

Series One

Letters from the Mother to Her Son

Our community is growing more and more; we are nearly thirty (not counting those who are scattered all over India); and I have become responsible for all this; I am at the centre of the organisation, on the material as well as the spiritual side, and you can easily imagine what it means. We already occupy five houses, one of which is our property; others will follow. New recruits are coming from all parts of the world. With this expansion, new activities are being created, new needs are arising which require new skills.

16 January 1927

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I think I told you about our five houses; four of them are joined in a single square block which is surrounded on all sides by streets and contains several buildings with courtyards and gardens. We have just bought, repaired and comfortably furnished one of these houses and then, just recently, we have settled there, Sri Aurobindo and myself, as well as five of the closest disciples.

We have joined the houses together with openings in some of the outer walls and outbuildings, so that I may walk freely in our little realm without having to go out into the street — this is rather nice. But I am busier than ever now, and I can say that at the moment I am writing to you in a hurry.

16 February 1927

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It is true that for a long time I have not slept in the usual sense of the word.¹ That is to say, at no time do I fall into

¹ Written in connection with a newspaper article in which it was stated that the Mother had not slept for several months.

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the inconscience which is the sign of ordinary sleep. But I do give my body the rest it needs, that is, two or three hours of lying down in a condition of absolute immobility in which the whole being, mental, psychic, vital and physical, enters into a complete state of rest made of perfect peace, absolute silence and total immobility, while the consciousness remains perfectly awake; or else I enter into an internal activity of one or more states of being, an activity which constitutes the occult work and which, needless to say, is also perfectly conscious. So I can say, in all truth, that I never lose consciousness throughout the twenty-four hours, which thus form an unbroken sequence, and that I no longer experience ordinary sleep, while still giving my body the rest that it needs.

3 July 1927

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In this letter I am sending you a few photographs of the Ashram which will no doubt interest you since they will give you an idea, however incomplete and imprecise, of the surroundings in which I live; in any case they will give a very limited impression, for the Ashram at present consists of seventeen houses inhabited by eighty-five or ninety people (the number varies as people come and go).

I am also sending you conversations 14 and 15. I hope that you have received, in several instalments, the complete series of the first thirteen; I had them mailed to you as they were published.²

25 August 1929

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I shall not endeavour to reply to your opinion on the “conversations” although there are certain points which you do not seem to have fully grasped; but I suppose that a second reading later

² These fifteen “conversations” are published in *Questions and Answers 1929–1931*, CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 1–120.

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on, at your leisure, will enable you to understand those parts which eluded you at first glance. Moreover, these “conversations” make no claim to exhaust their subjects or even to deal with them thoroughly. Rather they are hints whose purpose is more pragmatic than didactic; they are a kind of moral stimulus meant to goad and spur on those who are on the way. It is true that in my answers many aspects of the question have been neglected which could have been examined with interest — that will be for another time.

21 October 1929

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The Ashram is becoming a more and more interesting institution. We have now acquired our twenty-first house; the number of paid workers of the Ashram (labourers and servants) has reached sixty or sixty-five, and the number of Ashram members (Sri Aurobindo’s disciples living in Pondicherry) varies between eighty-five and a hundred. Five cars, twelve bicycles, four sewing machines, a dozen typewriters, many garages, an automobile repair workshop, an electrical service, a building service, sewing departments (European and Indian tailors, embroideresses, etc.), a library and reading-room containing several thousand volumes, a photographic service, general stores containing a wide variety of goods, nearly all imported from France, large gardens for flowers, vegetables and fruits, a dairy, a bakery, etc., etc.! — you can see that it is no small affair. And as I am taking care of all this, I can truly say that I am busy.

23 August 1930

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I have also received the *Grande Revue*³ and I read the article you mention. I found it rather dull, but apart from that not too bad. But the Mukerjee quoted there must have lived for many years

³ A literary monthly published in France until 1939.

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outside India (in America, I believe) and has become completely westernised; otherwise he would not give Gandhi and Tagore as the two most popular figures *in India*. On the contrary it is outside India that they are most popular; and for foreigners these two men seem to be the only ones who represent Indian genius. This is very far from the truth, and if they are so well known in Western countries, it is probably because their stature does not go beyond the understanding of the Western mind.

India has far greater geniuses than these and in the most varied fields, scientific, literary, philosophic, spiritual. It is true that the young people from Shantiniketan come out refined, but without any force or energy for realisation. As for Gandhi's young people, they may have more energy and power of action, but they are imprisoned within the four walls of a few narrow ideas and a limited mind.

I repeat, there is better, far better in India, but this India does not care for international glory.

4 August 1931

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Just a word about your remark that having children is the only way to perpetuate the human race. I have never denied this, but I wish to add that there is nothing to fear in this respect; if it is Nature's plan to perpetuate the human race, she will always find as many people as she needs to carry out her plan. The earth will surely never suffer from a dearth of men.

28 September 1931

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The things that are awaited... they alone can remedy the sorry state of affairs you mention in your letter of October 9th; and it is certainly not confined to the small states of central Europe. What you have described is pretty much the state of the whole world: disorder, confusion, wastage and misery.

