

(1)

FRENCH IN THE ASHRAM AND THE SCHOOL

(Two or three teachers were having a discussion about the language of instruction in the school. Their discussion was submitted to Mother with the remark:) Sri Aurobindo says in his book on education that the child should be taught in his mother-tongue.

Sri Aurobindo did say that, but he also said many other things which complete his advice and abolish all possibility of dogmatism. Sri Aurobindo himself has often repeated that if one affirms one thing, one should be able to affirm its opposite; otherwise one cannot understand the Truth.

(In the same letter, one of the teachers wondered about the future of French in the Ashram.)

French will continue to be taught in the Ashram, at least so long as I am here, because Sri Aurobindo, who loved French very much and knew it very well, considered it to be an essential part of the knowledge of languages.

23 August 1965

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(In the course of a conversation about French, a disciple pointed out to Mother that now many French people, especially newcomers, speak in English, even to people who know French perfectly well. Mother concentrated for a moment and said: "So much the worse for them." The disciple then asked whether it would be helpful if she gave a message on this matter. She wrote the following message and suggested that it should be put up in the

On Education

Ashram and in the school, and that a copy should be put up in the "Bibliothèque Choisie". Photocopies were made for this purpose.)

Sri Aurobindo loved French very much. He used to say that it was a clear and precise language, whose use encouraged clarity of mind. From the point of view of the development of the consciousness, that is precious. In French, one can say exactly what one wants to say.

Blessings.

19 October 1971

(2)

THE ORGANISATION OF WORK IN FRENCH CLASSES

(A group of teachers were considering a reorganisation of certain classes. One of them asked Mother whether she had any objection.)

No objection, these are things which you should arrange freely among yourselves.

January 1961

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(Two teachers had a rather heated discussion about the work. One of them presented the problem to Mother and asked for her opinion. Mother replied:)

Truly speaking, *I have no opinion*. According to the truth-vision, everything is still terribly mixed, a more or less fortunate combination of light and darkness, of truth and falsehood, of knowledge and ignorance, and so long as decisions are made and action is carried out according to opinions, it will always be like that.

We want to give the example of an action that is carried out according to the truth-vision, but unfortunately we are still very far from realising this ideal; and even if the truth-vision is expressed, it is immediately distorted in its implementation.

So, in the present state of things, it is impossible to say: this is true and this is false, this leads us away from the goal, this leads us nearer to the goal.

Everything can be used for the sake of progress; *everything* can be useful if one knows how to use it.

The important thing is never to lose sight of the ideal you want to realise and to make use of every circumstance for this purpose.

After all, it is always preferable not to make any decision for or against things, but to watch events as they develop, with the impartiality of a witness, relying on the divine Wisdom which will decide for the best and do what is needful.

July 1961

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(A teacher had passed on to several colleagues a personal answer from Mother to some questions about the work. Regretting this indiscretion, she immediately spoke to Mother about it.)

There is no harm in having said what you did, because, you see, to each person I can say, in all sincerity, that "I agree." In fact, it is a thing that is rather difficult for all of you to understand, since the mind can hardly approve of it. But behind each one's point of view there is an aspect, sometimes a very small aspect of *truth*, and I always agree with this aspect — on condition, of course, that it does not want to be exclusive by trying to eliminate the others.

And I am seeking for a method in action by which all these aspects can be expressed, each one in its own place, without interfering with one another. The day I find this means, I shall

On Education

begin to reorganise the school. In the meantime, you can always air ideas; it is healthy, so long as it is neither dogmatic, nor exclusive, nor aggressive, and so long as you *never* quarrel.

August 1961

(3)

TEACHING FRENCH TO INDIAN TEACHERS WHO TEACH IN FRENCH

SELECTING A TEXT FOR STUDY

(While choosing a text to study with a young Indian teacher who wanted to improve her French, the French teacher asked Mother for her opinion on La Peste by Albert Camus.)

Reading certain things can be good for Europeans who have a rather thick skin, to arouse in them a feeling of true compassion; but here in India it is not necessary. And it is not good to give an even darker picture of a life that is already dark enough in itself.

