This talk is based upon the Mother’s essays “Transformation” and “What a Child Should Always Remember” (On Education, CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 80–81, 149).

“We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities. But there is an absolutely indispensable first step that must be accomplished before anything else can be undertaken: the transformation of the consciousness.... However, this is only a beginning; for the outer consciousness, the various planes and parts of the outer active being are transformed only slowly and gradually as a result of the inner transformation.”

Why do I make a distinction between the integral transformation and the transformation of consciousness which I mentioned earlier? What is the connection between consciousness and the other parts of the being? What are these other parts?

This transformation of consciousness is something that comes to all who have practised a yogic discipline and become aware of the divine Presence or the Truth of their being. I don’t say that “many” people have realised this, but at least quite a few. What is the difference between this experience and the integral transformation?

In the integral transformation both the outer nature and the inner consciousness are transformed. The character, the habits, etc. are completely changed, as well as the thoughts and the mental outlook on things.

Yes, but there is something which remains unchanged unless you take care and persist in your effort. What is it? The body
consciousness. What is the body consciousness? The vital consciousness, of course — the physical consciousness as a whole. But then, in this physical consciousness as a whole, there is the physical mind — a mind that is occupied with all the ordinary things and responds to everything around you. There is also the vital consciousness, which is the awareness of sensations, impulses, enthusiasms and desires. Finally, there is the physical consciousness itself, the material consciousness, the body consciousness, and that is the one which has so far never been entirely transformed. The global, overall consciousness of the body has been transformed, that is, one can throw off the bondage of thought, of habits that one no longer considers inevitable. That can change, it has been changed. But what remains to be changed is the consciousness of the cells.

There is a consciousness in the cells: it is what we call the “body consciousness” and it is wholly bound up with the body. This consciousness has much difficulty in changing, because it is under the influence of the collective suggestion which is absolutely opposed to the transformation. So one has to struggle with this collective suggestion, not only with the collective suggestion of the present, but with the collective suggestion which belongs to the earth-consciousness as a whole, the terrestrial human consciousness which goes back to the earliest formation of man. That has to be overcome before the cells can be spontaneously aware of the Truth, of the Eternity of matter.

Of course, until now, those who have achieved this conscious transformation, who are aware of the eternal and infinite life within themselves, in the depths of their being, must, in order to preserve this consciousness, constantly refer back to their inner experience, return to their inner contemplation, live in a sort of more or less constant meditation. And when they come out of meditation, their outer nature is pretty much what it was before, and their way of thinking and reacting is not very different — unless they give up action altogether. But in that case the inner realisation, this transformation of the consciousness,
is helpful only for the person who has achieved it, but it doesn’t change the condition of matter or earthly life in the least.

For this transformation to succeed, all human beings — even all living beings as well as their material environment — must be transformed. Otherwise things will remain as they are: an individual experience cannot change terrestrial life. This is the essential difference between the old idea of transformation — that is, the becoming conscious with the psychic being and the inner life — and transformation as we conceive it and speak of it. Not only an individual or a group of individuals or even all individuals, but life, the overall consciousness of this more or less developed material life, have to be transformed. Without such a transformation we shall have the same misery, the same calamities and the same atrocities in the world. A few individuals will escape from it by their psychic development, but the general mass will remain in the same state of misery.

*If only the inner consciousness is changed, won’t some impurities still remain in the outer being?*

Yes, of course. That is the essential difference between our yoga and the old yogic disciplines which dealt only with the inner consciousness. The old beliefs used to say — and some people interpret the Bhagavat Gita in this way — that there is no fire without smoke, no life without ignorance in life. That is the common experience, but it is not our idea, is it?

We know by experience that if we go down into the subconscient, lower than the physical consciousness, into the subconscient and even lower still into the inconscient, we can find in ourselves the origin of atavism, of what comes from our early education and the environment in which we lived. And this gives a kind of special characteristic to the individual, to his outer nature, and it is generally believed that we are born like that and we will stay like that. But by going down into the subconscient, into the inconscient, one can trace the origin
of this formation and undo what has been done, change the movements and reactions of the ordinary nature by a conscious and deliberate action and thus really transform one’s character. This is not a common achievement, but it has been done. So one may assert not only that it can be done, but that it has been done. It is the first step towards the integral transformation, but after that, there remains the transformation of the cells which I mentioned earlier.

