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A disciple explains to the children that the shortest day of the year corresponds to the greatest declination of the sun to the south, about the 21st of December; then the sun again mounts to the north. Mother comments:

That is why the 25th of December was a festival of Light long before Jesus Christ. This festival was in vogue long before Christianity; it originated in Egypt and very probably the birthday of Christ was fixed on the same day as that of the return of the Light.

Then Mother reads the first part of her article “Energy Inexhaustible” (*On Education*).

*How is it that as mental activities increase, the capacity to renew one’s energies diminishes?*

In adults mental activity tends to paralyse the spontaneous movement of exchange of energies. Till he is fourteen, every child, apart from a few rare exceptions, is a little animal; he renews his energies spontaneously like an animal by means of the same activities and exchanges. But the mind introduces a disequilibrium in the being; spontaneous action is replaced by something that wants to know, to regulate, to decide, etc., and to get back this capacity to renew spontaneously one’s energies, one must rise to a higher rung above the instincts, that is, from ordinary mental activity one must pass directly into intuition.

*“Yet there is a source of energy which, once discovered, never dries up, whatever the circumstances and the physical conditions in life. It is the energy that can be*

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*described as spiritual, that which is received not from below, from the depths of inconscience, but from above, from the supreme origin of men and the universe, from the all-powerful and eternal splendours of the super-conscious. It is there, everywhere around us, penetrating everything and to enter into contact with it and receive it, it is sufficient to sincerely aspire for it, to open oneself to it in faith and confidence so as to enlarge one's consciousness for identifying it with the universal Consciousness."*

*"Energy Inexhaustible", On Education*

In these articles I am trying to put into ordinary terms the whole yogic terminology, for these *Bulletins* are meant more for people who lead an ordinary life, though also for students of yoga — I mean people who are primarily interested in a purely physical material life but who try to attain more perfection in their physical life than is usual in ordinary conditions. It is a very difficult task but it is a kind of yoga. These people call themselves "materialists" and they are apt to get agitated or irritated if yogic terms are used, so one must speak their language avoiding terms likely to shock them. But I have known in my life persons who called themselves "materialists" and yet followed a much severer discipline than those who claim to do yoga.

What we want is that humanity should progress; whether it professes to lead a yogic life or not matters little, provided it makes the necessary effort for progress.

*What is the difference between meditation and concentration?*

Meditation is a purely mental activity, it interests only the mental being. One can concentrate while meditating but this is a mental concentration; one can get a silence but it is a purely mental silence, and the other parts of the being are kept immobile and inactive so as not to disturb the meditation. You may pass twenty

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hours of the day in meditation and for the remaining four hours you will be an altogether ordinary man because only the mind has been occupied—the rest of the being, the vital and the physical, is kept under pressure so that it may not disturb. In meditation nothing is directly done for the other parts of the being.

Certainly this indirect action can have an effect, but... I have known in my life people whose capacity for meditation was remarkable but who, when not in meditation, were quite ordinary men, even at times ill-natured people, who would become furious if their meditation was disturbed. For they had learnt to master only their mind, not the rest of their being.

Concentration is a more active state. You may concentrate mentally, you may concentrate vitally, psychically, physically, and you may concentrate integrally. Concentration or the capacity to gather oneself at one point is more difficult than meditation. You may gather together one portion of your being or consciousness or you may gather together the whole of your consciousness or even fragments of it, that is, the concentration may be partial, total or integral, and in each case the result will be different.

If you have the capacity to concentrate, your meditation will be more interesting and easier. But one can meditate without concentrating. Many follow a chain of ideas in their meditation—it is meditation, not concentration.

*Is it possible to distinguish the moment when one attains perfect concentration from the moment when, starting from this concentration, one opens oneself to the universal Energy?*

Yes. You concentrate on something or simply you gather yourself together as much as is possible for you and when you attain a kind of perfection in concentration, if you can sustain this perfection for a sufficiently long time, then a door opens and you pass

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beyond the limit of your ordinary consciousness — you enter into a deeper and higher knowledge. Or you go within. Then you may experience a kind of dazzling light, an inner wonder, a beatitude, a complete knowledge, a total silence. There are, of course, many possibilities but the phenomenon is always the same.

To have this experience all depends upon your capacity to maintain your concentration sufficiently long at its highest point of perfection.

*To have this experience is it necessary to concentrate every time?*

In the beginning, yes, for you have not the capacity to keep what you have acquired, to maintain your concentration at its maximum — you slip back and lose even the memory of the experience you have had. But if you once follow a path, it is easier to follow the same path a second time and so on. The second concentration is therefore easier than the first one. You must persevere in your concentration till you come to the point when you no longer lose the inner contact.

From that time onward you must remain in this inner and higher consciousness from where you can do everything. You see your body and the material world and you know what is to be done and how to do it.

That is the first aim of concentration, but naturally not the last.

To attain that concentration much effort is necessary; an immediate or even a quick result is rarely possible. But if the inner door has once been opened, you may be sure that it will open again if you know how to persevere.

As long as the door has not been opened, you may doubt your capacity, but once opened, no more doubt is possible, if you go on willing and aspiring.

This experience has a considerable value.

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*What does “Mother of Dreams”<sup>1</sup> mean?*

When he speaks of the “immobile and serene Consciousness”, Sri Aurobindo often uses poetic terms which are very suggestive. He has used the term “Mother of Dreams” because he has put himself in the place of one who is below, one who sees, perceives something mysterious, altogether wonderful, inaccessible and almost incomprehensible; but if you look from another point of view, you may say that it is the creative Consciousness, the Origin of the universe, the universal Mother, the creative Power, and so on.

*When we play badly we find that we have no energy, but if we play well, with great enthusiasm, we find that energy comes. Why?*

This is perfectly true. To enter into contact with terrestrial energy, one must establish a certain harmony within oneself. If you know the game well, if you know how to make the moves and if you take an enthusiastic interest, if you have a sort of ambition (quite childish perhaps), a desire to win, then as you go on succeeding you feel a kind of inner joy, not perhaps very profound, but creating the harmony necessary for the interchange of energy. On the other hand, those who do not know how to accept defeat, who get angry and bad-tempered when things do not go according to their wish, lose their energy more and more.

Also, if you slip into depression, you cut every source of energy — from above, from below, from everywhere. That is the best way of falling into inertia. You must absolutely refuse to be depressed.

Depression is always the sign of an acute egoism. When you feel that it is coming near, tell yourself: “I am in a state of egoistic illness, I must cure myself of it.”

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, “The Mother of Dreams”, *Collected Poems*, p. 67.