

Integral **HEALING**



Compiled from the works of
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

The following selections are taken from the book
 “Integral Healing”:

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The Old Spirituality and the New

The Mother: There was a time, not so long ago, when the spiritual aspiration of man was turned towards a silent, inactive peace, detached from all worldly things, a flight from life, precisely to avoid battle, to rise above the struggle, escape all effort; it was a spiritual peace in which, along with the cessation of all tension, struggle, effort, there ceased also suffering in all its forms, and this was considered to be the true and only expression of a spiritual and divine life. It was considered to be the divine grace, the divine help, the divine intervention. And even now, in this age of anguish, tension, hypertension, this sovereign peace is the best received aid of all, the most welcome, the solace people ask and hope for. For many it is still the true sign of a divine intervention, of divine grace. In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace; it is the basis from which one must work; but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation

but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions.²



What is Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence. A given system of Yoga, then, can be no more than a selection or a compression, into narrower but more energetic forms of intensity, of the general methods which are already being used loosely, largely, in a leisurely movement, with a profuse apparent waste of material and energy but with a more complete combination by the great Mother in her vast upward labour....

Synthesis of Yogic Methods

Yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as has the scientific handling of the force of electricity or of steam to their normal operations in Nature. And they, too, like the operations of Science, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result. . . .

The Method and Process of Integral Yoga

The method we have to pursue, then, is to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His. . . . The divine and all-knowing and all-effecting descends upon the limited and obscure, progressively illumines and energises the whole lower nature and substitutes its own action for all the terms of the inferior human light and mortal activity.

In psychological fact this method translates itself into the progressive surrender of the ego with its whole field and all its apparatus to the Beyond-ego with its vast and incalculable but always inevitable workings. . .³



What is one to do to prepare oneself for the Yoga?

The Mother: To be conscious, first of all. We are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being; for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerated nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slave. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and

apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on. And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant — “sleepless”, as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any chance whatever to the undivine against the divine.⁴



Finding Your Own Way

The Mother: To cling to what you believe you know, to cling to what you feel, to cling to what you love, to cling to your habits, to cling to your so-called needs, and to cling to the world as it is, that is what binds you. You must undo all that, one thing after another. Undo all the ties. And it has been said thousands of times and people go on doing the same thing... Even those who are most eloquent and preach it to others, c-l-i-n-g — they cling to their way of seeing, to their way of feeling, their habit of progress, which seems for them the only one.

No more bonds — free, free. Always ready to change everything, except one thing: to aspire, this thirst.

I understand very well, there are people who do not like the idea of a “Divine”, . . . but you don’t need that! — the “something” you need, the Light you need, the Love you need, the Truth you need, the supreme Perfection you need — and that is all. The formulas. . . the fewer formulas the better. But this: a need, which *the* Thing alone can satisfy — nothing else, no half-measures, only that. And then, go! ... Your way will be your way, that has no importance — whatever the way, it doesn’t matter, even the extravagances of the modern American youth can be a way, that has no importance.⁵



Illness in Yoga

The Mother: There is an aspiration within you (I am speaking now of people who do yoga or at any rate know what the spiritual life is and try to walk on the path), within you there is a part of the being — either mental or vital or something even physical — that has understood well, has much aspiration, its special aptitudes, that receives the forces well and is making good progress. And then there are others that cannot, others still that don’t want to (that of course is very bad), but there are yet others that want to very much but

cannot, do not have the capacity, are not ready. So there is something that rises upward and something that does not move. That causes a terrible imbalance. And usually this translates itself into some illness or other, for you are in such a state of inner tension between something that cannot or something that clings, that does not want to move and something else that wants to: that produces a frightful unease and the result usually is an illness. . . .

You do the yoga according to your capacity. You have been told: "Open yourself, you will receive the Force." You have been told: "Have faith, be of goodwill and you will be protected." And indeed you are bathed in the Consciousness, bathed in the Force, bathed in the Protection and to the extent you have faith and open yourself, you receive all that, and it helps you to keep well and reject little inner disturbances and re-establish order when they come, to protect yourself against small attacks or accidents which might have happened. But if somewhere in your being — either in your body or in your vital or mind, in several parts or even in a single one — there is an incapacity to receive the descending Force, this acts like a grain of sand in a machine. You know, a fine machine working quite well with everything going all right, and you put into it just a little sand (nothing much, only a grain of sand), suddenly everything is damaged and the machine stops. Well, just a little lack of receptivity somewhere, something that is

unable to receive the Force, that is completely shut up (when one looks at it, it becomes like a little dark spot somewhere, a tiny thing hard as a stone: the Force cannot enter into it, it refuses to receive it — either it cannot or it will not) and immediately that produces a great imbalance; and this thing that was moving upward, that was blooming so wonderfully, finds itself sick, and sometimes just when you were in a normal equilibrium; you were in good health, everything was fine, you had nothing to complain about. One day when you had grasped a new idea, received a new stimulus, when you had a great aspiration and received a great force and had a marvelous experience, a beautiful experience opening inner doors, giving you a knowledge you did not have before; you were sure everything was going to go well.... The next day, you are taken ill. So you say: “Still that? It is impossible! That should not happen.” But it was quite simply what I have just said: a grain of sand. There was something that could not receive; immediately it brings about a disequilibrium. Even though very small it is enough, and you fall ill.¹⁶



But are not illnesses sometimes the result of microbes and not a part of the movement of the Yoga?

Where does Yoga begin and where does it end? Is not the whole of your life Yoga? The

possibilities of illness are always there in your body and around you; you carry within you or there swarm about you the microbes and germs of every disease. How is it that all of a sudden you succumb to an illness which you did not have for years? You will say it is due to a “depression of the vital force”. But from where does the depression come? It comes from some disharmony in the being, from a lack of receptivity to the divine forces. When you cut yourself off from the energy and light that sustain you, then there is this depression, there is created what medical science calls a “favourable ground” and something takes advantage of it. It is doubt, gloominess, lack of confidence, a selfish turning back upon yourself that cuts you off from the light and divine energy and gives the attack this advantage. It is this that is the cause of your falling ill and not microbes.¹⁷



Are illnesses tests in the Yoga?

Tests? Not at all.

You are given an illness purposely to make you progress? Surely it is not like that. That is, you may turn it round and say that there are people whose aspiration is so constant, whose goodwill is so total that whatever happens to them they take as a trial on the path to make progress. I knew people who, whenever they fell ill, took it as a proof of

the Divine Grace to help them to progress. They told themselves: it is a good sign, I am going to find out the cause of my illness and make the necessary progress. I knew a few of this kind and they advanced magnificently. There are others, on the contrary, who, far from making use of it, let themselves fall flat on the ground. . . . But the true attitude when one is ill, is to say: "There is something wrong; I am going to see what it is."¹⁸

Part One
Psychological Causes of Illness
Disequilibrium of the Being

The Mother: If the whole being could simultaneously advance in its progressive transformation, keeping pace with the inner march of the universe, there would be no illness, there would be no death. But it would have to be literally the whole being integrally from the highest planes, where it is more plastic and yields in the required measure to transforming forces, down to the most material, which is by nature rigid, stationary, re-fractory to any rapid remoulding change.

There are certain regions which offer a much stronger re-sistance than others to the action of the Yogic forces, and the illnesses affecting them are harder to cure. They are those parts that belong to the most material layers of the being, and the illnesses that pertain to them, as, for instance, skin diseases or bad teeth. Sri Aurobindo spoke once of a Yogi who, still enjoying robust health and a magnificent physique, had been living for nearly a century on the banks of the Narmada. Offered by a disciple medicine for a toothache, he observed, in refusing, that one tooth had given him trouble for the last two hundred years. This Yogi had secured so much control over material nature as to live two hundred years, but in all that time he had not been able to conquer a toothache.

Some of the diseases which are considered most dangerous are the easiest to cure; some

that are considered as of very little importance can offer the most obstinate resistance.²

Each spot of the body is symbolical of an inner movement; there is there a world of subtle correspondences. . . . The particular place in the body affected by an illness is an index to the nature of the inner disharmony that has taken place. It points to the origin, it is a sign of the cause of the ailment. It reveals too the nature of the resistance that prevents the whole being from advancing at the same high speed. It indicates the treatment and the cure. If one could perfectly understand where the mistake is, find out what has been unreceptive, open that part and put the force and the light there, it would be possible to re-establish in a moment the harmony that has been disturbed and the illness would immediately go.