(Mother suggested Recherche d'une église by Jules Romains, and sent her own copy for the French teacher to look at. The teacher was "shocked" by certain chapters of the book and reported her feelings to Mother in rather strong terms. Mother replied:)

Recherche d'une église was the book of my choice. Jules Romains is a great writer and his French is of the highest order. When I mentioned cuts,¹ it was because certain passages are not quite suitable for a young woman's mind. But it would have been easy to make these cuts, and the rest is very good.

¹ In a preceding letter Mother had written: "With certain cuts, some of Jules Romains' books would also be good, especially *Recherche d'une église*."

Mother's Work in the School

(The French teacher continued her search for texts and suggested La France d'aujourd'hui by Marc Blancpain.)

I have just been looking at the book, with interest. This time, it is very good.

May 1960

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FINDING A PROGRAMME OF WORK

(The French teacher outlined a study course on the history of civilisation for one of her students, a young Indian teacher, and submitted the project to Mother.)

Yes, this work would be of interest, but only if it is based on Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* (it has been published in the *Bulletin*). For in this book, not only are all the problems of human evolution posed, they are also solved. Each time that Sri Aurobindo mentions a civilisation or a country, the corresponding historical facts could be studied, and this work would be really interesting.

September 1960

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In one French class for Indian teachers, several students wanted to read the works of contemporary authors, because the language in them is more up-to-date than in classical writings. What does Mother think?

What I know of modern authors has taken away any wish I might have had to read more of them.

Why step deliberately into the mire? What is to be gained by it? The knowledge that the Western world is wallowing in the mud? It is hardly necessary. Selected passages, carefully selected, seem to be the solution.

May 1963

On Education

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(Concerning a young teacher who had to learn French intensively in order to be able to teach in French and had at the same time to keep up with a rather heavy time-table in the school.)

I fully agree. X should have the time to learn French thoroughly and her hours of work and teaching should be organised in such a way that she has the time to continue her lessons with you, until she feels that they are no longer necessary.

September 1966

(4)

TEACHING FRENCH TO THE STUDENTS

How can we improve the children's spelling?

Generally, for spelling, one must take the help of the eyes. Each word should have its *own form*, which the eye remembers. *Visual memory* is more useful than mental memory. One should *read* a lot — see, see, see, on the blackboard, in books, on pictures.

And as for style, gender, and grammar too, the best thing is to read, to read a great deal. In this way all this goes into the subconscious. It is the best way to learn.

January 1962

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ABOUT TESTS

Tests may be useful in giving you the *academic* worth of a child, but not his *real* worth.

As for the real worth of a child, something else is to be found, but that will be for later on, and will be of a different nature.

Mother's Work in the School

I am not *opposing real* worth to *academic* worth; they can coexist in the same individual, but it is a rather rare phenomenon which produces exceptional types of people.

1962

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(Mother's comments in the margin of a letter from a teacher about French in the school. The students were using work-sheets.)

One of the reasons why the children do not make any progress in French is that the teachers do not correct them.

Very true.

Working with the work-sheets will be effective only if corrections are strict.

Very true.

I have begun to prepare corrected versions of all the exercises for the benefit of the teachers and the students.

Very good.

The teachers should read these corrected versions at least once...

Certainly more than once.

... so that they can become aware of their own mistakes.

Yes, they need that very much.

On Education

It would be good for the child to have this corrected version in hand so that he can compare it with his own work.

Yes, that is very useful.

Merely to underline the mistakes teaches the children nothing.

True.

I am afraid that the corrected versions I am making for the teachers may remain piously in a drawer.

Heaven forbid!

If so, by the end of the year the children will have done a considerable amount of work to no purpose.

You are right. It is the teachers, almost all of them, with only a few exceptions, who are lazy — more than the students.

I think I am bothering you with this French.

No, you are not bothering me, you are quite right.

It seems to me that so much goodwill is wasted. The goodwill of the children is wasted because, although the atmosphere in the classes is good, the work is ineffective and the work that is needed is not done.

Yes.

25 December 1962

(5)

THE "BIBLIOTHÈQUE CHOISIE"²

(A teacher noticed that the "Bibliothèque Choisie" contained a rather high proportion of books which should not be there if the library is to be worthy of its name. She spoke of this to Mother in the course of several interviews. This was the outcome:)

Mother's advice about the composition of the "Bibliothèque Choisie".³

Remove all modern novels.

