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

*Sweet Mother, here it is said that one should have no attachment for material things; then, when you give us something, if we lose it and feel sad, it can be called attachment?*

It is better not to lose it. (*Laughter*) But in fact the thing ought to be only... It is not the thing itself to which one must be attached. It is to open oneself to what is within, what I put into the thing I give, this indeed is much more important. And, of course, there can always be an accident but it is certain that if one gives to a thing its inner symbolical or spiritual value, there is much less chance of losing it; it creates a kind of relation because of which there is not much chance of losing it. It remains close to you.

I have the feeling, when someone loses something I have given him, that he was just in contact with the outer form, the shell, and not with what I had put inside, otherwise he would not have lost it; I have the feeling that there is a lack of deeper perception. Perhaps one was very attached to the outer form, but not very open to what was behind.

*Mother, here it is said that specially for an athlete certain foods are necessary, so that there may be certain vitamins which are necessary, and all this...*

That's modern science. Yes... well, if you wait some fifty years, they will have found something else, and it will change, and vitamins will be forgotten... But now, what did you want to ask?

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*You have given the answer. (Laughter) How should we use things?*

Ah, this is... First, to use things with an understanding of their true utility, the knowledge of their real use, with the utmost care so that they do not get spoilt and with the least confusion.

I am going to give you an example: you have a pair of scissors. There are scissors of all kinds, there are scissors for cutting paper, and there are scissors for cutting thread... Now if you have the pair of scissors which you need, use it for the thing it is made for. But I know people who, when they have a pair of scissors, use it without any discernment to cut anything at all, to cut small silk threads, and they try to cut a wire also with it or else they use it as a tool to open tins, you see; for anything whatever, where they need an instrument they get hold of their scissors and use them. So naturally, after quite a short while they come to me again and say, "Oh, my pair of scissors is spoilt, I would like to have another." And they are very much surprised when I tell them, "No, you won't have another, because you have spoilt this one, because you have used it badly." This is just one example. I could give many others.

People use something which gets dirty and is spoilt in becoming dirty, or they forget to clean it or neglect it, because all this takes time.

There is a kind of respect for the object one has, which must make one treat it with much consideration and try to preserve it as long as possible, not because one is attached to it and desires it, but because an object is something respectable which has sometimes cost a lot of effort and labour in the producing and so must as a result be considered with the respect due to the work and effort put into it.

There are people who have nothing, who don't even have the things which are absolutely indispensable, and who are compelled to make them in some way for their personal use. I have seen people of this kind who, with much effort and

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ingenuity had managed to make for themselves certain things which are more or less indispensable from the practical point of view. But the way they treated them, because they were aware of the effort they had put in to make them, was remarkable — the care, that kind of respect for the object they had produced, because they knew how much labour it had cost them. But people who have plenty of money in their pockets, and when they need something turn the knob of a shop-door, enter and put down the money and take the thing, they treat it like that. They harm themselves and give a very bad example.

Many a time I say, “No, use what you have. Try to make the best possible use of it. Don’t throw away things uselessly, don’t ask uselessly. Try to do with what you have, putting into it all the care, all the order, all the necessary method, and avoiding confusion.”

Here, you know, we have a small chit-pad<sup>1</sup>, and people write every month what they want; and then it happens that we were compelled to ration things because otherwise it was becoming something excessive. But this rationing often turned against its purpose.

I remember visiting a sadhak in his room, it is now some twenty-five years ago or so. It is an old story. I remember it still. There was a rack hanging from the wall, a rack with five shelves; the rack was as big as this, and there were five shelves one above another and they were all... all these shelves were full, over-full of tiny soap pieces. So I asked him, “But for heaven’s sake, what are you doing with all these pieces of soap? Why do you have all these pieces of soap there? Why don’t you use them?” He said to me, “Ah, we have the right to one cake of soap per month, so every month I ask for soap. It happens that I don’t finish it in that month, I keep the pieces.”

<sup>1</sup> The Ashramites take from what Mother called “Prosperity” their clothes, toilet articles, and other requirements. They write out their needs on a page of their Prosperity Book and give in the list a few days before the distribution, which takes place on the first of each month.

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*And he continued to take it?*

It was like that, he made a collection; because he had the right to a cake of soap, he wanted to take the soap, and to take the soap he put the former piece aside. It is an authentic story. I am not inventing it.

Many people here are like that. I won't tell you their names but I know them well. There are many like that. They have a right to something, they will ask for it even if they don't need it, because they have the right. This indeed is... well, in fact it is... an attitude... we won't qualify it.

There is also the miser who fills his chest with pieces of gold and never uses them. Gold does not rot, otherwise truly it rots morally, because something that does not circulate becomes very ill. Now, no conclusions!

*Sweet Mother, which things are truly indispensable for our life?*

I don't think they are the same for everyone. It depends on the country, it depends on the habits, and to tell you the truth, if one analyses very closely, I don't think there are many. You see, if you travel round the world, in every country people have different habits of sleeping, habits of eating, habits of dressing, habits for making their toilet. And quite naturally, they will tell you that the things they use are indispensable. But if you change countries you will realise that all these things are of no use for those people, because they make use of other things which are just as useful for them and seem to them indispensable. Then once again you change the country, and yet again it is other things. So finally, if anyone has travelled a little over the world, he says, "But what is really useful?" I consider a tooth-brush as something indispensable. My neighbour will look at me and tell me, "What's that, your tooth-brush? I use my fingers and it is absolutely all right." And everything's like that, isn't it?

