

# The Sunlit Path



**Sri Aurobindo Chair of Integral Studies**

**Sardar Patel University**

**Vallabh Vidyanagar**

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## Editorial

Dear friends,

I am happy to bring to you the fourth and final issue of special compilations of The Sunlit Path.

This issue contains four articles written by The Mother entitled “The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations” and an article entitled “ To the Students, Young and Old”.

They are taken from Collected Works of The Mother, volume 12. This issue has been numbered 196-199 in view of enormity of contents.

I am sure that everyone will find very, very uplifting reading resource in these compilations.

Sincere Regards,

Dr Bhalendu Vaishnav



# The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations

## The Mother

### 1

TO PURSUE an integral education that leads to the supramental realisation, four austerities are necessary, and with them four liberations.

Austerity is usually confused with self-mortification, and when someone speaks of austerities, we think of the discipline of the ascetic who, in order to avoid the arduous task of spiritualising the physical, vital and mental life, declares it incapable of transformation and casts it away ruthlessly as a useless encumbrance, as a bondage and an impediment to all spiritual progress, in any case as something incorrigible, as a load that has to be borne more or less cheerfully until Nature, or divine Grace, delivers you from it by death. At best, life on earth is a field for progress and one should take advantage of it as best one can in order to reach as soon as possible the degree of perfection which will put an end to the ordeal by making it unnecessary.

For us the problem is quite different. Life on earth is not a passage or a means; by transformation it must become a goal and a realisation. Consequently, when we speak of austerities, it is not out of contempt for the body nor to detach ourselves from it, but because of the need for control and mastery. For there is an austerity which is far greater, far more complete and far more difficult than all the austerities of the ascetic: it is the austerity which is necessary for the integral transformation, the



fourfold austerity which prepares the individual for the manifestation of the supramental truth. For example, one can say that few austerities are as strict as those which physical culture demands for the perfection of the body. But we shall return to this point in due time. 48 The Four Austerities

Before starting to describe the four kinds of austerity required, it is necessary to clarify one question which is a source of much misunderstanding and confusion in the minds of most people. It is the question of ascetic practices, which they mistake for spiritual disciplines. These practices, which consist of illtreating the body in order, so they say, to liberate the spirit from it, are in fact a sensuous distortion of spiritual discipline; it is a kind of perverse need for suffering which drives the ascetic to self-mortification. The sadhu's recourse to the bed of nails or the Christian anchorite's resort to the whip and the hair-shirt are the result of a more or less veiled sadistic tendency, unavowed and unavowable; it is an unhealthy seeking or a subconscious need for violent sensations. In reality, these things are very far removed from all spiritual life, for they are ugly and base, dark and diseased; whereas spiritual life, on the contrary, is a life of light and balance, beauty and joy. They are invented and extolled by a sort of mental and vital cruelty towards the body. But cruelty, even with regard to one's own body, is nonetheless cruelty, and all cruelty is a sign of great unconsciousness. Unconscious natures need very strong sensations, for without them they can feel nothing; and cruelty, which is one form of sadism, brings very strong sensations. The avowed purpose of such practices is to abolish all sensation so that the body may no longer stand in

the way of one's flight towards the spirit; but the effectiveness of this method is open to doubt. It is a recognised fact that in order to progress rapidly, one must not be afraid of difficulties; on the contrary, by choosing to do the difficult thing at every opportunity, one increases the will-power and strengthens the nerves. Now, it is much more difficult to lead a life of moderation and balance, in equanimity and serenity, than to try to contend with over-indulgence in pleasure and the obscuration it entails, by over-indulgence in asceticism and the disintegration it causes. It is much more difficult to achieve the harmonious and progressive development of one's physical being in calm and simplicity than to ill-treat it to the point of annihilation. It is much more difficult to live soberly and without desire than to deprive the body of its indispensable nourishment and cleanliness and boast proudly of one's abstinence. It is much more difficult to avoid or to surmount and conquer illness by an inner and outer harmony, purity and balance, than to disregard and ignore it and leave it free to do its work of destruction. And the most difficult thing of all is to maintain the consciousness constantly at the height of its capacity, never allowing the body to act under the influence of a lower impulse.

This is why we shall have recourse to the four austerities which will result in four liberations within us.

The practice of these austerities will constitute a fourfold discipline or tapasya which can be defined as follows:

1) Tapasya of love



2) Tapasya of knowledge

3) Tapasya of power

4) Tapasya of beauty

These terms have been listed from top to bottom, so to say, but their order should not be taken to indicate anything superior or inferior, or more or less difficult, or the order in which these disciplines can and ought to be practised. The order, importance and difficulty vary with each individual and no absolute rule can be formulated. Each one must find and work out his own system according to his personal needs and capacities.

Accordingly, only an overall view will be given here, presenting an ideal procedure that is as complete as possible. Each one will then have to apply as much of it as he can in the best possible way.

The tapasya or discipline of beauty will lead us, through austerity in physical life, to freedom in action. Its basic programme will be to build a body that is beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and robust in its health and organic functioning.

To achieve these results, it will be good, as a general rule, to make use of habit as a help in organising one's material life, for the body functions more easily within the framework of a regular routine. But one must know how to avoid becoming a slave to one's habits, however good they may be; the



greatest flexibility must be maintained so that one may change them each time it becomes necessary to do so.