Include only scholarly works, on philosophy, art, the sciences.

The best thing would be to bring the list of books to Mother, a little at a time, so that she can see what they contain.

This is an important matter.

(The teacher asked Mother what she meant by "scholarly works". She replied:)

All books that aim to teach.

The aim of the "Bibliothèque Choisie" is to teach the students good French and the best in French thought.

It should include mainly scholarly works, that is, works which aim to teach: books on philosophy, art, the sciences, etc.

There should be very few novels (the students read only too many novels), and no modern novels, unless they are of particularly good quality.

² Library of Selected Works.

³ This note was taken down as Mother was speaking. It was immediately read out to her and she wrote on it "Approved" and signed it.

On Education

Literature has its place in the “Bibliothèque Choisie”, so that the students can learn what literature is.

The most important thing to be taken into consideration when selecting books, is the quality of the language and style,⁴ something “splendid” as in Flaubert. No translations, or very few, and only if they are of famous works — one cannot say “masterpieces” because there are so few of them!⁵

(About the bad books which are to be withdrawn from the “Bibliothèque Choisie”, Mother said:)

They should be put in a special place, in a special room called “Bad Books”, so that those who want to study what they contain may do so.

Great care must be taken when ordering books.

The question of the “Bibliothèque Choisie” is an important one.

MESSAGE FOR THE “BIBLIOTHÈQUE CHOISIE”

The aim of the “Bibliothèque Choisie” is to teach French well.

1. The books should be well written.
2. Preference should be given to those that are interesting from the point of view of learning.
3. Include novels only if they are remarkably well written.
4. Very few translations — only those of famous books.
5. Send all the rest to the Big Library with the note: “Not to be recommended.”⁶

1971

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⁴ As this sentence was being read out, Mother showed particular approval.

⁵ This note was taken down after a conversation between Mother and the same teacher. It was read to Mother, who wrote “Approved” and signed it.

⁶ This message was dictated by Mother, then checked by her and signed.

(The teacher read out to Mother a letter in which she had written, among other things: "I think it is possible to change most of the books in the "Bibliothèque Choisie" and to raise its standard a little. Please tell me if you approve of this and if I may try to realise it." Mother replied orally, with force:)

Completely, I approve completely. It is indispensable. We have fallen to such a level! In everything! Ah, I agree completely.

1972

(6)

MOTHER'S ACTION IN A CLASS OF CHILDREN
AGED TEN TO ELEVEN

How should we teach French to the young children?

The best thing would be to tell them a story, using very simple words and phrases so that they can understand (a little story, short and interesting or amusing), and then afterwards ask them to write down in class what they have heard.

Yes, but the children are very noisy.

A minimum of silence is necessary. I know that the most undisciplined children are usually the most intelligent. But to be tamed they must feel the pressure of an intelligence that is more powerful than their own. And for that, one must be able not to come down to their level, and above all know how to remain unaffected by what they do. In fact, it is a yogic problem.

Can calm in the teacher provide the solution to all these problems?

Yes, but for that the calm must be perfect in all parts of the being

On Education

so that the power can express itself through him.

(The children's notebooks had been sent to Mother for her assessment.)

I have put marks in the children's notebooks without making any classification. Is this classification really necessary? Each one has different merits and it is difficult to grade them.

June-July 1960

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(Extract from one of the teacher's letters:) I trust You and I trust the children because of You; as for myself, I know nothing and I want nothing, except what You want for us. Only show me at every step what should be done and how to answer. Lead us, and may we follow You silently in the depths of our hearts, whatever the outer results may be. Only let the children grow and flower in Your Peace and Love and let us all live together for You.

The relationship that has really been established between the class, you, the children and me, is certainly the most important thing and it must be preserved at all costs. But that depends on an *inner attitude* much more than on an outer framework or material organisation. In fact, this same *attitude* should be present throughout the whole school and all the classes, in all the teachers and all the students. This is what must be obtained and what we must strive for.

(There was a considerable improvement in the class. The teacher wrote:) All this, which has so completely changed, is the result of Your work in us, isn't it?

