

1 May 1957

“In the admission of an activity such as sports and physical exercises into the life of the Ashram it is evident that the methods and the first objects to be attained must belong to what we have called the lower end of the being. Originally they have been introduced for the physical education and bodily development of the children of the Ashram School and these are too young for a strictly spiritual aim or practice to enter into their activities.... Yet what can be attained within the human boundaries can be something very considerable and sometimes immense: what we call genius is part of the development of the human range of being and its achievements, especially in things of the mind and will, can carry us halfway to the divine. Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life, in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kinds, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection....

“The body, we have said, is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of itself and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and

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the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.”

The Supramental Manifestation, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 9–11

Mother, are sports competitions essential to our progress?

From the point of view of moral education they are rather essential, for if one can take part in them in the right spirit, it is a very good opportunity for mastering one's ego. If one does it without trying to overcome one's weaknesses and lower movements, one obviously doesn't know how to profit by them, and it does no good; but if one has the will to play in the right spirit, without any movement of a lower kind, without jealousy or ambition, keeping an attitude which could be called "fair play", that is, doing one's best and not caring about the result; if one can put in the utmost effort without being upset because one has not met with success or things have not turned out in one's favour, then it is very useful. One can come out of all these competitions with a greater self-control and a detachment from results which are a great help to the formation of an exceptional character. Naturally, if you do it in the ordinary way and with all the ordinary reactions and ugly movements, it doesn't help anything at all; but that holds good in no matter what one does; whether in the field of sports or the intellectual field, anywhere, if one acts in the ordinary way, well, one wastes one's time. But if when playing or taking part in tournaments and competitions, you keep the right spirit, it is a very good education, for it compels you to

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make a special effort and to exceed your ordinary limits a little. It is certainly an opportunity to make conscious many of your movements which otherwise would always remain unconscious.

But naturally, you must not forget that this must be an opportunity and a means for progress. If you just let yourselves go and play in an altogether ordinary manner, you are wasting your time; but it is the same for everything, not only for this: for studies and for anything at all. Everything *always* depends on the way in which things are done, not so much on what one does but on the spirit in which one does it.

If you were all yogis and did everything you do with your utmost effort and to your utmost possibilities, as well as you can do it and always with the idea of doing it better still, then, obviously, there would be no need of competitions, prizes, rewards; but, as Sri Aurobindo writes, little children cannot be expected to be yogis, and during the period of preparation a stimulus is necessary for the most material consciousness to make an effort for progress.... And this period of childhood may last for many years!

The ideal would be exactly what I have written in the last *Bulletin*,¹ I don't know if you have read it, but I have written something like this:

Have no ambition,
above all pretend nothing,
but be at every moment
the utmost that you can be.

That is the ideal state in the integral life — whatever one does. And if one realises that, well, one is certainly very far on the path of perfection.... But it is obvious that a certain inner maturity is needed to do this in all sincerity. You may set this as a programme for yourselves.

If you like we shall take it as the subject of our meditation.

(Meditation)

¹ April 1957.