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It is no use lamenting, however, saying: Where are you headed! The final collapse, the general bankruptcy seems obvious enough... unless... There is always an “unless” in the history of the earth; and always, when confusion and destruction seem to have reached their climax, something happens and a new balance is established which extends, for a few centuries more, the life of declining civilisations and human societies in delirium.

Do not start thinking I am a pessimist. I certainly do not like things as they are. I do not believe, however, that they are worse than they have been many times before. But I want them to be different, I want them to be more harmonious and more *true*. Oh, the horror of falsehood spread everywhere on earth, ruling the world with its law of darkness! I believe that its reign has lasted long enough; this is the master we must now refuse to serve. This is the great, the only remedy.

3 November 1931

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After a very long time I was happy to receive your letter of January 5th, especially since you think of Pondicherry as an ideal resting place. True, I think that it could provide a perfect place of cure for the restless — even if one seeks diversions there are none; on the other hand the sea is beautiful, the countryside is vast and the town is very small: a five minute drive and you are out of it; and, at the centre of it all, the Ashram is a condensation of dynamic and active peace, so much so that all those who come from outside feel as if they were in another world. It is indeed something of another world, a world in which the inner life governs the outer, a world where things get done, where work is carried out not for a personal end but in a selfless way for the realisation of an ideal. The life we lead here is as far from ascetic abstinence as from an enervating comfort; simplicity is the rule here, but a simplicity full of variety — a variety of occupations, of activities, of tastes, tendencies, natures; each one is free to organise his life as he pleases, the discipline is reduced

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to the minimum that is indispensable to organise the existence of 110 to 120 people and to avoid movements that would be detrimental to the achievement of our yogic aim.

What do you say to this? Isn't it tempting? Will you ever have the time or the possibility to come here? Once you did let me hope for a visit.

I would like to show you our "establishment". It has just acquired four houses which I bought in my name to simplify the legal technicalities; but it goes without saying that *I do not own them*. I think I have already explained the situation to you and I want to take advantage of this opportunity to remind you of it. The Ashram with all its real estate and moveable property belongs to Sri Aurobindo, it is his money that enables me to meet the almost formidable expenses that it entails (our annual budget averages one "lakh" of rupees, which at the present rate of exchange corresponds approximately to 650,000 francs); and if my name sometimes appears (on bank accounts, purchase of houses, of automobiles, etc.), it is, as I already told you, a matter of convenience for the papers and signatures, since it is I who "manage" everything, but not because I really own them. You will readily understand why I am telling you all this; it is so you can bear it in mind just in case.

10 February 1933

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Your last letter refers to current events and betrays some anxiety which is certainly not unfounded. In their ignorant unconsciousness men set moving forces they are not even aware of and soon these forces get more and more out of their control and bring about disastrous results. The earth seems to be shaken almost entirely by a terrible fit of political and social epilepsy through which the most dangerous forces of destruction do their work. Even here, in this poor little nook, we have not escaped the general malady. For three or four days the forces at work were ugly and could justifiably cause anxiety, and a great confusion

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was beginning to set in. I must say that under the circumstances the Governor (Solmiac) showed great kindness and resolve at the same time. His goodwill is beyond all praise. Finally, it all ended quite well, considering the difficult circumstances. But now more than 14,000 workers are out of work. The largest factory is closed, no one knows for how long, and the other one was burned down.

The sign of the times seems to be a complete lack of common sense. But perhaps we see it this way simply because nearness makes us see all the details. From a distance the details fade and only the principal lines appear, giving a slightly more logical aspect to circumstances.

It may be that life on earth has always been a chaos — whatever the Bible may say, the Light has not yet made its appearance. Let us hope that it will not be long in coming.

23 August 1936

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A small booklet is being published in Geneva, containing a talk I gave in 1912, I think. It is a bit out-of-date, but I did not want to dampen their enthusiasm. I had entitled it “The Central Thought”, but they found this a little too philosophical, so it has been changed to “The Supreme Discovery”.⁴ Rather pompous for my taste, but...

24 April 1937

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Speaking of recent events, you ask me “whether it was a dangerous bluff” or whether we “narrowly escaped disaster”. To assume both at the same time would be nearer to the truth. Hitler was certainly bluffing, if that is what you call shouting and making threats with the intention of intimidating those to whom one is talking and obtaining as much as one can. Tactics

⁴ Published in *Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 40–46.

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and diplomacy were used, but on the other hand, behind every human will there are forces at work whose origin is not human and which move consciously towards certain ends. The play of these forces is very complex and generally eludes the human consciousness; but for ease of explanation and understanding, they may be divided into two main opposing tendencies: those that work for the fulfilment of the Divine work upon earth, and those that are opposed to this fulfilment. The former have few conscious instruments at their disposal. It is true that in this matter quality compensates by far for quantity. As for the anti-divine forces they have only too many to choose from, and always they find wills which they enslave and individuals whom they turn into docile but nearly always unconscious puppets. Hitler is a choice instrument for these anti-divine forces which want violence, upheaval and war, for they know that these things retard and hamper the action of the divine forces. That is why disaster was very close even though no human government consciously wanted it. But at any cost there was to be no war and that is why war has been avoided — for the time being.

22 October 1938