The origin of an illness may be in the mind; it may be in the vital; it may be in any of the parts of the being. One and the same illness may be due to a variety of causes; it may spring in different cases from different sources of disharmony. And there may be too an appearance of illness where there is no real illness at all. In that case, if you are sufficiently conscious, you will see that there is just a friction somewhere, some halting in the movement, and by setting it right you will be cured at once. This kind of malady has no truth in it, even when it seems to have physical effects. It is half made up of imagination and

has not the same grip on matter as a true illness. In short, the sources of an illness are manifold and intricate; each can have a multitude of causes, but always it indicates where is the weak part in the being.³

Weakness of the Nervous Envelope

The Mother: To whatever cause an illness may be due, material or mental, external or internal, it must, before it can affect the physical body, touch another layer of the being that surrounds and protects it. This subtler layer is called in different teachings by various names, — the etheric body, the nervous envelope. It is a subtle body and yet almost visible. In density something like the vibrations that you see around a very hot and steaming object, it emanates from the physical body and closely covers it. All communications with the exterior world are made through this medium, and it is this that must be invaded and penetrated first before the body can be affected. If this envelope is absolutely strong and intact, you can go into places infested with the worst of diseases, even plague and cholera, and remain quite immune. It is a perfect protection against all possible attacks of illness, so long as it is whole and entire, thoroughly consistent in its composition, its elements in faultless balance. This body is built up, on the one side, of a material basis, but rather of material conditions than of physical matter, on the other, of the vibrations of our psychological states. Peace and

equanimity and confidence, faith in health, undisturbed repose and cheerfulness and bright gladness constitute this element in it and give it strength and substance. It is a very sensitive medium with facile and quick reactions; it readily takes in all kinds of suggestions and these can rapidly change and almost remould its condition. A bad suggestion acts very strongly upon it; a good suggestion operates in the contrary sense with the same force. Depression and discouragement have a very adverse effect; they cut out holes in it, as it were, in its very stuff, render it weak and unresisting and open to hostile attacks an easy passage.⁸

How the Forces of Illness attack

Sri Aurobindo: Attacks of illness are attacks of the lower nature or of adverse forces taking advantage of some weakness, opening or response in the nature, — like all other things that come and have got to be thrown away, they come from outside. If one can feel them so coming and get the strength and the habit to throw them away before they can enter the body, then one can remain free from illness. Even when the attack seems to rise from within, that means only that it has not been detected before it entered the subconscious; once in the subconscious, the force that brought it rouses it from there sooner or later and it invades the system. When you feel it just after it has entered, it is because though it

came direct and not through the subconscious, yet you could not detect it while it was still outside. Very often it arrives like that . . . forcing its way through the subtle vital envelope which is our main armour of defense, but it can be stopped there in the envelope itself before it penetrates the material body. Then one may feel some effect, e.g., feverishness or a tendency to cold, but there is not the full invasion of the malady. If it can be stopped earlier or if the vital envelope of itself resists and remains strong, vigorous and intact, then there is no illness; the attack produces no physical effect and leaves no traces.⁹



Wrong Thinking

Sri Aurobindo: The feeling of illness is at first only a sugges-tion; it becomes a reality because your physical consciousness accepts it. It is like a wrong suggestion in the mind, — if the mind accepts it, it becomes clouded and confused and has to struggle back into harmony and clearness. It is so with the body consciousness and illness. You must not accept but re-ject it with your physical mind and so help the body conscious-ness to throw off the suggestion. If necessary, make a

counter-suggestion “No, I shall be well; I am and shall be all right.”¹⁷



The Mother: The most important thing for good health is control over the mind, because the body obeys almost totally what you believe. When you believe that you are ill, you become more and more ill. If you believe that this or that will cure you, there is much chance that it will do so. Right thinking is most necessary for good health.¹⁸

The mind . . . is the master of the physical being. . . . Only one doesn't know how to use one's mind, quite the contrary. Not only does one not know how to use it, but one uses it as badly as possible. The mind has a considerable power of formation and a direct action on the body, and usually one uses this power to make oneself ill. For as soon as the least thing goes wrong, the mind begins to shape and build all possible catastrophes, to ask itself whether it could be this, whether it could be that, if that is the way it is going to be, and how it will all end.

Well, if instead of letting the mind do this disastrous work, one used the same capacity to make favourable formations — simply, for example, to give confidence to the body, to tell it that it is just a passing disturbance and that it

is nothing, and that if it enters a real state of receptivity, the ailment can go away as easily as it came, and that one can cure oneself in a few seconds — if one knows how to do that, one gets wonder-ful results.¹⁹

If you live normally, under quite normal conditions — with-out having extravagant ideas and a depressing education — well, through all your youth and usually till you are about thirty, you have an absolute trust in life. If, for example, you are not surrounded by people who, as soon as you have a cold in the head, get into a flurry and rush to the doctor and give you medicines, if you are in normal surroundings and happen to have something — an accident or a slight illness — there is this certainty in the body, this absolute trust that it will be all right: “It is nothing, it will pass off. It is sure to go. I will be quite well tomorrow or in a few days. It is sure to get better” — whatever you may have caught. That is indeed the normal condition of the body. An absolute trust that all life lies before it and that all will be well. And this helps enormously. One gets cured nine times out of ten, one gets cured very quickly with this confidence: “It is nothing; what is it after all? Just an accident, it will pass off, it is nothing.” And there are people who keep this for a very long time, a very long time, a kind of confidence — nothing can happen to them. Their whole life is before them and nothing can happen to them. And what hap-pens to them is of no importance whatsoever: all will surely go well; they have

the whole of life before them. Naturally, if you live in surroundings where there are morbid ideas and people spend their time telling you disastrous and catastrophic things, then you may think wrongly. And if you think wrongly, this reacts on your body. . . .

I have seen such cases, children who had these little accidents one has when running about and playing: they did not even think about it and it went away at once. I have seen others whose families had drummed into them, as soon as they were old enough to understand, that everything is dangerous, that there are microbes everywhere, that you must be very careful, that the least wound may prove disastrous, that you must be absolutely on your guard so that nothing serious happens.... So they must have their wounds dressed, must be washed with disinfectants, and there they sit wondering, "What is going to happen to me? Oh! What if I get tetanus, a septic fever?..." Naturally, in such cases one loses confidence in life and the body feels the effects keenly. Three-fourths of its resistance disappears. But normally, naturally, the body knows it should be healthy and it knows it has the ability to react. And if something happens, it tells this something: "It is nothing, it will go away, don't think about it, it is over", and it goes away.²⁰

Fear

The Mother: Ninety percent of illnesses are the result of the subconscious fear of the body. In the ordinary consciousness of the body there is a more or less hidden anxiety about the consequences of the slightest physical disturbance. It can be translated by these words of doubt about the future: "And what will happen?" It is this anxiety that must be checked. Indeed this anxiety is a lack of confidence in the Divine's Grace, the unmistakable sign that the consecration is not complete and perfect.

As a practical means of overcoming this subconscious fear each time that something of it comes to the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's Will.

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the Divine's working nothing can harm us. This process must be steadily repeated until all recurrence of fear is stopped. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and

duration will be considerably diminished until it is definitively conquered.²⁴

Do not torment yourself and do not worry; above all try to banish all fear; fear is a dangerous thing which can give importance to something which had none at all. The mere fear of seeing certain symptoms renew themselves is enough to bring about this repetition.²⁵

Fear is hidden consent. When you are afraid of something, it means that you admit its possibility and thus strengthen its hand. It can be said that it is a subconscious consent.²⁶

Sweet Mother, when one sees an illness coming, how can one stop it?

Ah! First of all, you must not want it, and nothing in the body must want it. You must have a very strong will not to be ill. This is the first condition.

The second condition is to call the light, a light of equilibrium, a light of peace, quietude and balance, and to push it into all the cells of the body, enjoining them not to be afraid, because that is the second condition.

First, not to want to be ill, and then not to be afraid of illness. You must neither attract it nor tremble. You must not want illness at all. But it must not be because of fear that you do not want it; you must not be afraid. You must have a calm certitude and a complete trust in the

power of the Grace to shelter you from everything, and then think of something else, not be concerned about it any longer. When you have done these two things, refusing the illness with all your will and infusing a confidence which completely eliminates fear in the cells of the body, and then occupied yourself with something else, not thinking any more about the illness, forgetting that it exists... if you know how to do that, you may even be in contact with people who have contagious diseases, and yet you do not catch them. But you must know how to do it.

Many people say, "Oh, no, I am not afraid." They have no fear in the mind, their mind is not afraid, it is strong, it has no fear; but the body trembles and they don't know it, because it is in the cells of the body that the trembling goes on. It trembles with a terrible anxiety and this is what attracts the illness. It is there that you must put the Force, and the quietude of a perfect peace and an absolute trust in the Grace. And then sometimes you have to drive away with a similar force in your thought all suggestions that, after all, the physical world is full of illnesses and these are contagious, and because you were in contact with someone who is ill, you are sure to catch it, and then that inner methods are not powerful enough to act on the physical, and all kinds of stupidities which the air is full of. These are collective suggestions everyone passes from one to another.²⁷



The Subconscious

Mother, there are people who suffer from certain illnesses year after year, don't they? If one observes the illness, one sees that it comes at a particular time of the year, this is repeated the next year also, and so on. But the time is fixed. Then what is the reason, and how can one get rid of it?

The Mother: There could be many reasons. It depends on the person you ask. If you ask an astrologer, he will tell you: "It is the stars; when the stars come into the same position, the same conditions recur." Well, this is not so far from the truth. It can be like that. It can also be an individual reaction to certain climatic conditions, or to the position of the sun; or it may be quite simply a bad habit, that's all.

And if you form... If by chance it has happened to you twice in succession, then you form... you have a nice forma-tion, you see, which remains like this (gesture) in the subconscious, without showing itself — if you don't observe it! And then when the time draws near, very gently it gives you a push from within to tell you: "Take care, the time is coming, the time is coming, the time is coming!" So naturally it happens, too. Usually it is something like that.

But almost everything that happens physically is like that. The first time, it may be simply a

combination of circum-stances; then the mind intervenes and makes a construction. Now, if you accept the construction, you can be sure it will act automatically with clockwork precision. But even if you say, "Oh, nonsense, it is only an idea!" and do this (gesture), still the idea, instead of going away, enters inside, into the subconscious — just the subconscious part of the mind — and there it remains quietly. And then, when it is time to manifest itself, from within, like this, it gives a kind of... as though it were tickling the memory a little, nothing more than that, just like this. If it scratches the memory just a little, like this, then suddenly one day you remember: "Why, last year at this time I was ill." And crash! That is it, it has entered. It has entered the zone of the active consciousness, and a few days later it happens.

. . . The body remembers for a very long time. If you want to be completely cured, you must cure this memory in the body, it is absolutely indispensable. And whether you know it or not, you work to cure the memory in the body. When the memory is erased, the body is truly healed.