One must build up nerves of steel in powerful and elastic muscles in order to be able to endure anything whenever it is indispensable. But at the same time great care must be taken not to demand more from the body than the effort which is strictly necessary, the expenditure of energy that fosters growth and progress, while categorically excluding everything that causes exhaustion and leads in the end to physical decline and disintegration.

A physical culture which aims at building a body capable of serving as a fit instrument for a higher consciousness demands very austere habits: a great regularity in sleep, food, exercise and every activity. By a scrupulous study of one's own bodily needs — for they vary with each individual — a general programme will be established; and once this has been done well, it must be followed rigorously, without any fantasy or slackness. There must be no little exceptions to the rule that are indulged in “just for once” but which are repeated very often — for as soon as one yields to temptation, even “just for once”, one lessens the resistance of the will-power and opens the door to every failure. One must therefore forgo all weakness: no more nightly escapades from which one comes back exhausted, no more feasting and carousing which upset the normal functioning of the stomach, no more distractions, amusements and pleasures that only waste energy and leave one without the strength to do the daily practice. One must submit to the austerity of a sensible and

regular life, concentrating all one's physical attention on building a body that comes as close to perfection as possible. To reach this ideal goal, one must strictly shun all excess and every vice, great or small; one must deny oneself the use of such slow poisons as tobacco, alcohol, etc., which men have a habit of developing into indispensable needs that gradually destroy the will and the memory. The all-absorbing interest which nearly all human beings, even the most intellectual, have in food, its preparation and its consumption, should be replaced by an almost chemical knowledge of the needs of the body and a very scientific austerity in satisfying them. Another austerity must be added to that of food, the austerity of sleep. It does not consist in going without sleep but in knowing how to sleep. Sleep must not be a fall into unconsciousness which makes the body heavy instead of refreshing it. Eating with moderation and abstaining from all excess greatly reduces the need to spend many hours in sleep; however, the quality of sleep is much more important than its quantity. In order to have a truly effective rest and relaxation during sleep, it is good as a rule to drink something before going to bed, a cup of milk or soup or fruit-juice, for instance. Light food brings a quiet sleep. One should, however, abstain from all copious meals, for then the sleep becomes agitated and is disturbed by nightmares, or else is dense, heavy and dulling. But the most important thing of all is to make the mind clear, to quieten the emotions and calm the effervescence of desires and the preoccupations which accompany them. If before retiring to bed one has talked a lot or had a lively discussion, if one has read an exciting or intensely interesting book, one should rest a little without sleeping in order to quieten the mental



activity, so that the brain does not engage in disorderly movements while the other parts of the body alone are asleep. Those who practise meditation will do well to concentrate for a few minutes on a lofty and restful idea, in an aspiration towards a higher and vaster consciousness. Their sleep will benefit greatly from this and they will largely be spared the risk of falling into unconsciousness while they sleep.

After the austerity of a night spent wholly in resting in a calm and peaceful sleep comes the austerity of a day which is sensibly organised; its activities will be divided between the progressive and skilfully graded exercises required for the culture of the body, and work of some kind or other. For both can and ought to form part of the physical tapasya. With regard to exercises, each one will choose the ones best suited to his body and, if possible, take guidance from an expert on the subject, who knows how to combine and grade the exercises to obtain a maximum effect. Neither the choice nor the execution of these exercises should be governed by fancy. One must not do this or that because it seems easier or more amusing; there should be no change of training until the instructor considers it necessary. The self-perfection or even simply the self-improvement of each individual body is a problem to be solved, and its solution demands much patience, perseverance and regularity. In spite of what many people think, the athlete's life is not a life of amusement or distraction; on the contrary, it is a life of methodical efforts and austere habits, which leave no room for useless fancies that go against the result one wants to achieve.

In work too there is an austerity. It consists in not having any preferences and in doing everything one does with interest. For one who wants to grow in self-perfection, there are no great or small tasks, none that are important or unimportant; all are equally useful for one who aspires for progress and self-mastery. It is said that one only does well what one is interested in doing. This is true, but it is truer still that one can learn to find interest in everything one does, even in what appear to be the most insignificant chores. The secret of this attainment lies in the urge towards self-perfection. Whatever occupation or task falls to your lot, you must do it with a will to progress; whatever one does, one must not only do it as best one can but strive to do it better and better in a constant effort for perfection. In this way everything without exception becomes interesting, from the most material chore to the most artistic and intellectual work. The scope for progress is infinite and can be applied to the smallest thing.

This leads us quite naturally to liberation in action. For, in one's action, one must be free from all social conventions, all moral prejudices. However, this does not mean that one should lead a life of licence and dissoluteness. On the contrary, one imposes on oneself a rule that is far stricter than all social rules, for it tolerates no hypocrisy and demands a perfect sincerity. One's entire physical activity should be organised to help the body to grow in balance and strength and beauty. For this purpose, one must abstain from all pleasure-seeking, including sexual pleasure. For every sexual act is a step towards death. That is why from the most ancient times, in the most sacred and secret schools, this act was prohibited to every aspirant



towards immortality. The sexual act is always followed by a longer or shorter period of unconsciousness that opens the door to all kinds of influences and causes a fall in consciousness. But if one wants to prepare oneself for the supramental life, one must never allow one's consciousness to slip into laxity and inconstancy under the pretext of pleasure or even of rest and relaxation. One should find relaxation in force and light, not in darkness and weakness. Continence is therefore the rule for all those who aspire for progress. But especially for those who want to prepare themselves for the supramental manifestation, this continence must be replaced by a total abstinence, achieved not by coercion and suppression but by a kind of inner alchemy, as a result of which the energies that are normally used in the act of procreation are transmuted into energies for progress and integral transformation. It is obvious that for the result to be total and truly beneficial, all sexual impulses and desires must be eliminated from the mental and vital consciousness as well as from the physical will. All radical and durable transformation proceeds from within outwards, so that the external transformation is the normal, almost inevitable result of this process.

