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things like that, because people are neither conscious enough nor pure enough to do what they should do, exactly as they should do it, with full knowledge of the result; for the result, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, is not what they desire — or if it is what they desire, it is modified, it is mixed, diluted, there are differences, differences enough not to be fully satisfactory. So if one knew ahead exactly what was going to happen, one would remain seated, quietly, and would do nothing any longer. One would say, “Good, if this must happen, it is good, I have nothing more to do.” That is why one doesn’t know. But he who can act in all circumstances in full knowledge of the cause, knowing what the result of his action will be, and at the same time can do a certain thing which is sometimes even in contradiction with this result, that person indeed can know. But I don’t think there are many like that. In ordinary life people say that for someone to realise something, he ought always to aim much farther than the goal he has to attain; that all who have realised something in life, all the great men who have created, realised something, their aim, their ambition, their plan was always much greater, vaster, more complete, more total than what they did. They always fell short of their expectation and hope. It is a weakness, but it comes from what I said, that unless one has a very great ideal before him and the hope of realising it, one doesn’t put out all the energies of the being and therefore doesn’t do what is necessary to attain even the nearest goal, except, as I said, when one can act with the clear vision that “this is what ought to be done” and without the slightest worry about the consequences and the result of what one does; but this is difficult.

Sweet Mother, what does “a Couéistic optimism” mean?

Ah! Coué. You don’t know the story of Coué? Coué was a doctor. He used to treat by psychological treatment, auto-suggestion, and he called this the true working of the imagination;

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and what he defined as imagination was faith. And so he treated all his patients in this way: they had to make a kind of imaginative formation which consisted in thinking themselves cured or in any case on the way to being cured, and in repeating this formation to themselves with sufficient persistence for it to have its effect. He had very remarkable results. He cured lots of people; only, he failed also, and perhaps these were not very lasting cures, I don't know this. But in any case, this made many people reflect on something that's quite true and of capital importance: that the mind is a formative instrument and that if one knows how to use it in the right way, one gets a good result. He observed — and I think it is true, my observation agrees with his — that people spend their time thinking wrongly. Their mental activity is almost always half pessimistic, and even half destructive. They are all the time thinking of and foreseeing bad things which may happen, troublesome consequences of what they have done, and they construct all kinds of catastrophes with an exuberant imagination which, if it were utilised in the other way, would naturally have opposite and more satisfying results.

If you observe yourself, if you... how to put it?... if you catch yourself thinking — well, if you do it suddenly, if you look at yourself thinking all of a sudden, spontaneously, unexpectedly, you will notice that nine times out of ten you are thinking something troublesome. It is very rarely that you are thinking about harmonious, beautiful, constructive, happy things, full of hope, light and joy; you will see, try the experiment. Suddenly stop and look at yourself thinking, just like that: put a screen in front of your thought and look at yourself thinking, off-hand, you will see this at least nine times out of ten, and perhaps more. (It is very rarely, very rarely that one has in the whole day, suddenly, a dazzling thought about what is going to happen or the state one is in or the things one wants to do or the course of his life or world circumstances — it depends, you see, on your preoccupation). Well, you will see, it is almost always foreseeing

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a bigger or smaller, more or less vast catastrophe.

Say you have the slightest thing that is not getting on quite well; if you think of your body, it is always that something unpleasant is going to happen to it — because when everything goes well, you don't think about it! You will notice this: that you act, you do all that you have to do, without having a single thought about your body, and when all of a sudden you wonder whether there isn't anything that's going wrong, whether there is some uneasiness or a difficulty, something, then you begin to think of your body and you think about it with anxiety and begin to make your disastrous constructions.

Whereas Coué recommended... It was in this way that he cured his patients; he was a doctor, he told them, "You are going to repeat to yourself: 'I am being cured, gradually I am getting cured' and again, you see, 'I am strong, I am quite healthy and I can do this, I can do that'."

I knew someone who was losing her hair disastrously, by handfuls. She was made to try this method. When combing her hair she made herself think, "My hair will not fall out." The first and second time it did not work, but she continued and each time before combing the hair she used to repeat with insistence, "I am going to comb my hair but it won't fall out." And within a month her hair stopped falling. Later she again continued thinking, "Now my hair will grow." And she succeeded so well that I saw her with a magnificent head of hair, and it was she herself who told me this, that this was what she had done after being on the point of becoming bald. It is very, very effective. Only, while one is making the formation, another part of the mind must not say, "Oh, I am making a formation and it is not going to be successful", because in this way you undo your own work.

Coué — it was at the beginning of the century, I think... (*Mother turns to Pavitra.*)

(Pavitra) *I saw him in 1917 or 1918 in Paris.*

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Yes, that's right, the beginning of the century, the first quarter of the century. You knew him?

(Pavitra) *In Paris, yes.*

Ah, ah! Tell us about it.

(Pavitra) *I heard one or two of his lectures. The method he gave to the sick was to repeat, first every morning and several times a day, "I am becoming better and better, every day I am better and better, each day I am healthier", every morning, every evening, several times a day, with conviction, clasping the hands like this...*

Oh! If one lost one's temper: "I am becoming better and better, I don't lose my temper now." (*Laughter*)

(Pavitra) *Every day I am becoming more and more intelligent.*

That's really good. Why, and if you repeat to a child, if you make him repeat, "I am good, day by day more and more."

"I am better and better, I am more and more obedient."

Oh, but this is very fine. (*To a child*) The other day you wanted to know what to do for children who are difficult to bring up. Here you are, you can try this. "I am more and more regular at school."

And then again, "I don't tell lies any more. I shall never lie again."

(Pavitra) *At first it was to be said in the future and afterwards one drew closer to the future and so finished in the present.*

Oh, one finishes in the present. And how long did it take?

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(Pavitra) *It depended on the person.*

It depends on the case. "I shall not tell lies again, it is my last lie." (*Laughter*)

So, we stop.