But unfortunately, instead of destroying the memory, one represses it. Most of the time one pushes it down into the subconscious, and sometimes into the inconscient, still deeper. But then, if it is repressed, if it is not completely erased, very gently, very gently, without seeming like anything, it comes back

to the surface; and something you have been cured of for years, if by chance it crosses your mind, just like this, like a little arrow, no longer than that, like an arrow passing by: “Why, at this time I had that”, you may be sure that sooner or later — a few seconds, a few minutes, a few hours or days later — it will return. You can... It may come back in a much milder form, it may come in the same form, it may come even more strongly. That depends on your inner state. If you are in a pessimistic state, it will come back more strongly. If you are in an optimistic state, it will be much weaker. But it will come back, and you will have to start the battle with your body’s memory all over again so as to destroy it — if this time you are more attentive. If you can destroy it, you are cured. But if you don’t destroy it, it will return. It will take a longer or shorter time, it will be more or less complete, but it will re-turn. It can come back in a flash. If you are wide awake and, when it comes, have enough knowledge and clear-sightedness to tell yourself, “Look, here is that wretched memory come again to play its tricks”, then you can strike it a violent blow and destroy its reality. If you know how to do that, it is a chance to get rid of it once for all. But it is not very easy to do.

How to do it?

. . . It is a certain dissolving power which can undo formations. It depends on the nature of the formation. If it is, as in this case, a formation of an adverse kind, then you need the force of a perfectly pure constructive light. If you have this at your disposal, all you have to do is to bombard the thing with that, and you can dissolve it. But it is an operation that has to be performed with inner forces; it cannot be done physically.

That is why all physical remedies are simply palliatives; they are not cures, because they are not enough to touch the living centre of the thing.³⁸



Sri Aurobindo: Absolute cure of an illness so that it cannot return again depends on clearing the mind, the vital and the body consciousness and the subconscious of the psychological response to the force bringing the illness. Sometimes this is done by a sort of order from above (when the consciousness is ready, but it cannot always be done like that). The complete immunity from all illness for which our Yoga tries can only come by a total and permanent enlightenment of the below from above resulting in the removal of the psychological roots of ill health — it cannot be done otherwise.³⁹



*Can one learn to control one's subconscious
as one controls one's conscious thought?*

The Mother: It is especially during the body's sleep that one is in contact with the subconscious. In becoming conscious of one's nights, control of the subconscious becomes much easier. The control can become total when the cells become con-scious of the Divine in them and when they open themselves voluntarily to His influence. This is what the consciousness that descended on the earth last year [1969] is working for. Little by little the subconscious automatism of the body is being replaced by the consciousness of the Divine Presence governing the entire functioning of the body.⁴⁰

Part Two

Cure by Inner Means

Use of the Will

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly, one can act from within on an illness and cure it. Only it is not always easy as there is much resistance in Matter, a resistance of inertia. An untiring per-sistence is necessary; at first one may fail altogether or the symptoms increase, but gradually the control of the body or of a particular illness becomes stronger. Again, to cure an occasional attack of illness by inner means is comparatively easy, to make the body immune from it in future is more difficult. A chronic malady is harder to deal with, more reluctant to disappear entirely than an occasional disturbance of the body. So long as the control of the body is imperfect, there are all these and other imperfections and difficulties in the use of the inner force.

If you can succeed by the inner action in preventing increase, even that is something; you have then by abhyDsa [practice] to strengthen the power till it becomes able to cure. Note that so long as the power is not entirely there, some aid of physical means need not be altogether rejected.²

Above all, do not harbour that idea of an unfit body. . . . Appearances and facts may be all in its favour, but the first condition of success for the yogin and indeed for anybody who wants to do anything great or unusual is to be superior to facts and disbelieve in appearances. Will to be free from dis-ease,

however formidable, many-faced or constant its attacks, and repel all contrary suggestions.³



The Mother: Wake up in yourself a will to conquer. Not a mere will in the mind but a will in the very cells of your body. Without that you can't do anything; you may take a hundred medicines but they won't cure you.⁸

The will can be cultivated and developed just as the muscles can, by methodical and progressive exercise. You must not shrink from demanding the maximum effort of your will even for a thing that seems of no importance, for it is through effort that its capacity grows, gradually acquiring the power to apply itself even to the most difficult things. What you have decided to do, you must do, whatever the cost, even if you have to renew your effort over and over again any number of times in order to do it. Your will will be strengthened by the effort and you will have only to choose with discernment the goal to which you will apply it.¹³

Imagination and Faith

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

Ah! Coué. You don't know the story of Coué? Coué was a doctor. He healed people with a psychological treatment, auto-suggestion, which he called the true working of the imagination; 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 recovering, and to repeat this formation to themselves with enough persistence for it to have an 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 about that. But in any case, this made many people reflect on something that is 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, untoward 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 satisfactory 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, un-expectedly, you will notice that nine times out of ten you are thinking something unpleasant. 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 your-self thinking, off-hand, you will see this at least nine times out of ten, and perhaps more. . . .

Say you have the slightest thing wrong with you; if you think of your body, it is always with the idea that something bad is going to happen to it — because when everything goes well, you don't think about it! . . .

Whereas Coué recommended... It was in this way that he cured his patients — he was a doctor: he would tell them, “You are going to repeat to yourself: ‘I am getting better, little by little I am getting better’ and again, ‘I am strong, I am in good health and I can do this, I can do that.’”

I knew someone who was losing her hair disastrously, by handfuls. Someone got her to try this method. When she combed her hair she made herself think, “My hair will not fall out.” The first time, the second time, it didn't

work; but she continued and each time before combing her hair she would 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. 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 won't succeed", because in that way you undo your own work.¹⁶

Detaching the Mind

Sri Aurobindo: The body consciousness through old habit of consciousness admits the

force of illness and goes through the experiences which are associated with it — e.g., congestion of phlegm in the chest and feeling of suffocation or difficulty of breathing etc. To get rid of that one must awaken a will and consciousness in the body itself that refuses to allow these things to impose themselves upon it. But to get that, still more to get it completely is difficult. One step towards it is to get the inner consciousness separate from the body — to feel that it is not you who are ill, but it is only something taking place in the body and affecting your consciousness. It is then possible to see this separate body consciousness, what it feels, what are its reactions to things, how it works. One can then act on it to change its consciousness and reactions.²⁴

We shall find, if we try, that the mind has this power of detachment and can stand back from the body not only in idea, but in act and as it were physically or rather vitally. This detachment of the mind must be strengthened by a certain attitude of indifference to the things of the body; we must not care essentially about its sleep or its waking, its movement or its rest, its pain or its pleasure, its health or ill-health, its vigour or its fatigue, its comfort or its discomfort, or what it eats or drinks. This does not mean that we shall not keep the body in right order so far as we can; we have not to fall into violent asceticisms or a positive neglect of the physical frame. But we have not either to be affected in mind by

hunger or thirst or discomfort or ill-health or attach the importance which the physical and vital man attaches to the things of the body, or indeed any but a quite subordinate and purely instrumental importance. Nor must this instrumental importance be allowed to assume the proportions of a necessity; we must not for instance imagine that the purity of the mind depends on the things we eat or drink, although during a certain stage restrictions in eating and drinking are useful to our inner progress; nor on the other hand must we continue to think that the dependence of the mind or even of the life on food and drink is anything more than a habit, a customary relation which Nature has set up between these principles. As a matter of fact the food we take can be reduced by contrary habit and new relation to a minimum without the mental or vital vigour being in any way reduced; even on the contrary with a judicious development they can be trained to a greater potentiality of vigour by learning to rely on the secret fountains of mental and vital energy with which they are connected more than upon the minor aid of physical aliments. . . .²⁵



Neutralising Pain

I am very much interested in writing and reading stories. Then I forget the pain.

Which proves that your pain is at least three-fourths imaginary.

Make me understand this imaginary illness. I don't under-stand it at all.

You think that you are ill and that increases the illness. When you forget the illness, it goes away almost completely.²⁹

The only unailing method for getting rid of illnesses is to turn one's attention away from them and refuse to give them any importance.³⁰



Sri Aurobindo: Your ailment is evidently in its foundation an illness of the nerves, not an ordinary physical disease. These maladies . . . increase if anything in you assents to them and accepts them, and the more the mind gives value to them and dwells on them, the more they grow. The only way is to re-main quiet, disassociate yourself and refuse to accept it or make much of it. . . . If you can acquire and keep patience and for-titude and the right consciousness and right attitude with re-gard to these things, the hold they have will progressively disappear.³¹

Before reaching a higher state of consciousness, there is a stage where one can develop in oneself the faculty of reason — a

clear, precise, logical reason, quite objective in its vision of things. . . . Most people, when something troubles them, be-come very unreasonable. For example, when they are sick, they spend their time saying, “Oh, how sick I am, how awful it is! Is it going to be like this all the time?” And naturally it gets worse and worse. Or when some misfortune happens to them, they cry out: “It is only to me that these things happen! And I thought everything was fine before”, and they burst into a fit of tears, a fit of nerves. Well, not to speak of superman, in man himself there is a higher capacity called reason, which is able to look at things calmly, coolly, reasonably. And this rea-son tells you, “Don’t worry, that will improve nothing; you must not complain, you must accept the thing since it has happened.” Then you calm down at once. It is a very good mental training; it develops judgment, vision, objectivity, and at the same time it has a very healthy effect on your charac-ter. It allows you to avoid making yourself ridiculous by giv-ing in to your nerves and lets you behave like a reasonable person.³³



The Mother: When one is not too soft, when one has a little bit of endurance and decides within oneself not to pay too much attention, quite remarkably the pain diminishes. And there are a number of illnesses or states of physical disequilib-rium which can be cured

simply by removing the effect, that is, by stopping the suffering. Usually it comes back, because the cause is still there. If you find the cause of the illness and act directly on its cause, then you can be cured radically. But if you are not able to do that, you can make use of this influence, of this control over pain in order — by suppressing or eliminating the pain or mastering it in yourself — to have an effect on the illness. So this is an effect, so to say, from outside inwards; while the other is an effect from within outwards, which is much more lasting and much more complete. But the first way is also effective.