A decisive choice has to be made between lending the body to Nature's ends in obedience to her demand to perpetuate the race as it is, and preparing this same body to become a step towards the creation of the new race. For it is not possible to do both at the same time; at every moment one has to decide whether one wants to remain part of the humanity of yesterday or to belong to the superhumanity of tomorrow.

One must renounce being adapted to life as it is and succeeding in it if one wants to prepare for life as it will be and to become an active and efficient part of it.

One must refuse pleasure if one wants to open to the delight of existence, in a total beauty and harmony.

This brings us quite naturally to vital austerity, the austerity of the sensations, the tapasya of power. For the vital being is the seat of power, of effective enthusiasm. It is in the vital that thought is transformed into will and becomes a dynamism for action. It is also true that the vital is the seat of desires and passions, of violent impulses and equally violent reactions, of revolt and depression. The normal remedy is to strangle and starve the vital by depriving it of all sensation; sensations are indeed its main sustenance and without them it falls asleep, grows sluggish and starves to death.

In fact, the vital has three sources of subsistence. The one most easily accessible to it comes from below, from the physical energies through the sensations.

The second is on its own plane, when it is sufficiently vast and receptive, by contact with the universal vital forces.



The third, to which it usually opens only in a great aspiration for progress, comes to it from above by the infusion and absorption of spiritual forces and inspiration.

To these sources men always strive more or less to add another, which is for them at the same time the source of most of their torments and misfortunes. It is the interchange of vital forces with their fellows, usually in groups of two, which they most often mistake for love, but which is only the attraction between two forces that take pleasure in mutual interchange.

Thus, if we do not wish to starve our vital, sensations must not be rejected or diminished in number and intensity. Neither should we avoid them; rather we must make use of them with wisdom and discernment. Sensations are an excellent instrument of knowledge and education, but to make them serve these ends, they must not be used egoistically for the sake of enjoyment, in a blind and ignorant search for pleasure and self-satisfaction.

The senses should be capable of enduring everything without disgust or displeasure, but at the same time they must acquire and develop more and more the power of discerning the quality, origin and effect of the various vital vibrations in order to know whether they are favourable to harmony, beauty and good health or whether they are harmful to the balance and progress of the physical being and the vital. Moreover, the senses should

be used as instruments to approach and study the physical and vital worlds in all their complexity; in this way they will take their true place in the great endeavour towards transformation.

It is by enlightening, strengthening and purifying the vital, and not by weakening it, that one can contribute to the true progress of the being. To deprive oneself of sensations is therefore as harmful as depriving oneself of food. But just as the choice of food must be made wisely and solely for the growth and proper functioning of the body, so too the choice of sensations and their control should be made with a very scientific austerity and solely for the growth and perfection of the vital, of this highly dynamic instrument, which is as essential for progress as all the other parts of the being.

It is by educating the vital, by making it more refined, more sensitive, more subtle and, one should almost say, more elegant, in the best sense of the word, that one can overcome its violence and brutality, which are in fact a form of crudity and ignorance, of lack of taste.

In truth, a cultivated and illumined vital can be as noble and heroic and disinterested as it is now spontaneously vulgar, egoistic and perverted when it is left to itself without education. It is enough for each one to know how to transform in himself the search for pleasure into an aspiration for the supramental plenitude. If the education of the vital is carried far enough, with perseverance and sincerity, there comes a time when,



convinced of the greatness and beauty of the goal, the vital gives up petty and illusory sensorial satisfactions in order to win the divine delight.

Bulletin, February 1953

## 2

The question of mental austerity immediately brings to mind long meditations leading to control of thought and culminating in inner silence. This aspect of yogic discipline is too well known to need dwelling upon. But there is another aspect of the subject which is usually given less attention, and that is control of speech. Apart from a very few exceptions, only absolute silence is set in opposition to loose talk. And yet it is a far greater and far more fruitful austerity to control one's speech than to abolish it altogether.

Man is the first animal on earth to be able to use articulate sounds. Indeed, he is very proud of this capacity and exercises it without moderation or discernment. The world is deafened with the sound of his words and sometimes one almost misses the harmonious silence of the plant kingdom.

Besides, it is a well-known fact that the weaker the mental power, the greater is the need to use speech. Thus there are primitive and uneducated

people who cannot think at all unless they speak, and they can be heard muttering sounds more or less loudly to themselves, because this is the only way they can follow a train of thought, which would not be formulated in them but for the spoken word.

There are also a great many people, even among those who are educated but whose mental power is weak, who do not know what they want to say until they say it. This makes their speech interminable and tedious. For as they speak, their thought becomes clearer and more precise, and so they have to repeat the same thing several times in order to say it more and more exactly.

Some need to prepare beforehand what they have to say, and splutter when they are obliged to improvise, because they have not had time to elaborate step by step the exact terms of what they want to say.

Lastly, there are born orators who are masters of the spoken word; they spontaneously find all the words they need to say what they want to say and say it well.

