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“But so long as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the Sadhaka remains necessary.”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 6

Outwardly, one believes in one’s own personality and one’s own effort. So long as you believe in personal effort, you must make a personal effort.

There is one part of the being which is not at all conscious of being a part of the Divine. The whole of the outer being is convinced that it is something separate, independent and related only to itself. This part of the being must necessarily make a personal effort. It can’t be told, “The Divine does the sadhana for you”, for it would never do anything, it would never be changed. When one speaks with somebody, one should use his language,¹ shouldn’t one?

What is “physical tamas”?

You don’t know that, you don’t? Then, congratulations! For instance, does it never happen to you that being seated you don’t want to get up, that having something to do you say, “Oh! I have to do all that!”?

Is it the same thing as laziness?

Not quite. Of course, laziness is a kind of tamas, but in laziness

¹ At the time of publication of this talk, Mother made the following remark: “This is not true. This is not true for it is too categorical. One must not use the language of the outer being, for its language is altogether false, but things must be said in a form in which it can understand them — that is different. But to say things exactly takes a very long time; that is why Sri Aurobindo always used long sentences and what appeared to be long explanations. These are not explanations: they are meant for saying the thing with precision.”

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there is an ill-will, a refusal to make an effort — while *tamas* is inertia: one wants to do something, but one can't.

I remember, a long time ago, having been among some young people, and they remarked that when I decided to get up I used to get up with a jump, without any difficulty. They asked me, "How do you do it? We, when we want to get up, have to make an effort of will to be able to do it." They were so surprised! And I was surprised by the opposite. I used to tell myself, "How does it happen? When one has decided to get up, one gets up." No, the body was there, like that, and it was necessary to put a will into it, to push this body for it to get up and act. It is like that, this is *tamas*. *Tamas* is a purely material thing; it is very rare to have a vital or mental *tamas* (it may occur but through contagion), I believe it is more a *tamas* of the nerves or the brain than vital or mental *tamas*. But laziness is everywhere, in the physical, the vital, the mind. Generally lazy people are not always lazy, not in all things. If you propose something that pleases them, amuses them, they are quite ready to make an effort. There is much ill-will in laziness.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature".²

Because the physical consciousness and nature are closed up and rigid — they are shut up in their habits, they don't want to change them, they accept only one regular routine. There is nothing more routine-bound than the body. If you change its habits in the least, it is quite bewildered, it doesn't know any longer what to do, it says, "Excuse me, excuse me! but that's not how one goes about living."

Those whose vital being is very active and dominating may succeed in awakening the body, and if they have the spirit of

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 7.

adventure (which happens very often, for the vital is an adventurous being), the physical obeys, it obeys the impulse, the inner order; then it consents to the change, the novelty, but it is an effort for it. But for the physical being and physical consciousness to be ready to receive the divine impulsion, they must be extremely plastic, because the vital uses coercion, it imposes its will, and the poor body has but to obey, while the Divine just shows the light, gives the consciousness, and so one must obey consciously and willingly — it is a question of collaboration, it is no longer a question of coercion. The physical being and physical consciousness must be very plastic to be able to lend themselves to all the necessary changes, so as to be of one kind one day and another the next, and so on.

Sri Aurobindo speaks here of the “stability of Light, Power, Ananda”.³ But isn’t power always dynamic?

Well, there is a static power. How to explain it to you? Look, there is the same difference between static power and dynamic power as between a game of defence and a game of attack; you understand? It is the same thing. Static power is something which can withstand everything, nothing can act upon it, nothing can touch it, nothing can shake it — it is immobile, but it is invincible. Dynamic power is something in action, which at times goes forth and may at times receive blows. That is to say, if you want your dynamic power to be always victorious, it must be supported by a considerable static power, an unshakable base.

