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This talk is based upon *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 4, “Desire — Food — Sex”.

Sweet Mother, from the beginning man ate because he needed food in order to live. Then why did taste for food develop? One eats what one likes to, and doesn't eat what one doesn't like!

I think primitive man was very close to the animal and lived more by instinct than by intelligence, you see. He ate when he was hungry, without any rule of any kind. Perhaps he had his tastes and preferences too, we know nothing much about it, but he lived much more materially, much less mentally and vitally than now.

Surely primitive man was very material, very near the animal. And as the centuries pass, man becomes more mental and more vital; and as he becomes more vital and mental, naturally refinement is possible, intelligence grows, but also the possibility of perversion and distortion. You see, there is a difference between educating one's senses to the point of being able to bring in all kinds of refinements, developments, knowledge, all the possibilities of appreciation, taste, and all that — there is a difference between this, which is truly a development and progress of consciousness, and attachment or greediness.

One can, for example, very well make a very deep study of taste and have a very detailed knowledge of the different tastes of things, of the association between ideas and taste, in order to acquire a full development — not positively vital, but a development of the senses. There is a great difference between this and those who eat through greediness, who think all the time about food. You see, for them eating is the most important

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thing; all their thoughts are concentrated on it, and they eat not because they need to eat but through desire and greed and gluttony.

In fact people who work in order to develop their taste, to refine it, are rarely very much attached to food. It is not through attachment to food that they do it. It is for the cultivation of their senses, which is a very different thing. It is like the artist, you know, who trains his eyes to appreciate forms and colours, lines, the composition of things, the harmony found in physical nature; it is not at all through desire that he does this, it is through taste, culture, the development of the sense of sight and the appreciation of beauty. And usually artists who are real artists and love their art and live in the sense of beauty, seeking beauty, are people who don't have many desires. They live in the sense of a growth not only visual, but of the appreciation of beauty. There is a great difference between this and people who live by their impulses and desires. That's altogether something else.

Usually all education, all culture, all refinement of the senses and the being is one of the best ways of curing instincts, desires, passions. To eliminate these things does not cure them; to cultivate, intellectualise, refine them, this is the surest means of curing. To give the greatest possible development for progress and growth, to acquire a certain sense of harmony and exactness of perception, this is a part of the culture of the being, of the education of the being. It is like the people who cultivate their intelligence, who learn, read, think, compare, study. These people's minds widen and they are much vaster and more understanding than those who live without mental education, with a few petty ideas which sometimes are even contradictory in their consciousness and govern them totally because these are the only ones they have and they think these are unique ideas which should guide their life; these people are altogether narrow and limited whereas those who are trained and have studied — this at least widens their minds and they can see, compare ideas and see that all possible ideas are there in the world and that it

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is a pettiness, an absurdity to be attached to a limited number of ideas and consider them the exclusive expression of truth.

Education is certainly one of the best means of preparing the consciousness for a higher development. There are people with very crude and very simple natures, who can have great aspiration and attain a certain spiritual development, but the base will always be of an inferior quality, and as soon as they return to their ordinary consciousness they will find obstacles in it, because the stuff is too thin, there are not enough elements in their vital and material consciousness to enable them to bear the descent of a higher force.

To eat through greediness and a passion for food is something completely different from studying the different tastes and knowing how to compare them, combine them and appreciate them.

Are there any other questions? No?

Sweet Mother, where do tastes come from?

It is one of the senses; it is said that it's the tongue; I don't know. It is the sense of taste, as there is the sense of touch. How does it happen that we feel something with the tips of the fingers? There are nerves there, nerves and consciousness. Taste — it is the nerves and consciousness which are in the tongue and the palate.

But there are other tastes for different things.

Oh, it is the word which is the same... The word is used in a literal sense and then in a figurative sense. He has a taste for something — that's a figurative way of using the word. It does not mean that it is the same thing as the taste of the tongue; or of somebody we say that he has good taste, it means that he knows how to appreciate clearly and judiciously, but it doesn't mean that he tastes with his tongue.

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How does fasting produce a state of receptivity?

It is because usually the vital being is very closely concentrated on the body and when the body is well fed it takes its strength from the food, its energy from the food, and it is one way... it is obviously almost the only way; not the only one, but the most important in the present conditions of life... but it is a very tamasic way of absorbing energy.

If you think about it, you see, it is the vital energy which is in either plants or animals, that is, logically it is of an inferior quality to the vital energy which should be in man, who is a slightly higher being in the gradation of the species. So if you draw from below you draw at the same time the inconscience that is below. It is impossible to eat without absorbing a considerable amount of inconscience; this makes you heavy, coarsens you; and then if you eat much, a large amount of your consciousness is absorbed in digesting and assimilating what you have eaten. So already, if you don't take food, you don't have all this inconscience to assimilate and transform inside you; it sets free the energies. And then, as there is an instinct in the being to recuperate the energies spent, if you don't take them from food, that is, from below, you instinctively make an effort to take them through union with the universal vital forces which are free, and if one knows how to assimilate them one does so directly and then there is no limit.