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Food — it seems to you that a certain amount of things is indispensable in order to give you the necessary strength and that they are such and such things because you are accustomed to them, but in another country it is altogether different.

So one can't make a rule; and if one wants to be absolutely strict, I think it is a purely personal question, that it depends on each one's body; because as soon as you grow wide in your consciousness, you realise that the things which seem indispensable to you are not at all so, that you can very well do without them, carry on very well, work very well, have a lot of energy without having any of the things which seem to you indispensable. Are there any things in the whole world which are indispensable, I mean material things? Yes, one can say a small amount of food — and one can't make a general rule, it depends on the climate.

Nature is foreseeing enough, she produces in each climate the right thing for it. Of course, one should not put man at the centre and say that Nature has made this for the good of man, I don't think it is like that, because she had invented all this long before man appeared on the earth. But it is a kind of harmony which develops between the climatic conditions of a country and its produce, as we know that there is a harmony between the size of animals and the largeness of the country they live in. For example, the elephants of India are much smaller than those of Africa. And it is said that this is because in Africa the spaces are immense, so the animals are very big.

It is a kind of harmony established in the creation and as the countries become smaller, as the zones in which these animals live grow smaller, well, the animal becomes smaller until it disappears completely when there is no proper relation left between the free space and its own size. If you construct many houses, well, there will no longer be any bears, any wolves; naturally, first the lions and tigers disappear, but in this I believe men have done something... Fear makes them very destructive. But the greater the masses of human beings and the lesser the

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free spaces, the more do the animal species grow smaller. So how can we make rules?

*The more money we have, the more we need...*

The more money one has the more one is in a state of calamity, my child. Yes, it is a calamity.

It is a catastrophe to have money. It makes you stupid, it makes you miserly, it makes you wicked. It is one of the greatest calamities in the world. Money is something one ought not to have until one no longer has desires. When one no longer has any desires, any attachments, when one has a consciousness vast as the earth, then one may have as much money as there is on the earth; it would be very good for everyone. But if one is not like that, all the money one has is like a curse upon him. This I could tell anyone at all to his face, even to the man who thinks that it is a merit to have become rich. It is a calamity and perhaps it is a disgrace, that is, it is an expression of a divine displeasure.

It is infinitely more difficult to be good, to be wise, to be intelligent and generous, to be more generous, you follow me, when one is rich than when one is poor. I have known many people in many countries, and the most generous people I have ever met in all the countries, were the poorest. And as soon as the pockets are full, one is caught by a kind of illness, which is a sordid attachment to money. I assure you it is a curse.

So the first thing to do when one has money is to give it. But as it is said that it should not be given without discernment, don't go and give it like those who practise philanthropy, because that fills them with a sense of their own goodness, their generosity and their own importance. You must act in a sattwic way, that is, make the best possible use of it. And so, each one must find in his highest consciousness what the best possible use of the money he has can be. And truly money has no value unless it circulates. For each and every one, money is valuable only when one has spent it. If one doesn't spend it... I tell you, men take

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care to choose things which do not deteriorate, that is, gold — which does not decompose. Otherwise, from the moral point of view it rots. And now that gold has been replaced by paper, if you keep paper for a long time without taking care of it, you will see when you open your drawer that there are small silver-fish which have regaled themselves on your paper-rupees. So they will have left a lace-work which the bank will refuse.

There are countries and religions which always say that God makes those whom He loves poor. I don't know if that is true; but there is one thing which is true, that surely when someone is born rich or has become very rich, in any case when he possesses much from the point of view of material riches, it is certainly not a sign that the Divine has chosen him for His divine Grace, and he must make honourable amends if he wants to walk on the path, the true path, to the Divine.

Wealth is a force — I have already told you this once — a force of Nature; and it should be a means of circulation, a power in movement, as flowing water is a power in movement. It is something which can serve to produce, to organise. It is a convenient means, because in fact it is only a means of making things circulate fully and freely.

This force should be in the hands of those who know how to make the best possible use of it, that is, as I said at the beginning, people who have abolished in themselves or in some way or other got rid of every personal desire and every attachment. To this should be added a vision vast enough to understand the needs of the earth, a knowledge complete enough to know how to organise all these needs and use this force by these means.

If, besides this, these beings have a higher spiritual knowledge, then they can utilise this force to construct gradually upon the earth what will be capable of manifesting the divine Power, Force and Grace. And then this power of money, wealth, this financial force, of which I just said that it was like a curse, would become a supreme blessing for the good of all.

For I think that it is the best things which become the worst.

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Perhaps the worst also can become the best. Some people also say that it is the worst men who become the best. I hope the best don't become the worst, for that indeed would be sad.

But still, certainly, the greatest power, if badly used, can be a very great calamity; whereas this same very great power if well utilised can be a blessing. All depends on the use that's made of things. Each thing in the world has its place, its work, a real use; and if used for something else it creates a disorder, confusion, chaos. And that's because in the world as it is, very few things are utilised for their true work, very few things are really in their place, and it is because the world is in a frightful chaos that there is all this misery and suffering. If each thing was in its place, in a harmonious balance, the whole world could progress without needing to be in the state of misery and suffering in which it is. There!

So there is nothing that's bad in itself, but there are many things — almost all — which are not in their place.

Perhaps in the body also it is like that. There is nothing that's bad in itself; but many things are not in their place, and that is why one becomes ill. There is created an inner disharmony. So the result is that one is ill. And people always think that it is not their fault that they are ill, and it is always their fault, and they are very angry when they are told this. "You have no pity." And yet it is true.

There we are. That's enough, isn't it?

That's all. Then we stop. The dose is complete.