I know what you want to say... that a human being becomes aware of power only when it is dynamic; a human being doesn’t consider it a power except when it acts; if it doesn’t act he does not even notice it, he does not realise the tremendous force which is behind this inaction — at times, even frequently, a force more formidable than the power which acts. But you

³ *Ibid.*

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may try it out in yourself, you will see, it is much more difficult to remain calm, immobile, unshakable before something very unpleasant — whether it be words or acts levelled against you — infinitely more difficult than to answer with the same violence. Suppose someone insults you; if in the face of these insults, you can remain immobile (not only outwardly, I mean integrally), without being shaken or touched in any way: you are there like a force against which one can do nothing and you do not reply, you do not make a gesture, you do not say a word, all the insults thrown at you leave you absolutely untouched, within and without; you can keep your heart-beats absolutely quiet, you can keep the thoughts in your head quite immobile and calm without their being in the least disturbed, that is, your head does not answer immediately by similar vibrations and your nerves don't feel clenched with the need to return a few blows to relieve themselves; if you can be like that, you have a static power, and it is infinitely more powerful than if you had that kind of force which makes you answer insult by insult, blow by blow and agitation by agitation.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of “the rejection of ... stupidity, doubt, disbelief”.⁴ If one rejects stupidity does one become intelligent?

Do you mean whether one can get rid of stupidity? Yes, there is a way. It is not easy, but there is a way. I have known people who were extremely stupid, truly stupid; well, these people succeeded through aspiration — an aspiration which was not formulated, had not even the power to express itself in words — succeeded in coming into contact with their psychic being. It was not a constant contact, it was momentary, at times very fugitive. But while they were in contact with their psychic being, they became remarkably intelligent, they said wonderful things. I knew a girl

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 7.

who had no education, nothing, truly stupid; people said, “There is nothing to be done about it, it is not possible.” Well, when she was in contact with her psychic being, she understood the profoundest things and made astounding remarks. But when the contact stopped she became stupid once again. It was not something permanent, it was only the contact that took away her stupidity. So, it is a difficult cure, that is, one must establish the contact with one’s psychic being and keep it always.

There is a Muslim legend like that about Christ. You know the story: Christ healed the sick, made the lame walk, the blind see and even raised the dead. Seeing all these miracles, someone went up to Christ and said, “Oh! I have a very interesting case to put before you.... Yes, I have a son who is stupid.” Christ opened his eyes wide and ran away! It seems that was the only thing he could not do! This is a joke, of course, and the thing is difficult, but it is possible.

“The Divine ... is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya....”⁵

Yes, he is veiled by the consciousness of material Nature. There is the consciousness in its origin which does not veil the Divine but expresses him. There is the consciousness in its outer form which veils him. Some say this is willed, that it is to allow the game to be played; that the Divine hides himself behind material Nature to compel all conscious beings to find Him. That is an opinion... people say many things.

One of the great difficulties for most philosophies is that they have never recognised or studied the different planes of existence, the different regions of the being. They have the Supreme and then the Creation and then that’s all, nothing between the two. This makes explanations very difficult.... All explanations, in the last analysis, are simply languages — there are languages

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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which make understanding easier and others which make it more difficult. And some of these theories make the understanding of things very difficult — while if you recognise and study and become aware of the different intermediary states between the most material Nature and the Supreme Origin, if you recognise and become conscious of all the intermediary regions, of all the inner states of being and all the outer regions, that can explain many problems. We have already studied this in connection with determinisms. If you say that the determinism is absolute and remain there, you understand nothing; it is quite obvious that all the events of life contradict this idea; or else the problem is so complicated that you can't get hold of it. But if you understand that there are a large number of determinisms acting upon each other, interpenetrating, changing the action of one determinism by the action of another, then the problem becomes comprehensible. It is the same thing for explaining the action of the Divine in the universe. If you take a central creative Force or a central creative Consciousness or a central immobile Witness, and then the universe, only that, nothing between the two, you cannot understand. There are people who have used this in such a naive way! They have made a Creator God and then his creatures. So all the problems come up. He has made the world, with what? Some tell you it is from the dust, but what is it, this dust? What was it doing before it was used to make a world?... Or from nothing! A universe was created out of nothing — that is foolish! It is very awkward for a logical mind. And over and above all that, you are told that He did this consciously, deliberately, and when he had finished he exclaimed, "Look, it is very good." Then, those who are in the universe reply, "We don't find it so good. It is perhaps very good for you but not for us." These are naive conceptions. They are simply ignorant and naive conceptions which make the problem of the universe absolutely incomprehensible. And all these explanations are inadmissible for a mind which is ever so slightly awakened. That is why you are told, "Don't try to understand, you will never understand."