None of this, however, from the point of view of mental austerity, goes beyond the category of idle talk. For by idle talk I mean every word that is spoken without being absolutely indispensable. One may ask, how can one judge? For this, one must first make a general classification of the various categories of spoken words.



First, in the physical domain, we have all the words that are spoken for material reasons. They are by far the most numerous and most probably also the most useful in ordinary life.

A constant babble of words seems to be the indispensable accompaniment to daily work. And yet as soon as one makes an effort to reduce the noise to a minimum, one realises that many things are done better and faster in silence and that this helps to maintain one's inner peace and concentration.

If you are not alone and live with others, cultivate the habit of not externalising yourself constantly by speaking aloud, and you will notice that little by little an inner understanding is established between yourself and others; you will then be able to communicate among yourselves with a minimum of words or even without any words at all. This outer silence is most favourable to inner peace, and with goodwill and a steadfast aspiration, you will be able to create a harmonious atmosphere which is very conducive to progress.

In social life, in addition to the words that concern material life and occupations, there will be those that express sensations, feelings and emotions. Here the habit of outer silence proves of valuable help. For when one is assailed by a wave of sensations or feelings, this habitual silence gives you time to reflect and, if necessary, to regain possession of yourself

before projecting the sensation or feeling in words. How many quarrels can be avoided in this way; how many times one will be saved from one of those psychological catastrophes which are only too often the result of uncontrolled speech.

Without going to this extreme, one should always control the words one speaks and never allow one's tongue to be prompted by a movement of anger, violence or temper. It is not only the quarrel that is bad in its results, but the fact of allowing one's tongue to be used to project bad vibrations into the atmosphere; for nothing is more contagious than the vibrations of sound, and by giving these movements a chance to express themselves, one perpetuates them in oneself and in others.

Among the most undesirable kinds of idle talk must also be included everything that is said about others.

Unless you are responsible for certain people, as a guardian, a teacher or a departmental head, what others do or do not do is no concern of yours and you must refrain from talking about them, from giving your opinion about them and what they do, and from repeating what others may think or say about them.

It may happen that the very nature of your occupation makes it your duty to report what is taking place in a particular department, undertaking or communal work. But then the report should be confined to the work alone



and not touch upon private matters. And as an absolute rule, it must be wholly objective. You should not allow any personal reaction, any preference, any like or dislike to creep in. And above all, never introduce your own petty personal grudges into the work that is assigned to you.

In all cases and as a general rule, the less one speaks of others, even to praise them, the better. It is already so difficult to know exactly what is happening in oneself — how can one know with certainty what is happening in others? So you must totally abstain from pronouncing upon anybody one of those final judgments which cannot but be foolish if not spiteful.

When a thought is expressed in speech, the vibration of the sound has a considerable power to bring the most material substance into contact with the thought, thus giving it a concrete and effective reality. That is why one must never speak ill of people or things or say things which go against the progress of the divine realisation in the world. This is an absolute general rule. And yet it has one exception. You should not criticise anything unless at the same time you have the conscious power and active will to dissolve or transform the movements or things you criticise. For this conscious power and active will have the capacity of infusing Matter with the possibility to react and refuse the bad vibration and ultimately to correct it so that it becomes impossible for it to go on expressing itself on the physical plane.

This can be done without risk or danger only by one who moves in the gnostic realms and possesses in his mental faculties the light of the spirit and the power of the truth. He, the divine worker, is free from all preference and all attachment; he has broken down the limits of his ego and is now only a perfectly pure and impersonal instrument of the supramental action upon earth.

There are also all the words that are uttered to express ideas, opinions, the results of reflection or study. Here we are in an intellectual domain and we might think that in this domain men are more reasonable, more self-controlled, and that the practice of rigorous austerity is less indispensable. It is nothing of the kind, however, for even here, into this abode of ideas and knowledge, man has brought the violence of his convictions, the intolerance of his sectarianism, the passion of his preferences. Thus, here too, one must resort to mental austerity and carefully avoid any exchange of ideas that leads to controversies which are all too often bitter and nearly always unnecessary, or any clash of opinion which ends in heated discussions and even quarrels, which are always the result of some mental narrowness that can easily be cured when one rises high enough in the mental domain.

For sectarianism becomes impossible when one knows that any formulated thought is only one way of saying something which eludes all expression. Every idea contains a little of the truth or one aspect of the truth. But no idea is absolutely true in itself.



This sense of the relativity of things is a powerful help in keeping one's balance and preserving a serene moderation in one's speech. I once heard an old occultist of some wisdom say, "Nothing is essentially bad; there are only things which are not in their place. Put each thing in its true place and you will have a harmonious world."

And yet, from the point of view of action, the value of an idea is in proportion to its pragmatic power. It is true that this power varies a great deal according to the individual on whom it acts. An idea that has great impelling force in one individual may have none whatsoever in another. But the power itself is contagious. Certain ideas are capable of transforming the world. They are the ones that ought to be expressed; they are the ruling stars in the firmament of the spirit that will guide the earth towards its supreme realisation.

Lastly, we have all the words that are spoken for the purpose of teaching. This category ranges from the kindergarten to the university course, not forgetting all the artistic and literary creations of mankind that seek to entertain or instruct. In this domain, everything depends on the worth of the creation, and the subject is too vast to be dealt with here. It is a fact that concern about education is very much in vogue at present and praiseworthy attempts are being made to make use of new scientific discoveries in the service of education. But even in this matter, austerity is demanded from the aspirant towards truth.