. . . There are people who are more or less what I call “soft”, that is, unable to take pain, to endure it, who immediately say, “I can’t! It is unbearable. I can’t endure any more!” Ah, that does not help the situation; it does not stop their suffering, because it is not by telling it you don’t want it that you make it go away! But if you can . . . bring into yourself a sort of immobility, as total as possible, in the place that is suffering, this has the effect of an anaesthetic. If you succeed in bringing an inner immobility, an immobility of the inner vibration, at the spot where you are suffering, it has exactly the same effect as an anaesthetic. It cuts the contact between the place that is suffering and the brain, and once you have cut the contact, if you can keep this state long enough, the pain will disappear. You must form the habit of doing this. But you get the chance, all the time you get the chance to do

it: you cut yourself, knock into something, you know, one is always getting little bruises somewhere — especially when doing athletics, gymnastics and so on — well, these are opportunities which are given to us. Instead of sitting there observing the pain, trying to analyse it, concentrating on it, which makes it increase more and more . . . you deliberately make this kind of concentration of immobility in the suffering nerve; at the point where the pain is, you induce as total an immobility as you can. Well, you will see that it works, as I told you, like an anaesthetic: it puts it to sleep. And then, if you can add to that a kind of inner peace and a confidence that the pain will go away, well, I assure you it will go.

Of all things, what is considered the most difficult from the yogic point of view is toothache, because it is very close to the brain. Well, I know that this can be done to the point of truly not feeling the pain at all; this does not cure the bad tooth, but there are cases in which one can succeed in killing the painful nerve. Usually in a tooth it is the nerve that has been attacked by the caries, by the disease, and begins to protest with all its might. So if you can manage to establish this immobility there, you prevent it from vibrating, you prevent it from protesting. And what is remarkable is that if you do it constantly enough, with enough perseverance, the sick nerve will die and you will not suffer at all any more. Because that is what was suffering and

when it is dead it no longer suffers. Try. I hope you never have a toothache!³⁵

The Mother: The mental force, mental activity is independent of the brain. We are in the habit of using the brain but we can use something else or rather, concentrate the mental force else-where, and have the impression that our mental activity comes from there. One can concentrate one's mental force in the solar plexus, here (gesture), and feel the mental activity coming out from there. . . .

If ever you have a headache I advise you to do this: to take the thought-force, the mental force — and even if you can draw a little of your vital force, that too — and make it come down, like this (gesture of very slowly sliding both hands from the top of the head downwards). If you have a head-ache or congestion or a touch of sunstroke, for instance, in any case something has happened to you, well, if you know how to do this and bring down the force here, like this, here (showing the centre of the chest), or even lower down (show-ing the stomach), well, it will disappear. It will disappear. You will be able to do this in five minutes. You can try, the next time you have a headache.... I hope you won't have a head-ache but the next time you do, try this. . . .

So, sit quite at ease and then take all your force as though you were taking, you see... all the energy in your head, take it and then make it come down, down, down, like this, slowly, very carefully, right

down here, down to the navel. And you will see that your headache will disappear. I have made the experiment many times.... It is a very good remedy, very easy; there is no need to take pills or injections; it gets cured like that.³⁸



Widening Oneself

The Mother: When you have to face anguish, suffering, re-volt, pain or a feeling of helplessness — whatever it may be, all the things that come to you on the way and are precisely the difficulties you have to overcome — if you can physically, that is to say in your bodily consciousness, have the impression of widening yourself, of unfolding yourself, one might say — you feel like something all folded up, one fold on an-other, like a piece of cloth, you know, which is folded and refolded and folded again — well, if you have this impression that what is gripping and squeezing you and making you suffer or paralysing your movement is like a too closely, too tightly folded piece of cloth or like a parcel that is too well tied, too well packed, and that slowly, little by little, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, and you lie flat and make yourself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading yourself out as far as you can, opening yourself and stretching out in an attitude of complete

passivity with what I might call “the face to the light”, not curling back upon your difficulty, doubling up on it, shutting it into yourself, so to speak, but on the contrary unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light — the Light that comes from above — if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don’t succeed in doing it — for it is sometimes difficult — if you can imagine yourself doing it physically, almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that more than three-quarters of the difficulty is gone. And then just a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.³⁹

Quietude and Peace

The Mother: The imperative condition for cure is calm and quietness. Any agitation, any narrowness prolongs the illness.⁴²

To relieve tension, ten minutes of real calm, inner and outer, are more effective than all the remedies in the world. In si-lence lies the most effective help.⁴⁴

You cannot sleep because your mind is not quiet. Your health is bad because your mind is not quiet. So there is only one remedy to all your ills: quiet your mind.⁴⁵



Quieting the Mind

The Mother: It is obvious that when I tell someone, “Be calm”, I may mean many different things according to the person. But the first indispensable calm is mental quietude, for gener-ally that is the one that is most lacking. When I tell someone, “Be calm”, I mean: try not to have restless, excited, agitated thoughts; try to calm your brain and to stop turning around in all your imaginations and observations and mental con-structions. . . .

For each the method is different, but first one must feel for whatever reason — whether because one is tired or be-cause one is overstrained or because one wants truly to rise

beyond the state one is living in — one must first understand and feel the need for this quietude, this peace in the mind. And then, afterwards, one may try out successively all the methods, old and new, to attain the result. .

..

Quietude is a very positive state; there is a positive peace which is not merely the opposite of conflict — an active peace, contagious, powerful, which controls and calms, puts things in order, organises. This is what I am talking about. When I tell someone, “Be calm”, I don’t mean to say, “Go and sleep, be inert and passive, and don’t do anything”, far from it!... True quietude is a very great force, a very great strength.⁴⁶



How can one establish a settled peace and silence in the mind?

First of all, you must want it.

And then you must try, and you must persevere, keep try-ing. . . . You sit quietly, to begin with; and then, instead of thinking of fifty things, start saying to yourself, “Peace, peace, peace, peace, peace, calm, peace....” You imagine peace and calm. You aspire, ask it to come: “Peace, peace, calm.” And then, when something comes and tries to touch you and be active, you say quietly, like this: “Peace, peace, peace.” Do not look at the thoughts, do

not listen to the thoughts, you understand. You must not pay attention to everything that comes. You know, when someone bores you terribly and you want to get rid of him, you don't listen to him, do you? Good! You turn your head away and think of something else. Well, you must do that: when thoughts come, you must not look at them, not listen to them, not pay any attention at all, you must behave as though they did not exist. And then, repeat all the time like a kind of... how shall I put it?... as an idiot does, who always repeats the same thing. Well, you must do the same; you must repeat, "Peace, peace, peace." So you try this for a few minutes and then do what you have to do; and then, another time, you begin again; you sit down again and then you try. Do this on getting up in the morning, do it in the evening when going to bed. You can do it... say you want to digest your food well, you can do this for a few minutes before eating. You cannot imagine how much it will help your digestion! Before beginning to eat, you sit quietly for a while and say, "Peace, peace, peace..." and everything becomes calm. It is as if all the noises were going far, far, far away.... (Mother stretches out her arms on both sides) And then you must continue doing this; and there comes a time when you no longer need to sit down, and no matter what you are doing, no matter what you are saying, it is always "Peace, peace, peace." Everything remains here, like this, it does not enter (gesture in front of the forehead), it remains like this. And

then one is always in a perfect peace... after some years.

But at the beginning, a very small beginning, two or three minutes; it is very simple. For something complicated you have to make an effort, and when you make an effort you are not quiet. It is hard to make an effort while remaining quiet. Very simple, very simple, one must be very simple in these things. It is as if you were learning to call a friend: he comes because he is called. Well, make peace and calm your friends and call them: "Come, peace, peace, peace, peace, come!"⁴⁷

Change of Consciousness

The Mother: The ordinary human consciousness, even in the most developed, even in men of great talent and great realisation, is a movement turned outwards — all the energies are directed outwards, the whole consciousness is spread outwards; and if anything is turned inwards, it is very little, very rare, very fragmentary, it happens only under the pressure of very special circumstances, violent shocks, the shocks life gives precisely with the intention of slightly reversing this movement of exteriorisation of the consciousness.

But all who have lived a spiritual life have had the same experience: all of a sudden something in their being has been reversed, so to speak, has been turned suddenly and

some-times completely inwards, and also at the same time upwards, from within upwards — but it is not an external “above”, it is within, deep, something other than the heights as they are physically conceived. Something has literally been turned over. There has been a decisive experience and the standpoint in life, the way of looking at life, the attitude one takes in rela-tion to it, has suddenly changed, and in some cases quite de-finitively, irrevocably.⁵⁷

Indeed, what better use could one make of an illness than to take the opportunity to go deep within oneself and awaken, take birth into a new consciousness, more luminous and more true.⁵⁸



The Mother: The falsity of the consciousness naturally has material consequences... and that is what illness is! . . . When you are open and in contact with the Divine, the vibration gives you strength, energy; and if you are quiet enough, it fills you with great joy — and all of this in the cells of the body. You fall back into the ordinary consciousness and straight away, without anything changing, the same thing, the same vibration coming from the same source turns into a pain, an uneasiness, a feeling of uncertainty, instability and decrepi-tude.⁶²



All is in the Divine and all is divine. And necessarily, if you change your state of consciousness and are identified with the Divine, that changes the very nature of things. For example, what seemed to cause pain or sorrow or misery is found to be, on the contrary, an opportunity for the Divine to grow closer to you, and you realise that from this event perhaps you may draw a still greater joy than that derived from something pleasant. Only it must be understood that way, in that spirit and with that consciousness, for otherwise, if taken in the ordinary sense, it is the very contradiction of the principle that all is divine.