Yes, certainly.

(The teacher asked whether, because of the experiment which was going on with Mother, it would not be better to keep the same children the following year, rather than to take another group.)

An experiment should be flexible and plastic enough to be applicable and adapted to all the children, with any changes in detail that their different characters may require. So you may rest assured that the experiment will continue. Only the children may not be the same ones.

(The teacher had organised work-groups with the children. The results were uneven and the class was noisy. The teacher asked whether they should continue.)

Let them continue with the experiment. Little by little things will settle down and the results will improve.

(After an excellent period, the work with the children became more difficult.)

This slackening is no doubt due to the approach of the holidays.

October 1960

(7)

MOTHER'S ACTION IN A CLASS OF CHILDREN
AGED SEVEN TO NINE

(Mother gave the name "Arbre Ensoleillé" ["Sunlit Tree"] to the class according to ideas expressed by the children themselves. She explained:)

The tree is life that aspires and grows. The sun is the light of Truth.

On Education

It is not the cold light of reason that helps life to grow and blossom, it is the warm and life-giving light of Truth; it is the sun, when it pours its joyful rays on the world.

(The teacher introduced activities such as doing odd jobs, gardening, making a zoo out of cardboard, observing a chrysalis, etc. The children enjoyed these activities but afterwards were reluctant to go on from there to do more “scholastic” work.)

A good beginning. It will evolve quite naturally towards more intellectual activities, and meanwhile any work that is done with care is an opportunity to learn something.

(Reply to some practical questions)

1. It is better not to lock the children up in the classroom, even to play.
2. A moment of silence and concentration is always good for *all the children*. But the prayer *should not be compulsory*. Those who want to do it will be encouraged. I suggest that you put up a notice-board in the classroom with these words written on it in large letters:

“Mother is always here amongst us to help us and guide us.”

Most of the children will understand, and some are capable of *feeling*.

December 1960

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(The teacher found the children turbulent, rather lazy and as talkative as parrots. She asked:) Is it like this because their real interest is not turned towards study?

Yes.

Mother's Work in the School

What can we do to obtain calm and quietness in the class and get the children to do some work?

The only effective thing is to create or awaken in them a *real* interest in study, *the need to learn and to know*, to awaken their *mental curiosity*.

(The teacher complained of a lack of results.)

It is only after months, and even years of assiduous, regular and obstinate effort that one can rightfully say (and even then!) that it has been useless and fruitless.

What should be done?

Compulsion is neither the best nor the most effective principle of education.

True education must *reveal* what is already present in the developing beings and make it blossom. Just as flowers blossom in the sun, children blossom in joy. It goes without saying that joy does not mean weakness, disorder and confusion. But a luminous kindness which encourages the good and does not severely insist on the bad.

Grace is always much closer to Truth than justice.

What should be done so that Mother can act in the class?

There is nothing, no method, no process, which is bad in itself; everything depends on the spirit in which it is done.

If you want my help, it is not by accepting one principle of action and rejecting another that you can have it, but by concentrating before the class, by establishing silence and peace in your heart (and in your head too, if possible) and *by calling my presence* with a sincere aspiration that I should be behind all your actions, not in the way you think that I would act (for

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that can only be an arbitrary opinion and therefore necessarily wrong), but in silence and calm and inner spontaneity. This is the only true way of getting out of your difficulty.

And until you are able to achieve this, do your best quietly and perseveringly, according to your own capacities and the circumstances, with simplicity and without tormenting yourself.

The Grace is always there with anyone who wishes to do well.

What does Mother call “persevering” where work with the children is concerned?

What I meant to say in the notebook, was that it is always preferable to continue quietly with what one is doing until an *inner psychological change* brings about the outer change smoothly. This is what I call *persevering*.

January 1961

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The work and the discipline are becoming slack. Is it because of a “vital strike” on the teacher’s part?

Certainly. It is a weakening of the force due to the non-collaboration of the vital which causes the slackening. Children do not live in their minds enough to obey spontaneously a mental will that is not sustained by a vital force which influences them by its mere presence, without requiring any outer expression. When the vital collaborates, my force works through it and automatically maintains order simply by its presence in the vital.