There is an article by Sri Aurobindo in one of the Bulletins which describes the various stages through which the entire physical being can be changed. And this is what so far has never been done.

*Does the inconscient in oneself belong to the individual being or to the earth?*

The inconscient is not individualised and when you go down into the inconscient in yourself, it is the inconscient of matter. One can’t say that each individual has his own inconscient, for that would already be a beginning of individualisation, and when you go down into the inconscient, it is perhaps not the universal but at least the terrestrial inconscient.

The light, the consciousness that comes down into this inconscient in order to transform it must necessarily be a consciousness that is close enough to be able to touch it. It is not possible to conceive of a light — the supramental light, for example — that would have the power to individualise the inconscient. But, through a conscious, individualised being, this light can be brought down into the inconscient and gradually make it conscious.

First of all, it is the subconscient that has to become conscious, and indeed the main difficulty of the integral transformation is that things are constantly rising up from the subconscient. You think you have got a certain movement under control — anger, for example. You try very hard to control your anger
and succeed to some extent, then suddenly it rises up again for some reason unknown to you, as if you hadn’t done anything at all, and you have to start all over again. If it were the transformed part of the being going back to its old ways, it would be most depressing, but it is not like that. It is the material part, the material life which is sustained, supported, so to say, by a subconscious life. And this subconscious is beginning to get individualised around some people; it has certain affinities with a kind of subconscious somewhat like our own, and that is where the things you have repressed or thrown out of your nature go to—and one fine day they rise up again. But if you are able to bring the light into the subconscious and make it conscious, this will no longer happen.

One often has the experience of struggling more or less successfully with a defect or a wrong movement, but just when one gives up expecting a total victory, the thing is removed as if from outside. Why is that?

There are two main reasons for this. In such a case, you may suddenly become receptive, and in this state of receptivity you receive the help that is needed to remove the defect and the help becomes effective. The other reason is that, while trying with patience and perseverance, you have—perhaps unknowingly—hit upon the origin of the difficulty in the subconscious. And once that is done, it is easy to transform whatever you wanted to transform in yourself. But this transformation may seem to you to come “from outside”, because you were not aware of what was going on. It does not come from outside, it is outside your active consciousness, and you are aware only of the “result” of your action. It may be one of these two things or both together.

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296
“WHAT A CHILD SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER

The necessity of an absolute sincerity.
The certitude of Truth’s final victory.
The possibility of constant progress with the will to achieve.”

Why do I insist on absolute sincerity? Perhaps the younger children don’t understand what sincerity is, but the older ones surely ought to know! You have all passed through childhood and you probably remember what you were taught, what you were told when you were young. Parents nearly always tell their children, “You must not lie, it is very bad to tell a lie.” But the unfortunate thing is that they lie in your presence and then you wonder why they want you to do something which they don’t do themselves.

But, apart from that, why do I insist on the fact that children should be told from a very early age that it is absolutely necessary to be sincere? I am not addressing those who were brought up here, but those who were brought up in an ordinary family, with ordinary ideas. Children are very often taught how to outsmart others, how to dissimulate so as to appear good in others’ eyes. Some parents try to control children through fear, and that is the worst possible method of education, for it is an incentive to lying, deceit, hypocrisy and all the rest. But if you repeatedly explain to children something of this kind: If you are not absolutely sincere, not only with others but also with yourself, if at any time you try to cover up your imperfections and failings, you will never make any progress, you will always remain what you are throughout all your life, without ever making any progress. So, even if you only want to grow out of this primitive unconscious state into a progressive consciousness, the most important thing, the one absolutely important thing is sincerity. If you have done something which you ought not to have done, you must admit it to yourself; if a less-than-admirable movement has occurred in yourself, you must look it in the face
and tell yourself, “It was not good,” or “It was disgusting,” or even “It was wicked.”