The same thing, exactly the same vibration, according to the way you receive and respond to it, can bring either intense joy or considerable despair, exactly the same thing, according to the state of consciousness you are in. So there is nothing of which it could be said that it is a misfortune. There is nothing that can be called suffering. All you have to do is to change your state of consciousness. That is all.⁶³

The Psychic Being

The Mother: If we learn to live within, we infallibly awaken to this presence within us which is our more real self, a presence profound, calm, joyous and puissant of which the world is not the master — a presence

which, if it is not the Lord Himself, is the radiation of the Lord within. We are aware of it within supporting and helping the apparent and superficial self and smiling at its pleasures and pains as at the error and passion of a little child. And if we can go back into ourselves and identify ourselves, not with our superficial experience, but with that radiant penumbra of the Divine, we can live in that attitude towards the contacts of the world and, standing back in our entire consciousness from the pleasures and pains of the body, vital being and mind, possess them as experiences whose nature being superficial does not touch or impose itself on our core and real being.⁶⁶



The Mother: There are many different reasons why one feels at times more alive, more full of strength and joy.... Generally speaking, in ordinary life there are people who, due to their very constitution, the way they are made, are in a certain harmony with Nature, as though they breathed with the same rhythm, and usually these people are always joyful, content, they succeed in what they do, they avoid many troubles and catastrophes; in short, they are those who are in harmony with the rhythm of life and Nature. And besides this, there are days when one is in contact with the divine Consciousness which is at work, with the Grace; and then everything is tinged, coloured with this Presence, and things which

usually seem dull or uninteresting to you become charming, pleasant, attractive, instructive — everything lives and vibrates and is full of promise and force. So when you open to that, you feel stronger, freer, happier, full of energy, and everything has a meaning. You understand why things are as they are and you participate in the general movement.

There are other times when, for some reason, you are foggy or shut up in yourself or down in the dumps, and then you no longer feel anything and all things lose their taste, their inter-est, their value; you are like a walking block of wood.

Now, if you succeed in uniting consciously with your psy-chic being, you can always be in this state of receptivity, inner joy, energy, progress, communion with the divine Presence. And when you are in communion with That, you see it every-where, in everything, and all things take on their true significance.

What does it depend on?... On an inner rhythm, perhaps a grace; in any case, a receptivity to something that is beyond you.⁶⁷



The Mother: There is a moment for choice, even in an accident. For example, you slip and fall. Just between the mo-ment you have slipped and the moment you fall, there is a fraction of a second. At that moment you have

the choice: it may be nothing, it may be serious. Only, your consciousness must naturally be wide awake and you must be constantly in contact with your psychic being — you do not have time to make the contact, you must be in contact. Between the moment you slip and the moment you are on the ground, if the mental and psychic formation is strong enough, then it is nothing, nothing will happen — nothing happens. Whereas if at that moment the mind according to its habit becomes a pessimist and cries: “Oh! I have slipped!”... It lasts a fraction of a second, it doesn't take even a minute, it is a fraction of a second; during a fraction of a second you have the choice. But you must be so alert, every minute of your life! For a fraction of a second you have the choice; there is a fraction of a second when you can prevent the accident from being serious, when you can prevent the illness from entering into you. You always have the choice. But it is for a fraction of a second and you must not miss it. If you miss it, it is too late.

One can make it afterwards? (laughter)

No. Afterwards, there is another moment... You have fallen, you have already hurt yourself; but there is still a moment when you can change things for the better or worse, so that it may be something very fugitive whose bad effects will quickly disappear, or something that becomes as serious, as critical as it can be. I don't know if you have noticed that

there are people who never miss the chance for an accident. Every time there is the possibility of an accident, they have it. And never is their accident ordinary. Every time the accident can be serious, it is serious. Well, usually in life one says: "Oh! he has bad luck, he is unfortunate, really the dice are against him." But all that is ignorance. It depends absolutely on the working of one's consciousness. . . . There are people who could have been killed and they come out of it unscathed; there are others for whom it was not serious and it becomes serious.

But it does not depend on thought, on the ordinary working of the mind. They may apparently have thoughts as good as the others — it is not that. It is the second of choice — people who know how to react just in the right way at the right time. I could give you hundreds of examples. It is quite interesting.

It depends absolutely on character. Some have such an awakened consciousness, so alert, that they are never asleep, they are awake within. Just at the second it is needed they call the help. Or they invoke the divine Force. But just at the second it is needed. So the danger is averted, nothing happens. They could have been killed; they come out of it absolutely unhurt. With others, on the contrary, as soon as they have the slightest scratch, something in their being gets out of order: a sort of fear or pessimism or defeatism comes up automatically in their consciousness. It was

nothing, they had just twisted their leg, and the next minute they break it. There is no reason for it. They could very well not have broken their leg.

There are others who climb up to the second storey on a ladder which gives way under them. They could have been dashed to the ground — they come out of it without being hurt in the least. How did they do it? It seems amazing, and yet this is how things happen to them. They find themselves lying on the ground quite all right; nothing has happened to them. I could give you the names, I am telling you precise facts.. ..

I knew someone who really should have died and did not die because of this. For his consciousness reacted very quickly.

He had taken poison by mistake: instead of taking one dose of a certain medicine, he had taken twelve and it was a poison; he should have died, the heart should have stopped (it was many years ago) and he is still quite alive! He reacted in the right way.

If these things were narrated they would be called miracles. They are not miracles: it is an awakened consciousness.⁷²



The Mother: When the first experience comes, which sometimes begins when one is very young, the first contact with the inner joy, the

inner beauty, the inner light, the first contact with that, which suddenly makes you feel, “Oh! that is what I want,” you must cultivate it, never forget it, hold it constantly before you, tell yourself, “I have felt it once, so I can feel it again. It has been real for me, if only for the space of a second, and it is what I am going to revive in myself.” . . .

This is what you should do every time you have the chance to collect yourself, commune with yourself, seek yourself.⁷⁴



The Mother: To become conscious of anything whatever, you must will it. And when I say “will it”, I don’t mean saying one day, “Oh! I would like it very much”, then two days later completely forgetting it.

To will it is a constant, sustained, concentrated aspiration, an almost exclusive occupation of the consciousness. This is the first step. There are many others: a very attentive observation, a very persistent analysis, a very keen discernment of what is pure in the movement and what is not. . . .

Each one of you should be able to get into touch with your own psychic being, it is not an inaccessible thing. Your psychic being is there precisely to put you in contact with the divine forces.⁷⁵

When the consciousness feels imprisoned in its too narrow external mould, what should one do?

The Mother: Above all you must not be violent, for if you are violent you will come out of it tired, drained, without any result. You must concentrate all the forces of aspiration. If you are conscious of the inner flame, you should put into this flame all that is strongest in you by way of aspiration, of in-vocation, and keep as quiet as you can, calling, with a great confidence that the answer will come. And when you are in this state, with your aspiration and your concentrated force, your inner flame, press gently upon this kind of outer crust, without violence, but insistently, for as long as you can, without getting agitated, irritated or excited. You must be perfectly quiet, call and push.

It will not succeed the first time. You must begin again as many times as is necessary, but suddenly, one day... you are on the other side! Then you emerge into an ocean of light.

If you fight, if you are restless, if you struggle, you will get nothing; and if you give in to your nerves, you will just get a headache and that is all.

That is it: gather all your power of aspiration, make it something intensely concentrated in an absolute tranquility, be conscious of your inner flame and throw into it all you can so that it may burn higher and higher, higher and

higher; and then call consciously, and slowly push. You are sure to suc-ceed one day.⁷⁶



The Mother: Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep

and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your con-sciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you — your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.

There are other centres of concentration, for example, one above the crown and another between the eye-brows. Each has its own efficacy and will give you a particular result. But the central being lies in the heart and from the heart proceed all central movements — all dynamism and urge for transfor-mation and power of realisation.⁷⁷

The Mother: This change of consciousness and its preparation have often been compared to the formation of a chick in an egg: till the last second the egg remains the same, there is no change, and it is only when the chick is completely formed, absolutely alive, that it makes itself a hole in the shell with its little beak and comes out. Something similar takes place at the moment of the change of consciousness. For a long time you have the

impression that nothing is happening, that your conscious-ness is the same as usual; and even, if you have an intense aspiration, you may feel a resistance, as though you were knocking against a wall that refuses to yield. But when you are ready within, a last effort — a peck at the shell of your being — and everything opens and you are projected into another consciousness.⁷⁸



The Mother: To find the soul you must go like this (gesture of plunging), like this, draw back from the surface, dive deep and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down into a deep hole, very deep, silent, immobile; and there, there is a kind of...

something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, very full, like a sense of sweetness — that is the soul.

And if you persist and are conscious, then there comes a kind of plenitude that gives the feeling of something complete and containing unfathomable depths in which, should you enter, you feel that many secrets would be revealed... like the reflection in very peaceful waters of something eternal. And you no longer feel limited by time.

You have the impression that you have always been and will be for eternity.

That is when you have touched the core of the soul.