Young children are not very sensitive to a mental power that is not clothed with vital power. And in order to have vital power you yourself must be *perfectly calm*.

(The teacher proposed to start with the children a course

of study in the subjects which interested them.)

Yes, it is a good idea. An atmosphere of friendly collaboration is always best.

February 1961

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A difficult period is beginning. What would be the true attitude for the teacher?

The psychic inspiration alone is true. All that comes from the vital and the mind is necessarily mixed with egoism and is arbitrary. One should not act in *reaction* to outer contact, but with an immutable vision of love and goodwill. Everything else is a mixture which can only have confused and mixed results, and perpetuate the disorder.

(Extract from one of the teacher's letters:) It seems that it is merely mental impulses that are making me act, and that they miss the mark. That is why although I intervene very little, I feel that it is still too much, because it is not the real thing. And I think I have learnt from You that true calm is much more effective than any external intervention.

It also seems that if I am going through an experience, perhaps the same thing may be true for the children, and in fact we are going through this experience together, we have embarked on the same boat; the Divine alone knows its meaning and its outcome.⁷

The problem is more far-reaching than it appears at first sight. It is in fact a revolt of the vital forces of the children against all discipline and all constraint. The normal ordinary method would have been to expel all the undisciplined children from

⁷ Mother underlined this extract and wrote in the margin: "This is correct."

On Education

the school and to keep only those who are “good”. But this is a defeat and an impoverishment.

If, by transmitting the inner force, *in absolute calm*, one can finally control this revolt, it becomes a conversion and a true enrichment. That is what I want to try and I hope that it will be possible for you to go on collaborating with my action. And now that you have understood not only what I want to do, but also the mechanism and the process of this action, I am confident that we shall succeed. We must expect relapses and not be discouraged by them.

Vital forces, especially in children whose reason is not very well developed, fight desperately before accepting the light and allowing themselves to be converted by it. But success is certain in the end, and we must know how to endure and wait.

(The teacher prayed for light, love, flexibility and all that is necessary in order to collaborate with Mother’s work in the class.)

All this is constantly with you. Remain open and let it work.

March 1961

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(The teacher planned to let the children work in groups. Should she form the groups herself, according to their standards, or should she let the children group themselves according to their affinities?)

Let the children group themselves according to their spontaneous sympathies.

Does calm in the teacher necessarily bring about calm in the class, that is to say, “a quiet atmosphere where each one can work according to his own rhythm and capacities, without noise or restlessness, without impatience or laziness...?”

Mother's Work in the School

If your calm is integral, that is, both inner and outer, founded on the perception of the Divine Presence, and unchanging, that is to say, constant and unvarying in all circumstances, it will undoubtedly be all-powerful, and the children will necessarily be influenced by it and the class will certainly become, spontaneously and almost automatically, what you want it to be.⁸

April 1961

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(The teacher thought that a liking for work and the joy of working should be developed in the children. Mother replied:)

You are quite right in everything you say about the school, the class and work, and I fully approve the effort of organisation that you want to make.

(Mother also sent these two messages to the children:)

If one does not love work, one is always unhappy in life.

In order to be truly happy in life, *one must love work.*

July 1961

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SOME OTHER MESSAGES OF MOTHER TO THE CHILDREN OF THIS CLASS

My dear children, love work and you will be happy. Love to learn and you will progress.

⁸ From the time of this message, calm was definitively reestablished in the classroom.

On Education

(The children decided with their teacher on a programme for the year: to speak in French, to read correctly, to write French without mistakes, to count properly, to understand arithmetic problems, to learn how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Mother replied in the class notebook:)

My dear children, I have read your letter and I agree that it would be very good if by the end of the year you knew all the things that you have listed here.

But there is one point on which I want to draw your attention, because it is the central point and the most important one: it is your attitude in class and the state of mind in which you come to school.

To benefit from your daily attendance in class, you must go there with a sincere will to learn, to be attentive and concentrated, to listen to what your teacher tells you and to work quietly and seriously.

If you spend your time shouting, fidgeting and upsetting everything like unconscious and ill-mannered children, you are wasting your time, you are wasting the teacher's time and you will learn nothing at all. And at the end of the year I will have to say that you are bad students and do not deserve to move up into a higher class.