And don’t think that there are people to whom this rule does not apply, for you cannot live in the physical world without having a share in the physical nature, and physical nature is essentially a mixture. You will see, when you become absolutely sincere, that there is nothing in yourself that is absolutely un-mixed. But it is only when you look yourself in the face, in the light of your highest consciousness, that whatever you want to eliminate from your nature will disappear. Without this striving for absolute sincerity, the defect, the little shadow, will stay in a corner biding its time to come out.

I am not speaking of the vital, which is hypocritical, I am merely speaking of the mind. If you have a small, disagreeable sensation, a slight uneasiness, see how quickly the mind gives you a favourable explanation! It lays the blame on someone else or on the circumstances, it says that what you did was right and that you are not responsible, and so on. If you look carefully into yourself, you will see that it is like that and you will find it most amusing too! If a child starts examining himself carefully very early, observing himself honestly so as not to deceive himself or deceive others, it will become a habit and spare him much struggling later on.

Now I am addressing parents and teachers, for it is very important to teach children that it is absolutely useless to “look” as if they were good, to “look” as if they were obedient, to “look” as if they were studying well, etc. Very often, the course parents and teachers adopt with their children is to encourage them to “look as if”. It often happens that if a child spontaneously confesses his mistake, he is given a scolding. This is one of the greatest mistakes of parents. You must have sufficient control over yourself never to scold a child, even if he has broken a very valuable and cherished object. You should simply ask him, “How did you do that?” “What happened?” For the child ought to see why it happened, so that he can be

298
more careful next time. But that is all. In this way you will get the child to be sincere with you instead of trying to deceive you.

The greatest obstacle to the transformation of one’s own character is hypocrisy. If you always keep this in mind when dealing with a child, you can do him a lot of good. Of course, you must not sermonise or lecture him, etc. You should simply make him understand that there is a nobility in the being, a great purity, a great love of beauty, which is so powerful that even the most wicked and criminal people are forced to acknowledge a truly beautiful or heroic or selfless act.

For, in human beings, there is a presence, the most marvelous Presence on earth, and except in a few very rare cases which I need not mention here, this presence lies asleep in the heart — not the physical heart but the psychic centre — of all beings. And when this Splendour is manifested with enough purity, it will awaken in all beings the echo of this Presence.

Why does insincerity get such a sanction from society?

Because society is obsessed with success.

Is there a difference between sincerity and loyalty?

There is always a difference between two different things. Of course, it is very difficult, I suppose, to be loyal without being sincere, and vice versa. But I have known people who were loyal and yet lacked a certain kind of sincerity. The opposite is not unusual. The one doesn’t automatically follow from the other, but it is obvious that honesty, straightforwardness, loyalty and sincerity are closely related. I think that it is extremely difficult for someone to be perfectly sincere without being loyal and honest, but of course this demands the utmost.
Isn’t loyalty limited by a feeling for something or someone? Isn’t sincerity something wider?

Yes, it is. Loyalty implies some kind of hierarchical relationship, so to say, with someone or something. There is a sort of interdependence. The usual idea is that loyalty means keeping one’s word, doing one’s duty scrupulously, etc.

Someone who lives all alone in a forest can practise total sincerity, but you can only practise loyalty in social life, in relation to other people. A person who is entirely consecrated in an act of inner devotion to the divine Presence, can be loyal to this Presence. This implies a relationship with something in front of you, or a relationship with the universal.

The German generals were loyal to Hitler, but they weren’t sincere with themselves.

This is a very complex problem. They might have been sincere in relation to their own ideal. You do not know.

I have known beings who were the most active instruments against the divine life, against the divine realisation. Well, to some extent, they were loyal to their own ideal and very sincere in their...1 These beings are called Asuras, but as I have just said, they were sincere in relation to their own ideal.

So sincerity is not enough?

I didn’t say they had an absolute sincerity. I simply said that they were very sincere. Perhaps, in some part of their being, there was something that did not try to know any more than it knew. It is quite probable.

1 Words missing in the transcription.
6 January 1951

Some people think they have achieved absolute sincerity.

If you are sure you have achieved absolute sincerity, you can be sure that you are immersed in falsehood!