And if the contact has been conscious and complete enough, it liberates you from bondage to outer forms; you no longer feel that you live only because you have a body. That is usually the normal sensation of the human being, to be so tied to this outer form that when I think of "myself" I think of the body. That is the normal thing. The reality of the person is the reality of the body. Only when one has made an effort for inner development and tried to find something a little more stable in one's being, can one begin to feel that this "some-thing", which is permanently conscious through all ages and all change, must be "myself".⁷⁹



Sri Aurobindo: Each plane of our being — mental, vital, physical — has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting; but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together. The body, for instance, has its own consciousness and acts from it, even without any mental will of our own or even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about this body-consciousness, feels it only in an imperfect way, sees only its results and has the greatest difficulty in finding out their causes. It is part of the yoga to become aware of this separate consciousness of the body, to see and feel its movements and the forces that act upon it from inside or outside and to learn how to control and direct it even in its most hidden and (to us) subconscious processes.⁸¹



The Mother: Finally, the body obeys the mind automatically in those things in which it is formed or trained to obey it, but the relation of the body to the mind is not in all things that of an automatic perfect instrument. The body also has a consciousness of its own and, though it is a submental instrument or servant consciousness, it can disobey or fail to obey as well. In many things, in matters of health and illness for instance, in all automatic

functionings, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind. If it is fatigued, it can offer a passive resistance to the mind's will. It can cloud the mind with tamas, inertia, dullness, fumes of the subconscious so that the mind cannot act. The arm lifts, no doubt, when it gets the suggestion, but at first the legs do not obey when they are asked to walk; they have to learn how to leave the crawling attitude and movement and take up the erect and ambulatory habit. When you first ask the hand to draw a straight line or to play music, it can't do it and won't do it. It has to be schooled, trained, taught, and afterwards it does automatically what is required of it. All this proves that there is a body-consciousness which can do things at the mind's order, but has to be awakened, trained, made a good and conscious instrument. It can even be so trained that a mental will or suggestion can cure the illness of the body.⁸⁴



The Mother: When one has developed this body-consciousness, one can have a very clear perception of the contradiction between the different kinds of consciousness. When the body needs something and knows this is what it needs, and the vital wants something else and the mind yet another thing, well, there may very well be an argument among them, contradictions and conflicts. And one can discern very well what the equilibrium of the

body is, the need of the body in itself, and how the vital interferes and usually destroys this equilibrium and does so much harm to the development, because it is ignorant. And when the mind comes in, it creates yet another disorder in addition to the one between the vital and the physical, introducing its ideas, its norms, its principles, its rules, its laws and all the rest, and as it does not exactly take into account the needs of the other [the body], it wants to do what everybody else does.

Human beings have a much more delicate and uncertain health than animals because their mind intervenes and disturbs the equilibrium. The body, left to itself, has a sure instinct. For example, never will the body if left to itself eat when it doesn't need to or take something that will be harmful to it. And it will sleep when it needs to sleep, it will act when it needs to act. The instinct of the body is very sure. It is the vital and the mind which disturb it, the one by its desires and caprices, the other by its principles, dogmas, laws and ideas. And unfortunately, in civilisation as it is understood, with the kind of education given to children, this sure instinct of the body is completely destroyed: it is the rest that dominates. And naturally things happen as they do: one eats things that are harmful, one doesn't take rest when one needs to or sleeps too much when it is not necessary or does things one should not do and spoils one's health completely.⁸⁸



The Mother: When you are normal, that is to say, not spoiled by bad teaching and bad examples, when you are born and live in a healthy and relatively balanced and normal environment, the body, spontaneously, without any need to intervene mentally or even vitally, has the certitude that even if something goes wrong it will be cured. The body carries within itself the certitude of cure, the certitude that the illness or disorder is sure to disappear. Only through false education from the environment is the body gradually taught that there are incurable diseases, irreparable accidents, and that one grows old, and all these stupidities which undermine its faith and confidence. But normally, the body of a normal child — the body, I am not speaking of the mind — the body itself feels when something goes wrong that it will certainly be all right again. And if it is not like that, it means that it has already been perverted. It seems normal for it to be in good health, it seems quite abnormal to it if something goes wrong and it falls ill; and in its instinct, its spontaneous instinct, it is sure that everything will be all right. It is only the perversion of thought which destroys this; as one grows up, the thought becomes more and more distorted, there are all the collective suggestions, and so, little by little, the body loses its trust in itself, and naturally, losing its self-confidence, it also

loses the spontaneous capacity of restoring its equilibrium when it has been disturbed.

But if when very young, from your earliest childhood, you have been taught all sorts of discouraging, depressing things — things that cause decomposition, so to speak, or disintegration — then this poor body does its best, but it has been perverted, corrupted, and no longer has the sense of its inner strength, its inner force, its power to react.

If you take care not to corrupt it, the body carries within itself the certitude of victory. Only the wrong use we make of thought and its influence on the body robs it of this certitude of victory. So the first thing to do is to cultivate this certitude instead of destroying it. And when it is there, no effort is needed to aspire, but simply a flowering, an unfolding of that inner certitude of victory.

The body carries within itself the sense of its divinity. This

is what you must try to recover in yourself if you have lost it.⁹²



The Mother: I have seen it — a physical suffering that lasts, that does not stop, that lasts day and night. And then all of a sudden, instead of being in this state of consciousness, you are in that of this exclusive divine Presence. Pain gone! And it was

physical, altogether physical, with a physical reason. Yes, the doctors would say, “It is because of this, because of that and that”, quite a material thing, purely physical; and poof! it goes away.... The consciousness changes and back it comes.

If one remains long enough in the true consciousness, the appearance, that is to say, what we call the physical “fact” [of the illness], that itself disappears, not just the pain.⁹⁶

Through repeated, daily experiences, I am convinced more and more that every disorder in the body and all illnesses are the result of doubt in the cells or a certain group of cells. They doubt the concrete reality of the Divine, they doubt the Divine Presence in them, they doubt that they are divine in their very essence, and this doubt is the cause of all disorders.

As soon as you succeed in infusing into them the certitude of the Divine, the disorder disappears almost instantly, and it recurs only because, not having been definitively driven away, the doubt reappears.⁹⁸



When there is a clearly localised ailment in the body, what is the best way to open the physical consciousness to receive the healing Force?

The Mother: Everyone must find his own movement; because for each person, what is most effective is the method for which he has been more or less prepared and which is most familiar to him. So it is very difficult to make a general rule.

But a preparation of a general kind is possible. This is to accustom the body methodically to understand that it is only the outer expression of a truer and deeper reality, and that this truer and deeper reality is what governs its destiny — though it is not usually aware of it.

You can prepare the body through a series of observations,... by showing it examples, making it understand things as one makes a child understand them, either by observing its own movements — but here one is usually rather blind! — or by observing those of others.... Take this, for instance: a certain number of people, placed in precisely similar circumstances, are each affected very differently. We may go even further: in a given set of definite circumstances, given a certain number of definite individuals in apparently identical conditions, for some the results are catastrophic, while others escape unharmed.

During the war there were a great many examples of this kind for study. In epidemics it is the same thing; in natural calamities, such as tidal waves, earthquakes or cyclones, it is the same.

The body understands these things if they are shown and explained to it as one explains things to a child: "You see, there was something else that acted there, not only the brute material fact by itself." Unless some bad will prevents it, it understands. This is a preparation. . . .

Three Steps to Heal All Disorder

Now suppose that due to some illness or other you have some pain at a particular spot. At that moment all will de-pend, as I said at the beginning, on the approach most famil-iar to you. But we can give an example. You are in pain, in great pain; it hurts very much, you are suffering a lot.

First point: do not dwell on the pain by telling yourself, "Oh, how it hurts! Oh, this pain is unbearable! Oh, it is get-ting worse and worse, I will never be able to endure it", etc., all that sort of thing. The more you go on thinking like that and feeling like that and the more your attention is concen-trated on it, the more the pain increases remarkably.

So, the first point: to control yourself enough not to do that.

Second point: as I said, it depends on your habits. If you know how to concentrate, to be quiet, and if you can bring into yourself a certain peace of any kind — it may be a mental peace, it may be a vital peace, it may be a psychic peace; they have different values

and qualities, that is an individual question — you try to realise within yourself a state of peace or you attempt to enter into conscious contact with a force of peace.... Suppose you succeed to a greater or less extent. Then, if you can draw the peace into yourself and bring it down into the solar plexus — for we are not talking about inner states, we are talking about your physical body — and from there direct it very calmly, very slowly, so to speak, but very persistently, towards the place where the pain is more or less acute, and fix it there, this is very good.

This is not always enough.

But if by widening this movement you can add a sort of mental formation with a little life in it (not just cold, but with a little life in it) that the only reality is the divine Reality, and all the cells of this body are a more or less deformed expression of that divine Reality — there is only one reality, the Divine, and our body is a more or less deformed expression of that sole Reality — if by my aspiration, by my concentration, I can bring into the cells of the body the consciousness of that sole Reality, all disorder must necessarily cease.

If you can add to this a movement of trusting surrender to the Grace, I guarantee that within five minutes your suffering will disappear. If you know how to do it.

You may try and yet not succeed. You must know how to try again and again and again,

until you do succeed. But if you do these three things at the same time, well, there is no pain that can resist.⁹⁹

Part Three
Cure by Spiritual Force
Divine Grace

What should one do who wants to change his bodily condition, effect a cure or correct some physical imperfection? Should he concentrate upon the end to be realised and exercise his will power or should he only live in the confidence that it will be done or trust in the Divine Power to bring about the desired result in its own time and in its own way?

The Mother: All these are so many ways of doing the same thing and each in different conditions can be effective. The method by which you will be most successful depends on the consciousness you have developed and the character of the forces you are able to bring into play. You can live in the con-sciousness of the completed cure or change and by the force of your inner formation slowly bring about the outward change. Or if you know and have the vision of the force that is able to effect these things and if you have the skill to handle it, you can call it down and apply it in the parts where its action is needed, and it will work out the change. Or, again, you can present your difficulty to the Divine and ask of It the cure, putting confidently your trust in the Divine Power.