You must come to your class with the will to learn, otherwise it is a waste of time, because even if only one of you misbehaves all the others will be disturbed. So this is the decision I want you to take: to be good, quiet, attentive, and to work hard. This is what you must promise me to do in this notebook.

And when each of you has written, with all his goodwill, then send the notebook back to me so that I can give you my blessings.

Beginning of 1961

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(The children do not sit up straight and their handwriting is bad. Mother wrote:)

It is no more tiring to hold yourself straight than to hold yourself badly. When you hold yourself straight, the body grows harmoniously. When you hold yourself badly, the body becomes misshapen and ugly.

It is no more tiring to write neatly than to scrawl. When your work is neatly written, it is read with pleasure. When it is too badly written, it cannot be read at all.

To do with care all that one does is the basis of all progress.

1961

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The days pass, the weeks pass, the months pass, the years pass and time fades into the past. And later on, when they have grown up, those who no longer have the immense advantage of being children regret the time that they have wasted and that they could have used to learn all the things which are needed to know how to live.

March 1961

(8)

MOTHER'S ACTION IN A CLASS OF CHILDREN AGED SIXTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

In 1968, while a reorganisation of the school was taking place, Mother declared that she was ready to reply to any questions that the students wished to ask her about interesting subjects of study. When someone asked her to choose a subject, she replied: "Death."

This offer was made to all the students. The following work represents the response of a French class to Mother's offer.

On Education

In the course of each session, the questions were formulated by each student individually and sent together to Mother.

(The students wrote to Mother, asking to be allowed to work with her on a study on death. Mother gave these instructions orally to the teacher.)

The subject is: What is death?

How should you begin? You must look into yourself, look inside; do not try to know by reading books or to find out what is happening in the vital and the mind: what you feel, what you think about death.

The research should be carried out exclusively on a material plane: what is death, from the physical point of view?

You must concentrate and find the answers in yourself. Don't make any speeches. Say only one sentence. The more intelligent you are, the less words you need to express yourself.

27 April 1968

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(The students' replies to the question, "What is death, from the physical point of view?":

"All circulation of blood in the brain cells stops."

"When the brain stops functioning and the decomposition of the body begins, that is death."

"The cessation of all physical activity due to the absence of the energy source, or soul."

"The actual fact of death makes me think of an experience in which one is projected with increasing force into space."

Mother wrote to the class:)

I read what you sent with interest. And here is my reply:

Death is the phenomenon of decentralisation and dispersion of the cells which make up the physical body.

The consciousness is, by its very nature, immortal, and in order to manifest in the physical world, it assumes more or less lasting material forms.

The material substance is in course of transformation in order to become a multiform and increasingly perfect and lasting mode of expression for this consciousness.

18 May 1968

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(This time, Mother gave separate replies to the questions and sent them to the teacher:)

Here are my replies to your students' questions. I hope they will be able to understand.

If a cell becomes conscious of its own personality, is it not liable to act only in its own self-interest, taking no account of the collective interest?

What is the self-interest of a cell!

*

Does the decentralisation occur all at once or by degrees?

Everything does not disperse all at once; it takes a long time.

The central will of the physical being abdicates its will to hold all the cells together. That is the first phenomenon. It accepts dissolution for one reason or another. One of the strongest reasons is the sense of an irreparable disharmony; the other is a kind of disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation. In fact, there are innumerable reasons, but unless there is a violent accident, it is above all this will to maintain cohesion which abdicates for one reason or another, or without reason. It is this which inevitably precedes death.

On Education

Must each cell be conscious of its oneness with the centre?

It is not like that. It is still a semi-collective consciousness, it is not an individual consciousness of the cells.

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Does decentralisation always occur after death, or can it start before?

It often starts before.

Do the cells disperse in space or in the body itself? If they disperse in space, the body must surely disappear with the cells?

Naturally, the body dissolves after death, but that takes a long time.

In the expression "dispersion of the cells", doesn't the word "dispersion" have a special meaning? If so, what is it?

I used the word dispersion of the cells in its most concrete sense.

