them, and so probably justify their weakness as regards this. He could say to them in so many words "Above
all, don’t fly into a temper”, but that is no use at all. It is the eternal “Do what I say, not what I do.” But that has no effect.

(Silence)

Mother, the problem comes up in our class.

Oh! oh! you get into a temper with your students? (Laughter)

To control and discipline them, what should one do if one has no self-control?

Then one can’t! (Laughter)

But the way you describe it, this control will take a whole lifetime!

Oh! what a pity! (Laughter)

But how can you hope... Let us see, you have an indisciplined, disobedient, insolent pupil; well, that represents a certain vibration in the atmosphere which, besides, is unfortunately very contagious; but if you yourself do not have within you the opposite vibration, the vibration of discipline, order, humility, of a quietude and peace which nothing can disturb, how do you expect to have any influence? You are going to tell him that this should not be done? — Either that will make things worse or he will make fun of you!

Usually...

And if by chance you don’t have any control yourself and become angry, then it’s finished! You lose for ever all possibility of exercising any authority over your students.

Teachers who are not perfectly calm, who do not have an endurance that never fails, and a quietude which nothing can
disturb, who have no self-respect — those who are like that will get nowhere. One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must be a great yogi to be a good teacher. One must have a perfect attitude to be able to exact a perfect attitude from the students. You cannot ask anyone to do what you don’t do yourself. That is a rule. So look at the difference between what is and what ought to be, and you will be able to estimate the extent of your failure in class.

That is all I can offer you.

And I may add, since there’s the occasion for it: we ask many students here when they grow up and know something, to teach others. There are some, I believe, who understand why; but there are also others who think it is because it is good to serve in some way or other and that teachers are needed and we are happy to have them. But I tell you — for it is a fact — that I have never asked anyone educated here to give lessons without seeing that this would be for him the best way of disciplining himself, of learning better what he is to teach and of reaching an inner perfection he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this opportunity of disciplining himself, which is exceptionally severe. Those who succeed as teachers here — I don’t mean an outer, artificial and superficial success, but becoming truly good teachers — this means that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, controlling their movements, capable of a clear-sightedness, an understanding of others and a never-failing patience.

If you go through that discipline and succeed, well, you have not wasted your time here.

And I ask all those who accept to give lessons, to accept it in that spirit. It is all very well to be kind and do some service and be useful; that is good of course, a very good thing; but it is only one aspect and perhaps the least important aspect of the problem. The most important one is that it is a Grace given to you so that you can achieve self-control, an understanding of
the subject and of others which you could never have acquired but for this opportunity.

And if you have not benefited from this all these years you have been teaching others, it means that you have at the very least wasted half your time.

(Silence)

Is that all? Convinced? You are going to set to work!

(Another disciple) Mother, what you have said concerns each teacher, his inner attitude.

Yes.

But concerning the outer organisation of the school, how do you want it to be done? — because at the moment there are many disputes among the teachers.

Disputes! Not too many, I hope!

Discussions. (Laughter)

How do I want it?

I can tell you things in general, you see, but the details of the organisation... What is your problem?

So far what you have said about the University consists of general ideas, but what about the details?

Yes...

2 The Ashram School was originally named Sri Aurobindo International University Centre; later the name was changed to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.
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There are many differences of opinion; so what is the true way you want us to follow?

But excuse me, first you must tell me from what point of view. “Organisation” is very vague, isn’t it? If it is about the courses of study, that’s quite a formidable subject which can’t be settled just like that. If it is the method of teaching, that is something quite personal — personal in both cases. The general plan is easy, that is, it has been given quite clearly; but unless you give me an instance about which, let us say, there is some discussion and different opinions...

For example, let us take one point, Mother. You have said that the student must be given full freedom. Now, some interpret this as meaning that there should be no fixed classes, for the student should be left free to do what he likes, to come to the class or not as he likes, etc. So in this case, there should not be fixed hours for each class. And in this case the organisation becomes very complicated — how to arrange the classes?

Quite impossible! But when did I say that the student must be left free to come or not?...

Excuse me, you must not confuse things. I have said and I repeat that if a student feels quite alien to a subject, for example, if a student feels he has an ability for literature and poetry and has a distaste or at least an indifference for mathematics, if he tells me, “I prefer not to follow the mathematics course”, I can’t tell him, “No, it is absolutely necessary to go to it.” But if a student has decided to follow a class, it is an absolutely elementary discipline that he follows it, goes to it regularly and behaves himself properly there; otherwise he is altogether unworthy of going to school. I have never encouraged anyone to roam about during class-hours and to come one day and be absent the next, never, for, to begin with, if he can’t submit to this quite elementary
discipline, he will never acquire the least control over himself, he will always be the slave of all his impulses and all his fancies.

If you don’t want to study a certain branch of knowledge, that is all right, no one can compel you to do it; but if you decide to do something — anything in life, if you decide to do a thing — you must do it *honestly*, with discipline, regularity and method. And without whims. I have never approved of anyone being the plaything of his own impulses and fancies, never, and you will never be able to have that from me, for then one is no longer a human being, one is an animal. So, here is one of the questions quite settled, without any discussion.

Now, another problem?

*That will be for next time!* (Laughter)

Good. Let us keep it for another time. We shall stop here.