It is generally admitted that in the process of education a certain kind of lighter, more frivolous, more entertaining productions are necessary to reduce the strain of effort and give some relaxation to the children and even to adults. From a certain point of view, this is true; but unfortunately this concession has served as an excuse to justify a whole category of things which are nothing but the efflorescence of all that is vulgar, crude and base in human nature. Its coarsest instincts, its most depraved taste find in this concession a good excuse to display and impose themselves as an inevitable necessity. They are nothing of the kind, however; one can relax without being dissolute, take rest without being vulgar, enjoy oneself without allowing the grosser elements in the nature to rise to the surface. But from the point of view of austerity, these needs themselves change their nature; relaxation is transformed into inner silence, rest into contemplation and enjoyment into bliss.

This generally recognised need for entertainment, slackening of effort and more or less long and total forgetfulness of the aim of life and the purpose of existence should not be considered as something altogether natural and indispensable, but as a weakness to which one yields because of lack of intensity in the aspiration, because of instability in the will, because of ignorance, unconsciousness and sloth. Do not justify these movements and you will soon realise that they are unnecessary; there will even come a time when they become repugnant and unacceptable to you. Then the greater



part of human creation, which is ostensibly entertaining but in reality debasing, will lose its support and cease to be encouraged.

However, one should not think that the value of spoken words depends on the nature of the subject of conversation. One can talk idly on spiritual matters just as much as on any other, and this kind of idle talk may well be one of the most dangerous. For example, the neophyte is always very eager to share with others the little he has learnt. But as he advances on the path, he becomes more and more aware that he does not know very much and that before trying to instruct others, he must be very sure of the value of what he knows, until he finally becomes wise and realises that many hours of silent concentration are needed to be able to speak usefully for a few minutes. Moreover, where inner life and spiritual effort are concerned, the use of speech should be subjected to a still more stringent rule and nothing should be said unless it is absolutely indispensable.

It is a well-known fact that one must never speak of one's spiritual experiences if one does not want to see vanishing in a flash the energy accumulated in the experience, which was meant to hasten one's progress. The only exception which can be made to the rule is with regard to one's guru, when one wants to receive some explanation or teaching from him concerning the content and meaning of one's experience. Indeed, one can speak about these things without danger only to one's guru, for only the guru is able by his knowledge to use the elements of the experience for your own good, as steps towards new ascents.

It is true that the guru himself is subject to the same rule of silence with regard to what concerns him personally. In Nature everything is in movement; thus, whatever does not move forward is bound to fall back. The guru must progress even as his disciples do, although his progress may not be on the same plane. And for him too, to speak about his experiences is not favourable: the greater part of the dynamic force for progress contained in the experience evaporates if it is put into words. But on the other hand, by explaining his experiences to his disciples, he greatly helps their understanding and consequently their progress. It is for him in his wisdom to know to what extent he can and ought to sacrifice the one to the other. It goes without saying that no boasting or vainglory should enter into his account, for the slightest vanity would make him no longer a guru but an imposter.

As for the disciple, I would tell him: "In all cases, be faithful to your guru whoever he is; he will lead you as far as you can go. But if you have the good fortune to have the Divine as your guru, there will be no limit to your realisation."

Nevertheless, even the Divine, when incarnate on earth, is subject to the same law of progress. His instrument of manifestation, the physical being he has assumed, should be in a constant state of progress, and the law of his personal self-expression is in a way linked to the general law of earthly progress. Thus, even the embodied god cannot be perfect on earth until



men are ready to understand and accept perfection. That day will come when everything that is now done out of a sense of duty towards the Divine will be done out of love for Him. Progress will be a joy instead of being an effort and often even a struggle. Or, more exactly, progress will be made in joy, with the full adherence of the whole being, instead of by coercing the resistance of the ego, which entails great effort and sometimes even great suffering.

In conclusion, I would say this: if you want your speech to express the truth and thus acquire the power of the Word, never think out beforehand what you want to say, do not decide what is a good or bad thing to say, do not calculate the effect of what you are going to say. Be silent in mind and remain unwavering in the true attitude of constant aspiration towards the All-Wisdom, the All-Knowledge, the All-Consciousness. Then, if your aspiration is sincere, if it is not a veil for your ambition to do well and to succeed, if it is pure, spontaneous and integral, you will then be able to speak very simply, to say the words that ought to be said, neither more nor less, and they will have a creative power.

Bulletin, April 1953

### 3

Of all austerities the most difficult is the austerity of feelings and emotions, the tapasya of love.

Indeed, in the domain of feelings, more perhaps than in any other, man has the sense of the inevitable, the irresistible, of a fatality that dominates

him and which he cannot escape. Love (or at least what human beings call love) is particularly regarded as an imperious master whose caprice one cannot elude, who strikes you according to his fancy and forces you to obey him whether you will or not. In the name of love the worst crimes have been perpetrated, the greatest follies committed.

And yet men have invented all kinds of moral and social rules in the hope of controlling this force of love, of making it amenable and docile. But these rules seem to have been made only to be broken; and the restraint they impose on its free activity merely increases its explosive power. For it is not by rules that the movements of love can be disciplined. Only a greater, higher and truer power of love can subdue the uncontrollable impulses of love. Only love can rule over love by enlightening, transforming and exalting it. For here too, more than anywhere else, control does not consist of suppression and abolition but of transmutation — a sublime alchemy. This is because, of all the forces at work in the universe, love is the most powerful, the most irresistible. Without love the world would fall back into the chaos of inconscience.