When the concentration which forms the body comes to an end and the body dissolves, all the cells that have been especially developed and have become conscious of the divine Presence within them, are scattered and enter other combinations in which they awaken, by contagion, the consciousness of the Presence that each one has had. And in this way, by this phenomenon of concentration, development and dispersion, all matter evolves and learns by contagion, develops by contagion, has the experience by contagion.

Naturally, the cell dissolves with the body. It is the consciousness of the cells that enters other combinations.

5 June 1968

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When the will of the physical being abdicates without reason, is it without any physical reason or without any reason at all?

The physical consciousness is conscious only physically; the will of the physical being can abdicate without any reason of which it is aware.

What causes the physical being's disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation?

Usually, this disgust occurs when there is, in one part of the being (an important part, either vital or mental), an absolute refusal to progress. And so, physically, this is manifested as a refusal to strive against the deterioration which comes with time.

Where is the connection between the central will of the physical being and the cells established? And how?

The cells have an inner composition or structure which corresponds to the structure of the universe. So the link is established between identical external and internal states.... It is not "external", but it is external for the individual. That is, the cell, in its internal composition, receives the vibration of the corresponding state in the composition of the whole. Each cell is composed of different radiances, with a wholly luminous centre, and the connection is established between light and light. That is, the will, the central light, acts on the cell by touching the corresponding lights, by an inner contact of the being. Each cell is a world in miniature corresponding to the whole.

15 July 1968

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On Education

Is the will for progress enough to prevent the deterioration that comes with time? How can the physical being prevent this deterioration?

That is precisely what the transformation of the body is: the physical cells not only become conscious, but receptive to the true Consciousness-Force; that is, they allow the working of this higher Consciousness. That is the work of transformation.

How does the will, the central light, which is not material, act on the gross matter of the cell?

It is just like asking, “How does the will act on matter?” All life is like that. You should explain to these children that their whole existence is the result of the action of the will, that without will, matter would be inert and immobile and that it is precisely the fact that the vibration of will acts on matter that makes life possible. Otherwise there would be no life. If they want a scientific answer and want to know how, it is more difficult, but the fact is there, it is a fact that can be seen at every second.

20 July 1968

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How does one become conscious of the physical being?

Mankind, nearly all of mankind, is conscious only of the physical being. With education, the number of men who are conscious of their vital and mind is increasing. As for the human beings who are conscious of their psychic being, they are relatively few.

If you mean, “How does one awaken the consciousness of the physical being?”, that is precisely the aim of physical education. It is physical education that teaches the cells to be conscious. But for the development of the brain, it is study, observation, intelligent education, above all observation and reasoning. And naturally, for the whole education of the consciousness from the point of view of character, it is yoga.

Does the central will of the physical being have a particular location in the body?

It is the brain.

Can one experience death without dying?

Certainly. One can experience death yogically; one can even experience it materially, if death is short enough so that the doctors do not have time to pronounce you dead.

After death, which part of the being becomes aware that one is dead?

Any part of the being that survives can become aware that the body is no longer there. It depends.

How can one tell for certain that the physical body is dead?

Only when it decomposes.

How can one control or prevent the process of disintegration?

By carefully maintaining the physical balance.

When one dies, does one necessarily feel physical pain?

Not necessarily.

28 September 1968

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On Education

What should we do in our daily lives to stop the process of death?

The method is to detach one's consciousness from the body and to concentrate it on the deeper life, so as to bring this deeper consciousness into the body.

If the sense of "self" has identified itself more with the mind in life, is this the same sense of "self" that has all the experiences after death, that is, that retains at the same time the memories of life? I am asking this about the mind, for it remains formed a little longer than the other parts after death.

It is not true that the mind is more durable. The psychic consciousness which has identified itself with the little physical part leaves this little physical person. Insofar as this consciousness has shaped the life, it remembers what it has shaped and the memory is closely linked to the psychic consciousness in the events. Wherever the psychic consciousness has not taken part in events, there is no memory. And only the psychic consciousness can continue; it is not the mind that retains memories, that is quite incorrect.

1 February 1969

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(A few days later, during a conversation with the teacher about this student, Mother said, by way of conclusion:)

In fact, there is no death.