But whatever you do, whatever the process you use, and even if you happen to have acquired in it a great skill and power, you must leave the result in the hands of the Divine. Always you may try, but it is for the Divine to give you the fruit of your effort or not to give it. There your personal power stops; if the result comes, it is the Divine Power and not yours that brings it. You question if it is right to ask the Divine for these things. But there is no more harm in turning to the Divine for the removal of a physical imperfection than in praying for the removal of a moral defect. But whatever you ask for or whatever your effort, you must feel, even while trying your best, using knowledge or putting forth power, that the result depends upon the Divine Grace. Once you have taken up the Yoga, whatever you do must be done in a spirit of complete surrender. This must be your attitude, — “I aspire, I try to cure my imperfections, I do my best, but for the result I put myself entirely into the hands of the Divine.”

Does it help, if you say, “I am sure of the result, I know that the Divine will give me what I want”?

You may take it in that way. The very intensity of your faith may mean that the Divine has already chosen that the thing it points to shall be done. An unshakable faith is a sign of the presence of the Divine Will, an evidence of what shall be.²



Only the Divine can heal. It is in Him alone that one must seek help and support, it is in Him alone that one must put all one's hope.³



Sri Aurobindo: I should like to say something about the Divine Grace — for you seem to think it should be something like a Divine Reason acting upon lines not very different from those of human intelligence. But it is not that. Also it is not a universal Divine Compassion either, acting impartially on all who approach it and acceding to all prayers. It does not select the righteous and reject the sinner.... It is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law — for all spiritual seers have distinguished between the Law and Grace. Yet it is not indiscriminate — only it has a discrimination of its own which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another vision than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individual often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind and when the state of Grace comes, then the Grace itself acts. There are these three powers: (1) The Cosmic Law, of Karma or what else; (2) the Divine Compassion acting on as many as it can reach through the nets of the Law and giving them their chance; (3) the Divine Grace which acts more incalculably but

also more irresistibly than the others. The only question is whether there is something behind all the anomalies of life which can respond to the call and open itself with whatever difficulty till it is ready for the illumination of the Divine Grace — and that something must be not a mental and vital movement but an inner some-what which can well be seen by the inner eye. If it is there and when it becomes active in front, then the Compassion can act, though the full action of the Grace may still wait attending the decisive decision or change; for this may be postponed to a future hour, because some portion or element of the being may still come between, something that is not yet ready to receive.

But why allow anything to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident? When you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.⁵



The Mother: If you want my true way of seeing things, I must tell you that taking a good dose of faith and confidence in the Divine Grace is better than all the pills and injections in the world.¹⁰

I quite agree with you that there is a power other and much more powerful than that of the doctors and the medicines and I am glad to see that you put your trust in it. Surely it will lead you through all difficulties and in spite of all catastrophic warnings. Keep your faith intact and all will be all right.¹¹



The perception of the exterior consciousness may deny the perception of the psychic. But the psychic has the true knowledge, an intuitive instinctive knowledge. It says, “I know; I cannot give reasons, but I know.” For its knowledge is not mental, based on experience or proved true. It does not believe after proofs are given: faith is the movement of the soul whose knowledge is spontaneous and direct. Even if the whole world denies and brings forward a thousand proofs to the contrary, still it knows by an inner knowledge, a direct perception that can stand against everything, a perception by identity. The knowledge of the psychic is something which is concrete and tangible, a solid mass. You can also bring it into your mental, your vital and your physical; and then you have an integral faith — a faith which can really move mountains. But nothing in the being must come and say, “It is not like that”, or ask for a test. By the least half-belief you spoil matters. How can the Supreme manifest if faith is not integral and immovable?

Faith in itself is always unshakable — that is its very nature, for otherwise it is not faith at all. But it may happen that the mind or the vital or the physical does not follow the psychic movement. . . . You will always miss your destiny if you start arguing. Some people sit down and con-sider whether the psychic impulse is reasonable or not.

It is not really by what is called blind faith that people are misled. . . . Pure in itself, faith can get mixed up in the being with low movements and it is then that you are misled.¹⁴



Certainly a personal effort is needed to preserve one's faith, to let it grow within. Later — much later — one day, looking back, we may see that everything that happened, even what seemed to us the worst, was a divine Grace to make us advance on the way; and then we become aware that the personal effort too was a grace. But before reaching that point, one has to advance much, to struggle much, sometimes even to suffer a great deal.

To sit down in inert passivity and say, "If I am to have faith I shall have it, the Divine will give it to me", is an attitude of laziness, of unconsciousness and almost of bad will. For the inner flame to burn, one must feed it; one must watch over the fire, throw into it the fuel of all the errors one wants to get rid of, all that delays the progress, all that darkens the path.

If one doesn't feed the fire, it smoulders under the ashes of one's unconsciousness and inertia, and then, not years but lives, centuries will pass before one reaches the goal.

One must watch over one's faith as one watches over the birth of something infinitely precious, and protect it very care-fully from everything that can impair it.

In the ignorance and darkness of the beginning, faith is the most direct expression of the Divine Power which comes to fight and conquer.¹⁷



Miracles of the Grace

The Mother: To fix rigid laws in this way . . . cuts you off from the curative Power of the Spirit, it cuts you off from the true Power of the Grace, for you can understand that if by your aspiration or your attitude you introduce a higher element, a new element — what we may now call a supramental element — into the existing combinations, you can suddenly change their nature, and all these so-called necessary and in-eluctable laws become absurdities. That is to say that you yourself, with your conception, with your attitude and your acceptance of certain alleged principles, you yourself close the door upon the possibility of the miracle — they are not mira-cles when one knows how they happen, but obviously for

the outer consciousness they seem miraculous. And it is you your-self, saying to yourself with a logic that seems quite reasonable, “Well, if I do this, that will necessarily happen, or if I don’t do that, necessarily this other thing will happen”, it is you yourself who close the door — it is as though you were putting an iron curtain between yourself and the free action of the Grace.¹⁸



Nothing is inevitable. At every moment an intervention may come from a higher plane into the material one and alter the course of circumstances. But in this particular case there is a conflict between a very powerful mental construction founded on medical opinion and your faith in the divine Grace.

The power of this medical suggestion lies in the fact that it insinuates itself into the subconscious and acts on the body from there, undetected even by the conscious mind unless it is in the habit of scouring the subconscious with the vigilance of a detective.

So there we are — I cannot promise you that your faith in the Grace will be intense and unshakable enough to overcome the harmful effect of these medical suggestions; and I feel that I have no right to tell you, “It is nothing,” when everything in your material consciousness is crying out, “Danger!”

Rest assured that our help and our blessings are always with you.²⁰



This divine grace . . . is not simply a mysterious flow or touch coming from above, but the all-pervading act of a divine presence which we come to know within as the power of the high-est Self and Master of our being entering into the soul and so possessing it that we not only feel it close to us and pressing upon our mortal nature, but live in its law, know that law, possess it as the whole power of our spiritualised nature.²²



The Mother: No matter how great your faith and trust in the divine Grace, no matter how great your capacity to see it at work in all circumstances, at every moment, at every point in life, you will never succeed in understanding the marvellous immensity of Its Action, and the precision, the exactitude with which this Action is accomplished; you will never be able to grasp to what extent the Grace does everything, is behind eve-rything, organises everything, conducts everything, so that the march forward to the divine realisation may be as swift, as complete, as total and harmonious as possible, considering the circumstances of the world.

As soon as you are in contact with It there is not a second in time, not a point in space, which does not show you daz-zlingly this perpetual work of the Grace, this constant inter-vention of the Grace.

And once you have seen this, you feel you are never equal to it, for you should never forget it, never have any fears, any anguish, any regrets, any recoils... or even suffering. If one were in union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin living a life of exultation, of all-power, of infinite happiness. And that would be the best possible collaboration in the divine Work.²³

Spiritual Force

Sri Aurobindo: It is evident that if spiritual force exists, it must be able to produce spiritual results. . . . Further, if it be true that spiritual force is the original one and the others are de-rivative from it, then there is no irrationality in supposing that spiritual force can produce mental results, vital results, physi-cal results. It may act through mental, vital or physical ener-gies and through the means which these energies use, or it may act directly on mind, life or Matter as the field of its own special and immediate action. Either way is prima facie possi-ble. In a case of cure of illness, someone is ill for two days, weak, suffering from pains and fever; he takes no medicine, but finally asks for cure from his

Guru; the next morning he rises well, strong and energetic. He has at least some justification for thinking that a force has been used on him and put into him and that it was a spiritual power that acted. . . .

It does not follow that a spiritual force must either succeed in all cases or, if it does not, that proves its non-existence. Of no force can that be said. The force of fire is to burn, but there are things it does not burn; under certain circumstances it does not burn even the feet of a man who walks barefoot on red hot coals. That does not prove that fire cannot burn or that there is no such thing as force of fire, Agni Shakti.²⁸



Sri Aurobindo: When I speak of feeling Force or Power, I do not mean simply having a vague sense of it, but feeling it concretely and consequently being able to direct it, manipulate it, watch its movements, be conscious of its mass and intensity and in the same way of that of other, perhaps opposing forces; all these things are possible and usual by the development of yoga.

It is not, unless it is supramental Force, a Power that acts without conditions and limits. The conditions and limits under which yoga or sadhana has to be worked out are not arbitrary or capricious; they arise from the nature of things. These including the will,

receptivity, assent, self-opening and surrender of the sadhak have to be respected by the yoga-force, unless it receives a sanction from the Supreme to override everything and get something done, but that sanction is sparingly given. . . .