Consciousness is indeed the creatrix of the universe, but love is its saviour. Conscious experience alone can give a glimpse of what love is, of its purpose and process. Any verbal transcription is necessarily a mental travesty of something which eludes all expression in every way. Philosophers, mystics, occultists, have all tried to define love, but in vain. I have no pretension of succeeding where they have failed. But I wish to



state in the simplest possible terms what in their writings takes such an abstract and complicated form. My words will have no other aim than to lead towards the living experience, and I wish to be able to lead even a child to it.

Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity; it finds its ultimate expression in the bliss of union. Between the two lie all the phases of its universal manifestation.

At the beginning of this manifestation, in the purity of its origin, love is composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the urge towards complete oneness. On one hand there is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need for absolute self-giving. No other movement could have better bridged the abyss that was created when in the individual being consciousness was separated from its origin and became unconsciousness.

What had been projected into space had to be brought back to itself without, however, annihilating the universe which had thus been created. That is why love burst forth, the irresistible power of union.

It brooded over the darkness and the inconscience; it was scattered and fragmented in the bosom of unfathomable night. And then began the awakening and the ascent, the slow formation of Matter and its endless progression. It is indeed love, in a corrupted and darkened form, that is

associated with all the impulses of physical and vital Nature, as the urge behind all movement and all grouping, which becomes quite perceptible in the plant kingdom. In trees and plants, it is the need to grow in order to obtain more light, more air, more space; in flowers, it is the offering of their beauty and fragrance in a loving efflorescence. Then, in animals, it is love that lies behind hunger and thirst, the need for appropriation, expansion, procreation, in short, behind every desire, whether conscious or not. And among the higher species, it is in the selfsacrificing devotion of the female to her young. This brings us quite naturally to the human race in which, with the triumphant advent of mental activity, this association reaches its climax, for it has become conscious and deliberate. Indeed, as soon as terrestrial development made it possible, Nature took up this sublime force of love and put it at the service of her creative work by linking and mixing it with her movement of procreation. This association has even become so close, so intimate, that very few human beings are illumined enough in their consciousness to be able to dissociate these movements from each other and experience them separately. In this way, love has suffered every degradation; it has been debased to the level of the beast.

From then on, too, there clearly appears in Nature's works the will to rebuild, by steps and stages and through ever more numerous and complex groupings, the primordial oneness. Having made use of the power of love to bring two human beings together to form the biune group, the origin of the family, after having broken the narrow limits of personal egoism, changing it into a dual egoism, Nature, with the appearance of children,



brought forth a more complex unit, the family. And in course of time, with multifarious associations between families, individual interchanges and mingling of blood, larger groupings were formed: clans, tribes, castes, classes, leading to the creation of nations. This work of group formation proceeded simultaneously in the various parts of the world, crystallising in the different races. And little by little, Nature will fuse these races too in her endeavour to build a real and material foundation for human unity.

In the consciousness of most men, all this is the outcome of chance; they are not aware of the existence of a global plan and take circumstances as they come, for better or for worse according to their temperament: some are satisfied, others discontented.

Among the contented, there is a certain category of people who are perfectly adapted to Nature's ways: these are the optimists. For them the days are brighter because of the nights, colours are vivid because of the shadows, joy is more intense because of suffering, pain gives a greater charm to pleasure, illness gives health all its value; I have even heard some of them say that they are glad to have enemies because it made them appreciate their friends all the more. In any case, for all these people, sexual activity is one of the most enjoyable of occupations, satisfaction of the palate is a delight of life that they cannot go without; and it is quite normal to die since one is born: death puts an end to a journey which would become tedious if it were to last too long.

In short, they find life quite all right as it is and do not care to know whether it has a purpose or a goal; they do not worry about the miseries of others and do not see any need for progress.

Never try to “convert” these people; it would be a serious mistake. If they were unfortunate enough to listen to you, they would lose the balance they have without being able to find a new one. They are not ready to have an inner life, but they are Nature’s favourites; they have a very close alliance with her, and this realisation should not be needlessly disturbed.

To a lesser degree, and above all, in a less durable way, there are other contented people in the world whose contentment is due to the magic effect of love. Each time an individual breaks the narrow limitations in which he is imprisoned by his ego and emerges into the open air, through self-giving, whether for the sake of another human being or his family, his country or his faith, he finds in this self-forgetfulness a foretaste of the marvellous delight of love, and this gives him the impression that he has come into contact with the Divine. But most often it is only a fleeting contact, for in the human being love is immediately mixed with lower egoistic movements which debase it and rob it of its power of purity. But even if it remained pure, this contact with the divine existence could not last for ever, for love is only one aspect of the Divine, an aspect which here on earth has suffered the same distortions as the others.



Besides, all these experiences are very good and useful for the ordinary man who follows the normal way of Nature in her stumbling march towards the future unity. But they cannot satisfy those who want to hasten the movement, or rather, who aspire to belong to another line of more direct and rapid movement, to an exceptional movement that will liberate them from ordinary mankind and its interminable march, so that they may take part in the spiritual advance which will lead them along the swiftest paths towards the creation of the new race, the race that will express the supramental truth upon earth. These rare souls must reject all forms of love between human beings, for however beautiful and pure they may be, they cause a kind of short-circuit and cut off the direct connection with the Divine.