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But that is mental laziness, it is the mind's bad will. You see, one feels within oneself that, because one has this kind of power of thought-activity, this aspiration to find a light, a solution, it must correspond to something, otherwise... otherwise, truly (I think I have written this somewhere), if the universe were reduced to that simple notion, well, it would be the most sinister of farces and I should very well understand those who have declared, "Run away, get out of it as fast as possible." Unfortunately, I don't see how they would be able to get out of it, for there is nothing else — how can you get out of something which alone exists? So, one enters a vicious circle, one turns round and round and this leads quite naturally to mental despair. But when one has the key — there are one or two keys, but there is one which opens all the doors — when one has the key, one follows one's road and little by little understands *the* Thing.

What is the difference between consciousness and physical Nature?

Tell me, is your body absolutely conscious, conscious of itself, conscious of its functioning? No, then what is it? It can only be physical Nature. And if there is a physical Nature which is not conscious, it means that physical Nature and consciousness are not the same thing. Physical Nature includes everything that is physical: your body belongs to physical Nature, mountains, stones, the sky, water, fire... all this belongs to physical Nature. But your physical Nature contains a consciousness, it is animated by a consciousness, though it is not entirely conscious. And precisely because it is not entirely conscious, it can be inert, tamasic, "unconscious". Otherwise all would be conscious, stones also would be conscious (I don't know how far they are so, but it is to a very small extent compared with human consciousness).

Does not surrender consist in offering one's work like a good servant?

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Work is a good discipline. But it is not this idea, it is not the idea of a passive, unconscious and almost involuntary submission. It is not that. It does not lie only in work.

The most important surrender is the surrender of your character, your way of being, so that it may change. If you do not surrender your very own nature, never will this nature change. It is this that is most important. You have certain ways of understanding, certain ways of reacting, certain ways of feeling, almost certain ways of progressing, and above all, a special way of looking at life and expecting from it certain things — well, it is this you must surrender. That is, if you truly want to receive the divine Light and transform yourself, it is your whole way of being you must offer — offer by opening it, making it as receptive as possible so that the divine Consciousness which sees how you ought to be, may act directly and change all these movements into movements more true, more in keeping with your own truth. This is infinitely more important than surrendering what one does. It is not what one does (what one does is very important, that's evident) that is the most important thing but what one *is*. Whatever the activity, it is not quite the way of doing it but the state of consciousness in which it is done that is important. You may work, do disinterested work without any idea of personal profit, work for the joy of working, but if you are not at the same time ready to leave this work, to change the work or change the way of working, if you cling to your own way of working, your surrender is not complete. You must come to a point when everything is done because you feel within, very clearly, in a more and more imperious way, that it is this which must be done and in this particular way, and that you do it only because of that. You do not do it because of any habit, attachment or preference, nor even any conception, even a preference for the idea that it is the best thing to do — else your surrender is not total. As long as you cling to something, as long as there is something in you which says, “This may change, that may change, but *that*, that will not change”, as long as you say

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about anything at all, “That will not change” (not that it refuses to change, but because you can’t think of its changing), your surrender is not complete.

It goes without saying that if in your action, your work, you have in the least this feeling, “I am doing it because I have been told to do it”, and there is not a total adherence of the being, and you do not do the work because you feel it must be done and you love doing it; if something holds back, stands apart, separate, “I was told it had to be done like that so I did it like that”, it means there is a great gulf between you and surrender. True surrender is to feel that one wants, one has, this complete inner adherence: you cannot do *but that*, that which you have been given to do, and what you have not been given to do you cannot do. But at another moment the work may change; at any moment it may be something else, if it is decided that it be something else. It is there that plasticity comes in. That makes a very great difference. It is well understood that those who work are told, “Yes, work, that is your way of surrendering”, but it is a beginning. This way has to be progressive. It is only a beginning, do you understand?