31 August 1955

Mother reads from *Lights on Yoga*, “Work”.

*Sweet Mother, here I did not understand “One must have the same consciousness in inner experience and outward action and make both full of the Mother.”*

I haven’t understood either.¹ Isn’t there a clause of the sentence missing? I too haven’t understood the structure of this sentence. *(Mother turns to Pavitra)* It seems to me that there’s at least a word missing.

*(Pavitra)* *I shall verify it with the English on our return.*

No. It may be like this in English. I can imagine the English sentence, but in French it is not clear. *(Mother takes up the book)* Yes, it is right at the beginning. *(Mother reads the sentence)* Oh! Yes, yes... it is not clear.²

*(Pavitra)* *That’s it; the word “remplir” is too concrete in French.*

So, now do you understand?... Is that all?

*Sweet Mother, when someone wants to do some work, is it better that you choose the work for him or that he chooses it himself?*

This depends on the point of view one takes.

¹ Mother was referring, of course, to the French translation of Sri Aurobindo’s original.

² The rest of this paragraph is a discussion of the French translation. It cannot be translated.
If it is from the point of view of yoga and of the person who wants to do the work, it is preferable to let him choose, because he can be, for example, under the illusion that he is capable of doing something and he is not; or he has an ambition, he wants to do something to satisfy his self-love, his vanity. And so, if he is allowed to do so, as the work that's done here is under the influence of the Truth-Consciousness, his incapacity for the work will appear immediately, and he will be able to make progress; whereas if I see that a particular person is capable of doing a particular work — another work, you understand — and I tell him, “No, that work does not suit you, it is better that you do this one,” he will never be convinced (he or she, it doesn’t matter), he will always think that it’s an arbitrary decision, that it’s simply because one preferred his doing this thing or that. So from his personal point of view it is better to let him do what he asks for, so that he may make the progress he ought to make. If it happens that he is very conscious of the work he can do and asks precisely for the work he ought to do, then it is good, there’s no more discussion, it is very good.

But in certain cases, perhaps it is not very good to let somebody muddle up and disturb the work in order that he may have an experience of this. So if the work which is to be done is more important than the person’s yoga, he is told, “No, I am sorry, but you are not capable of doing that. You must do this.” Only, this increases the difficulty for him (or her), as I said; for he will remain convinced that his choice was better than the one made by somebody else; whereas by experience, when he has really failed in what he has undertaken, he will understand that he has made a mistake.

Now, I am repeating it: if he happens to be conscious of what he can truly do, one has only to let him do what he wants, it is very good, this. There’s no problem. There is no difference between the perception of what he ought to do and what he chooses to do; in this case there is no problem. So it depends absolutely on the case, and on the nature of the work to be done.
Questions and Answers

It's exactly the same thing as the problem of the education of children. There are all kinds of different and even opposite theories. Some people say, “Children must be left to have their own experience because it is through experience that they learn things best.” Like that, as an idea, it is excellent; in practice it obviously requires some reservations, because if you let a child walk on the edge of a wall and he falls and breaks a leg or his head, the experience is a little hard; or if you let him play with a match-box and he burns out his eyes, you understand, it is paying very dearly for a little knowledge! I have discussed this with... I don’t remember now who it was... an educationist, a man concerned with education, who had come from England, and had his ideas about the necessity of an absolute liberty. I made this remark to him; then he said, “But for the love of liberty one can sacrifice the life of many people.” It is one opinion. (Mother laughs)

At the same time, the opposite excess of being there all the time and preventing a child from making his experiment, by telling him, “Don’t do this, this will happen”, “Don’t do that, that will happen”—then finally he will be all shrunk up into himself, and will have neither courage nor boldness in life, and this too is very bad.

In fact it comes to this:
One must never make rules.

Every minute one must endeavour to apply the highest truth one can perceive. It is much more difficult, but it’s the only solution.

Whatever you may do, don’t make rules beforehand, because once you have made a rule you follow it more or less blindly, and then you are sure, ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred, to be mistaken.