For one who has known love for the Divine, all other forms of love are obscure and too mixed with pettiness and egoism and darkness; they are like a perpetual haggling or a struggle for supremacy and domination, and even among the best they are full of misunderstanding and irritability, of friction and incomprehension.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that one grows into the likeness of what one loves. Therefore if you want to be like the Divine, love Him alone. Only one who has known the ecstasy of the exchange of love with the Divine can know how insipid and dull and feeble any other exchange is in comparison. And even if the most austere discipline is required to arrive at

this exchange, nothing is too hard, too long or too severe in order to achieve it, for it surpasses all expression.

This is the marvellous state we want to realise on earth; it is this which will have the power to transform the world and make it a habitation worthy of the Divine Presence. Then will pure and true love be able to incarnate in a body that will no longer be a disguise and a veil for it. Many a time, in order to make the discipline easier and to create a closer and more easily perceptible intimacy, the Divine has sought, in his highest form of love, to assume a physical body similar in appearance to the human body; but each time, imprisoned within the gross forms of Matter, he was able to express only a caricature of himself. And in order to manifest in the fullness of his perfection he waits only for human beings to have made some indispensable progress in their consciousness and in their bodies; for the vulgarity of man's vanity and the stupidity of his conceit mistake the sublime divine love, when it expresses itself in a human form, for a sign of weakness and dependence and need.

And yet man already knows, at first obscurely, but more and more clearly as he draws nearer to perfection, that love alone can put an end to the suffering of the world; only the ineffable joy of love in its essence can sweep away from the universe the burning pain of separation. For only in the ecstasy of the supreme union will creation discover its purpose and its fulfilment.



That is why no effort is too arduous, no austerity too rigorous if it can illumine, purify, perfect and transform the physical substance so that it may no longer conceal the Divine when he takes on an outer form in Matter. For then this marvellous tenderness will be able to express itself freely in the world, the divine love which has the power of changing life into a paradise of sweet joy.

This, you will say, is the culmination, the crown of the effort, the final victory; but what must be done in order to achieve it? What is the path to be followed and what are the first steps on the way?

Since we have decided to reserve love in all its splendour for our personal relationship with the Divine, we shall replace it in our relations with others by a total, unvarying, constant and egoless kindness and goodwill that will not expect any reward or gratitude or even any recognition. However others may treat you, you will never allow yourself to be carried away by any resentment; and in your unmixed love for the Divine, you will leave him sole judge as to how he is to protect you and defend you against the misunderstanding and bad will of others.

You will await your joys and pleasures from the Divine alone. In him alone will you seek and find help and support. He will comfort you in all your sorrows, guide you on the path, lift you up if you stumble, and if there are moments of failure and exhaustion, he will take you up in his strong arms of love and enfold you in his soothing sweetness.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I must point out here that because of the exigencies of the language in which I am expressing myself, I am obliged to use the masculine gender whenever I mention the Divine. But in fact the reality of love I speak of is above and beyond all gender, masculine or feminine; and when it incarnates in a human body, it does so indifferently in the body of a man or a woman according to the needs of the work to be done.

In summary, austerity in feelings consists then of giving up all emotional attachment, of whatever nature, whether for a person, for the family, for the country or anything else, in order to concentrate on an exclusive attachment for the Divine Reality. This concentration will culminate in an integral identification and will be instrumental to the supramental realisation upon earth.

This leads us quite naturally to the four liberations which will be the concrete forms of this achievement. The liberation of the feelings will be at the same time the liberation from suffering, in a total realisation of the supramental oneness.

The mental liberation or liberation from ignorance will establish in the being the mind of light or gnostic consciousness, whose expression will have the creative power of the Word.



The vital liberation or liberation from desire gives the individual will the power to identify itself perfectly and consciously with the divine will and brings constant peace and serenity as well as the power which results from them.

Finally, crowning all the others, comes the physical liberation or liberation from the law of material cause and effect. By a total self-mastery, one is no longer a slave of Nature's laws which make men act according to subconscious or semiconscious impulses and maintain them in the rut of ordinary life. With this liberation one can decide in full knowledge the path to be taken, choose the action to be accomplished and free oneself from all blind determinism, so that nothing is allowed to intervene in the course of one's life but the highest will, the truest knowledge, the supramental consciousness.

Bulletin, August 1953

## **To the Students, Young and Old**

### **The Mother**

Old THERE are, in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have existed for thousands of years must give way to those that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, occurs at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are at precisely such a turning-point in the world's history. Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality.

Certain beings who, I might say, are in the secret of the gods, are aware of the importance of this moment in the life of the world, and they have taken birth on earth to play their part in whatever way they can. A great luminous consciousness broods over the earth, creating a kind of stir in its atmosphere. All who are open receive a ripple from this eddy, a ray of this light and seek to give form to it, each according to his capacity.

We have here the unique privilege of being at the very centre of this radiating light, at the fount of this force of transformation.



Sri Aurobindo, incarnating the supramental consciousness in a human body, has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the way to follow it in order to reach the goal, but has also by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us, so to say, with the proof that the thing can be done and that the time has come to do it.

Consequently, we are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new consciousness and a new life. That is why I address myself to you, the students, that is, to all who wish to learn, to learn always more and always better, so that one day you may be capable of opening yourselves to the new force and of giving it the possibility of manifesting on the physical plane. For that is our programme and we must not forget it. To understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that we want to become instruments that are as perfect as possible, instruments that express the divine will in the world. And if the instruments are to be perfect, they must be cultivated, educated, trained. They must not be left like fallow land or a formless piece of stone. A diamond reveals all its beauty only when it is artistically cut. It is the same for you. If you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, give it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses. That is why you go to school, my children, whether you are big or small, for one can learn at any age — and so you must go to your classes.