It is not like your stomach which can digest only a certain amount of food, and therefore you can't take in more than that; and even the food you take liberates only a little bit, a very small quantity of vital energy. And so what can remain with you after all the work of swallowing, digesting, etc.? Not much, you see. But if you learn... and this indeed is a kind of instinct, one learns instinctively to draw towards himself the universal energies which move freely in the universe and are unlimited in quantity... as much of these as you are capable of drawing towards you, you can absorb — so instinctively when there is no support from below which comes from food, you

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make the necessary movement to recuperate the energies from outside, and absorb as much of them as you are capable of doing, and sometimes more. So this puts you in a kind of state of excitement, and if your body is very strong and can bear being without food for a certain length of time, then you keep your balance and can use these energies for all kinds of things, as for example, to progress, to become more conscious and transform your nature. But if your physical body doesn't have much in reserve and grows considerably weak from not eating, then this creates an imbalance between the intensity of the energies you absorb and the capacity of the body to hold them, and then this causes disturbances. You lose your balance, and all the balance of forces is destroyed, and anything at all may happen to you. In any case, you lose much control over yourself and become usually very excited, and you take this excitement for a higher state. But often it is simply an inner imbalance, nothing more. It sharpens the receptivity very much. For example, precisely when one fasts and no longer takes the energies from below, well, if you breathe in the odour of a flower it nourishes you, the perfume nourishes you, it gives you a great deal of energy; but otherwise you do not notice it.

There are certain faculties which get intensified, and so one takes that for a spiritual effect. It has very little to do with the spiritual life except that there are people who eat much, think much about their food, are very deeply absorbed in it, and then when they have eaten well — and as I say, they must digest it, and so all their energies are concentrated on their digestion — these people are dull in mind, and this pulls them down very much towards matter; so if they stop eating and stop thinking about food — because there is one thing, that if one fasts and thinks all the time that he is hungry and would like to eat, then it is ten times worse than eating — and can truly fast because they think of something else and are occupied with something else and are not interested in food — then that can help one to climb to a slightly higher degree of consciousness, to free himself

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from the slavery to material needs. But fasting is above all good for those who believe in it — as everything. When you have the faith that this will make you progress, is going to purify you, it does you good. If you don't believe in it, it doesn't do much, except that it makes you thin.

There was... Maeterlinck — you know the books of Maeterlinck, I think; you must have read *The Blue Bird* and others. He was a very fat man, and as he had a sense of beauty, becoming fat upset him very much. So he had decided to fast once a week; one day in the week he did not eat, and as he was an intelligent man he did not bother about food; he wrote, he worked hard on that day, and that kept him reasonably well and in an elegant form; and from that point of view it was very useful to him.

This is the surest result: if one doesn't eat one grows thin; so if one is too fat and wants to grow thin, it is a good means. But on condition that one doesn't pass the day thinking of food, because then, as soon as one stops his fast, he dashes for it and eats so much that he gets back all that he has lost. In fact, the best thing is not to think about it but to regulate one's life automatically enough not to need to think of eating. You eat at fixed hours, eat reasonably, you don't even need to think of the food when you are taking it; you must eat calmly, that's all, quietly, with concentration, and when you do not eat you must never think about it. You must not eat too much, because then you will have to think about your digestion, and it will be very unpleasant for you and will make you waste much time. You must eat just... you must put an end to all desire, all attraction, all movements of the vital, because when you eat simply because the body needs to eat, the body will tell you absolutely precisely and exactly when it has had enough; you see, when one is not moved by a vital desire or mental ideas, one grasps this with surety. "Now it is enough," says the body, "I don't want any more." So one stops. As soon as one has ideas or else desires in the vital, and there is, for instance, something that you like particularly, because you like it particularly you eat three times too much of it... In fact,

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this may cure you to a certain extent, because if you don't have a very strong stomach, you get indigestion, and then after that you have a disgust for the thing which has given you indigestion. Still, these are rather drastic means. One can make progress without having recourse to such means. The best is not to think about it.

Of course there are people who prepare food for themselves and for others, and who are obliged to think about it, but just a very little. One can prepare food while thinking about more interesting things. But in any case, the less one thinks about it the better; and when one is not concerned with it, either mentally or vitally, the body becomes a very good indicator. When it is hungry it will tell you, when it needs to take in something, it will tell you; when it has finished, when it doesn't need any more, it will tell you; and when it doesn't need food, it doesn't think about it, it thinks of something else. It is only the head which creates all the trouble. In fact it is always the head which creates the trouble, because one doesn't know how to use it. If one knew how to use it, it could also create harmony. But it is something very strange that people always use their imagination for something bad, and it is very very rarely that they use their imagination for the good. Instead of thinking of happy things which would help to keep them in balance and harmony, they always think of all the possible catastrophes, and so naturally they disturb the balance of their being, and into the bargain, if they are unfortunate enough to be afraid, they attract the catastrophes they fear.

There we are. That's all? No questions?

Good night, my children.