There is only one way of acting truly, it is to try at each moment, each second, in each movement to express only the highest truth one can perceive, and at the same time know that this perception has to be progressive and that what seems to
you the most true now will no longer be so tomorrow, and
that a higher truth will have to be expressed more and more
through you. This leaves no room any longer for sleeping in
a comfortable tamas; one must be always awake — I am not
speaking of physical sleep — one must be always awake, always
conscious and always full of an enlightened receptivity and of
goodwill. To want always the best, always the best, always the
best and never tell oneself, “Oh! It is tiring! Let me rest, let me
relax! Ah, I am going to stop making an effort”; then one is sure
to fall into a hole immediately and make a big stupid blunder!

The rest must not be one which goes down into the incon-
science and tamas. The rest must be an ascent into the Light,
into perfect Peace, total Silence, a rest which rises up out of the
darkness. Then it is true rest, a rest which is an ascent.

Sweet Mother, the “Dortoir” children told me to ask you
if it is good to read the illustrated “classics”.

Read what?

“Classics Illustrated”!

Whatever is that? (Laughter)

(The child gives Mother a copy of these “Classics”)
Nowadays all children read this and they told me that
they read it even during the class, when the teacher is
speaking of something else.

Well, what is this stuff? (Mother turns over the pages) Ooooh!
Where does it come from, this thing?

From America.

It is American? (Mother turns some more pages) Well, my chil-
dren, it is lamentably vulgar! There, that’s all I can say about it.
Questions and Answers

Nowadays there are hundreds of these things here, Sweet Mother!

There are hundreds of copies?

Yes, Mother. They make collections of them.
(Another child) Of different books, not the same books.
(Pavitra) More than a hundred.
(Second child) Different books, not this.
(First child) All books; of the best books they make this and then the children read this stuff and don't read the books.
(Second child) In all languages.

Yes, it is a sign of the times. It is the vulgarisation of everything: the vulgarisation of ideas, the vulgarisation of masterpieces, the vulgarisation of history, everything; everything put as low as possible, so that one doesn’t need to raise oneself, one can crawl on the ground and have this. It is the descent of the consciousness as low as possible and then one wallows there!

Oh, no! It is repulsive!

However, that’s your business! If you like to live like animals which love to waddle in mud, do that, it’s your affair. That’s all. It is deplorable!

Good, the question is closed, without any amendment.

Now I don’t give orders; each one follows his own consciousness. If you want to go down it is a very good means. (Laughter)

If you want to go up, well, I advise you to throw it away into the street. Oh! It doesn’t matter where. It’s not worth keeping — anywhere.

Mother, it is the older children who spread it among the little ones.
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Yes.

*And without asking you.*

They have asked me. Just asked me.

*They had already done this before asking you.*

Well! Is it in the Library that you get these things?

*No, Mother.*

Ah! *(Laughter)*

*Medhananda is feeling nervous.*

Just imagine, even when these things are given to you on a record (we had some records) well, even that... I was just on the point of saying, “Well, it is a little vulgar.” Because, so that the record may sell and be heard by everybody, they bring down the artistic value of the thing a little, in order to put it within the range of the public... and it was a bit grandiloquent, forced, it did not have all the purity of the original. *Julius Caesar* was played to us one day, you know. Well, there already I made my reservations; I told myself, “It is falsifying people’s taste.” Instead of having the pure nobility of the thing, it exaggerates just a little in order to please the greatest number.

So you understand, this was already a summit in comparison. At least, it had some aspirations to artistic realisation. It was not altogether well realised but there was an effort.

This thing is the very opposite. Still...!

Now, be courageous! How many of you have read these books?

*(Many children raise their hands).*

Good heavens! And you have the cheek to ask me to give meditations! Well, here’s a fine preparation for meditating!
Questions and Answers

_I read a few just to see, Sweet Mother._

Good.

Well, this evening I won’t give you any meditation. It will be for next week, if you like, but not this evening.

There, then! _Au revoir._