Sometimes, if you are not in a very good mood, you say, "How boring it is going to be!" Yes, perhaps the teacher who is taking your class does not know how to amuse you. He may be a very good teacher, but at the same time he may not know how to entertain you, for it is not always easy. There are days when one does not feel like being entertaining. There are days, for him as for you, when one would like to be elsewhere than in school. But still, you go to your class. You go because you must, for if you obey all your fancies you will never have any control over yourselves; your fancies will control you. So you go to your class, but instead of going there and thinking, "How bored I am going to be; I am sure it is not going to be interesting", you should tell yourselves, "There is not a single minute in life, not one circumstance that is not an opportunity for progress. So what progress am I going to make today? The class I am going to now is on a subject that does not interest me. But perhaps that is because something is lacking in me; perhaps, in my brain, a certain number of cells are deficient and that is why I cannot find any interest in the subject. If so, I shall try, I shall listen carefully, concentrate hard and above all drive out of my mind this aimlessness, this superficial shallowness which makes me feel bored when there is something I cannot grasp. I am bored because I do not make an effort to understand, because I do not have this will for progress." When one does not progress, one feels bored, everyone, young or old; for we are here on earth to progress. How tedious life would be without progress! Life is monotonous. Most often it is not fun. It is far from being beautiful. But if you take it as a field for progress, then everything changes, everything becomes interesting and there is no longer any room for boredom. Next



time your teacher seems boring to you, instead of wasting your time doing nothing, try to understand why he bores you. Then if you have a capacity of observation and if you make an effort to understand, you will soon see that a kind of miracle has occurred and that you are no longer feeling bored at all.

This remedy is good in almost every case. Sometimes, in certain circumstances, everything seems dull, boring, stupid; this means that you are as boring as the circumstances and it clearly shows that you are not in a state of progress. It is simply a passing wave of boredom, and nothing is more contrary to the purpose of existence. At such a moment you might make an effort and ask yourself, "This boredom shows that I have something to learn, some progress to make in myself, some inertia to conquer, some weakness to overcome." Boredom is a dullness of the consciousness; and if you seek the cure within yourself, you will see that it immediately dissolves. Most people, when they feel bored, instead of making an effort to rise one step higher in their consciousness, come down one step lower; they come down even lower than they were before and do stupid things, they make themselves vulgar in the hope of amusing themselves. That is why men intoxicate themselves, spoil their health, deaden their brains. If they had risen instead of falling, they would have made use of this opportunity to progress.

In fact, the same thing holds true in all circumstances, when life gives you a severe blow, one of those blows which men call a misfortune. The first

thing they try to do is to forget, as if they did not forget only too soon! And in order to forget, they do all kinds of things. When something is very painful, they try to distract themselves — what they call distracting themselves, that is, doing stupid things, lowering their consciousness instead of raising it. If something extremely painful happens to you, never try to deaden yourself; you must not forget, you must not sink into unconsciousness. Go right to the heart of the pain and there you will find the light, the truth, the strength and the joy which are hidden behind this pain. But for that you must be firm and refuse to let yourself slide.

In this way every event in life, great or small, can be an opportunity for progress. Even the most insignificant details can lead to revelations if you know how to profit from them. Whenever you are engaged in something which does not demand the whole of your attention, use it as an opportunity to develop your faculty of observation and you will see that you will make interesting discoveries. To help you to understand what I mean, I shall give you two examples. They are two brief moments in life which are insignificant in themselves, but still leave a deep and lasting impression.

The first example takes place in Paris. You have to go out into this immense city; here all is noise, apparent confusion, bewildering activity. Suddenly you see a woman walking in front of you; she is like most other women, her dress has nothing striking about it, but her gait is remarkable, supple, rhythmic, elegant, harmonious. It catches your attention and you are full



of wonder. Then, this body moving along so gracefully reminds you of all the splendours of ancient Greece and the unparalleled lesson in beauty which its culture gave to the whole world, and you live an unforgettable moment — all that just because of a woman who knows how to walk!

The second example is from the other end of the world, from Japan. You have just arrived in this beautiful country for a long stay and very soon you find out that unless you have at least a minimum knowledge of the language, it will be very difficult for you to get along. So you begin to study Japanese and in order to become familiar with the language you do not miss a single opportunity to hear people talking, you listen to them carefully, you try to understand what they are saying; and then, beside you, in a tram where you have just taken your seat, there is a small child of four or five years with his mother. The child begins to talk in a clear and pure voice and listening to him you have the remarkable experience that he knows spontaneously what you have to learn with so much effort, and that as far as Japanese is concerned he could be your teacher in spite of his youth.

In this way life becomes full of wonder and gives you a lesson at each step. Looked at from this angle, it is truly worth living.

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## Acknowledgements



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Editor: Dr. Bhalendu S. Vaishnav, Chairperson, **Sri Aurobindo Chair of Integral Studies, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, 388120, Gujarat, India.**

Contact: Department of Medicine, Pramukhswami Medical College, Bhaikaka University, Karamsad 388325, Gujarat, India.

e mail: [Sriaurobindochair@gmail.com](mailto:Sriaurobindochair@gmail.com)