Still the yoga-force is always tangible and concrete in the way I have described and has tangible results. But it is invis-ible — not like a blow given or the rush of a motor car knock-ing somebody down which the physical senses can at once perceive. How is the mere physical mind to know that it is there and working? By its results? But how can it know that the results were that of the yogic force and not of something else? One of two things it must be. Either it must allow the conscious-ness to go inside, to become aware of inner things, to believe in the experience of the invisible and the supraphysical, and then by experience, by the opening of new capacities, it becomes conscious of these forces and can see, follow and use their workings, just as the Scientist uses the unseen forces of Nature. Or one must have faith and watch and open oneself and then it will begin to see how things happen, it will notice that when the Force was called in, there began after a time to be a result, then repetitions, more repeti-tions, more clear and tangible results, increasing frequency, increasing consistency of results, a feeling and awareness of the Force at work — until the experience becomes daily, regu-lar, normal, complete. These are the two main

methods, one internal, working from in outward, the other external, working from outside and calling the inner force out till it pen-etrates and is visible in the exterior consciousness. But neither can be done if one insists always on the extrovert attitude, the external concrete only and refuses to join to it the internal concrete — or if the physical mind at every step raises a dance of doubts which refuses to allow the nascent experience to develop. Even the Scientist carrying on a new experiment would never succeed if he allowed his mind to behave in that way.³¹

Receptivity and Resistance to the Force

How can one increase the receptivity of the body?

The Mother: It depends on the part. The method is almost the same for all parts of the being. To begin with, the first condition: to remain as quiet as possible. You may notice that in the different parts of your being, when something comes and you do not receive it, this produces a shrinking — there is something which hardens in the vital, the mind or the body. There is a stiffening and this hurts, one feels a mental, vital or physical pain. So, the first thing is to put one's will and relax this shrinking, as one does a twitching nerve or a cramped muscle; you must learn how to relax, be able to relieve this tension in whatever part of the being it may be. The method of relaxing the contraction may be different in the mind, the vital or the body, but logically it is the same thing.

Once you have relaxed the tension, you see first if the disagreeable effect ceases, which would prove that it was a small momentary resistance, but if the pain continues and if it is indeed necessary to increase the receptivity in order to be able to receive what is helpful, what should be received, you must, after having relaxed this contraction, begin trying to widen yourself — you feel you are widening yourself. There are many methods. Some find it very useful to imagine they are floating on

water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass. Others make an effort to identify themselves with the sky and the stars, so they widen, widen themselves, identifying themselves more and more with the sky. Others again don't need these pictures; they can become conscious of their consciousness, enlarge their consciousness more and more until it becomes unlimited. One can enlarge it till it becomes as vast as the earth and even the universe. When one does that one becomes really receptive. As I have said, it is a question of training.

In any case, from an immediate point of view, when something comes and one feels that it is too strong, that it gives a headache, that one can't bear it, the method is just the same, one must act upon the contraction. One can act through thought, by calling peace, tranquility (the feeling of peace takes away much of the difficulty) like this: "Peace, peace, peace... tranquility...calm." Many discomforts, even physical, like all these contractions of the solar plexus, which are so un-pleasant and sometimes give you nausea, the sensation of be-ing suffocated, of not being able to recover your breath, can disappear in this way. It is the nervous centre which is affected, it gets affected very easily. As soon as there is something which affects the solar plexus, you must say, "Calm... calm... calm", become more and more calm until the tension is destroyed.⁴²

Opening the Body Consciousness

The Mother: Passivity is not laziness. An active movement is one in which you throw your force out, that is, when some-thing comes out from you — in a movement, a thought, a feeling — something which goes out from you to others or into the world. Passivity is when you remain just yourself like this, open, and receive what comes from outside. It does not at all depend on whether one moves or sits still. It is not that at all. To be active is to throw out the consciousness or force or movement from within outwards. To be passive is to re-main immobile and receive what comes from outside. . . .

You remain as though you were quite still, but open, and wait for the Force to enter, and then open yourself as wide as possible to take in all that comes into you. And it is this movement: instead of outgoing vibrations there is a kind of calm quietude, but completely open, as though you were opening all your doors in this way to the force which must descend into you and transform your action and consciousness.

Receptivity is the result of a true passivity.

But Mother, to be able to become passive an effort has to be made, hasn't it?

Not necessarily, that depends upon the person. An effort? One must, yes, one must

want it. But is the will an effort?... Naturally, one must think about it, must want it. But two things can go together, you see, there is a moment when the two — aspiration and passivity — can not only be alternate but si-multaneous. You can be at once in the state of aspiration, of willing, which calls down something — precisely the will to open oneself and receive and the aspiration which calls down the force you want to receive — and at the same time be in that state of complete inner stillness which allows full pen-etration, for it is in this immobility that one can be penetrated, that one becomes permeable by the Force. Well, the two can be simultaneous without the one disturbing the other, or can alternate so closely that they can hardly be distinguished. But one can be like that, like a great flame rising in aspiration, and at the same time as though this flame formed a vase, a large vase, opening and receiving all that comes down.

And the two can go together. And when one succeeds in having the two together, one can have them constantly, what-ever one may be doing. Only there may be a slight, very slight displacement of consciousness, almost imperceptible, which becomes aware of the flame first and then of the vase of re-ceptivity — of what seeks to be filled and the flame that rises to call down what must fill the vase — a very slight pendular movement and so close that it gives the impression that one has the two at the same time.

(Silence)

This is one of the things one discovers gradually as the body becomes ready for transformation. It is quite a remarkable instrument in the sense that it can experience two contraries at the same time. There is a certain state of body-consciousness which brings things together, totalises things that in other states of consciousness alternate or even in certain others oppose each other. But if one has reached up there, in the vital and the mind, a development sufficient for harmonising opposites (that of course, is quite indispensable), when one has succeeded in doing this, there are moments when it alternates, you see, one thing comes after the other, while what is remarkable in the consciousness of the body is that it can feel . . . all things simultaneously, as though you were hot and cold at once, as though you were active and passive at once, and everything becomes like that. Then you begin to grasp the totality of movements in the cells. It is something much more concrete naturally, but much more perfect in the body than in any other part of the being. This means that if things continue in this way, it will be proved that the physical, material instrument is the most perfect of all. That is why perhaps it is the most difficult to transform, to perfect. But of all, it is the one most capable of perfection.⁵³



The Mother: The big difficulty in Matter is that the material consciousness (that is to say, the mind in Matter) has been formed under the pressure of difficulties — difficulties, obstacles, sufferings, struggles. It has been, so to say, “worked out” by these things and that has left upon it a stamp, almost of pessimism, defeatism, which is certainly the greatest obstacle.

It is this that I am conscious of in my own work. The most material consciousness, the most material mind is accustomed to act, to make an effort, to advance through whippings; otherwise, it is *tamas*. And then, so far as it imagines, it imagines always difficulty, always the obstacle or always the opposition, and that slows down the movement terribly. Very concrete, very tangible and often repeated experiences are needed to convince it that behind all its difficulties there is a Grace, behind all its failures there is the Victory, behind all its pains, its sufferings, its contradictions, there is Ananda.⁵⁹



The Mother: How many times during a suffering, for example, when a suffering is there, acute, and one has the impression that it is going to become unbearable, there is the little inner move-ment (within the cells) of Call — the cells send their S.O.S. — everything stops, the suffering disappeared, and often (now more and more) it is replaced by a

feeling of blissful well-being; but the very first reaction of this imbecile material con-sciousness is: “Ah! we shall see how long that is going to last”, and naturally, by this movement it demolishes everything — one must begin all over again.

I believe that for the effect to be lasting — not a miracu-lous effect that comes, dazzles and goes away — it must really be the result of a transformation. One must be very, very patient — we have to deal with a consciousness which is very slow, very heavy, very obstinate, which is not able to advance rapidly, which clings to what it has, to what has appeared to it as truth; even if it is quite a tiny truth, it clings to that and does not want to move. Then to cure that, one must have very much patience — much patience.⁶¹

The Call and the Response

Sri Aurobindo: It is not a theory but a constant experience and very tangible when it comes that there is above us, above the consciousness in the physical body, a great supporting extension as it were of peace, light, power, joy — that we can become aware of it and bring it down into the physical consciousness and that that, at first for a time, afterwards more frequently and for a longer time, in the end for good, can remain and change the whole basis of our daily consciousness. Even before we are aware of it above, we can suddenly feel it coming down and entering into us. The need is to have an aspiration towards it, make the mind quiet so that what we call the opening is rendered possible.⁶²



What is the exact way of feeling that we belong to the Divine and that the Divine is acting in us?

You must not feel with your head (because you may think so, but that is something vague); you must feel with your sense-feeling. Naturally one begins by wanting it with the mind, because that is the first thing that understands. And then one has an aspiration here (pointing to the heart), with a flame which pushes you to realise it. But if you want it to be truly the thing, well, you must sense it. . . .

How can we reach that state?

Aspire for it, want it. Try to be less and less selfish, but not in the sense of becoming nice to other people or forgetting your-self, not that: have less and less the feeling that you are a person, a separate entity, something existing in itself, isolated from the rest.

And then, above all, above all, it is that inner flame, that aspiration, that need for the light. It is a kind of — how to put it? — luminous enthusiasm that seizes you. It is an irresistible need to melt away, to give oneself, to exist only in the Divine.

At that moment you have the experience of your aspiration.

But that moment should be absolutely sincere and as inte-gral as possible; and all this must occur not only in the head, not only here, but must take place everywhere, in all the cells of the body. The consciousness integrally must have this irresistible need.... It lasts for some time, then diminishes, gets extinguished. You cannot keep these things for very long. But then it so happens that a moment later or the next day or some time later, suddenly you have the opposite experience. Instead of feeling this ascent, all that is no longer there and you have the feeling of the Descent, the Answer. And nothing but the Answer exists.⁶⁶



One must have a sufficient aspiration and a prayer that is sufficiently intense. But that has been given to human nature. It is one of the marvellous gifts of grace given to human nature; only, one does not know how to make use of it.

This comes to saying that in spite of the most absolute determinisms in the horizontal line, if one knows how to cross all these horizontal lines and reach the highest point of consciousness, one is able to make things change, things apparently absolutely determined. So you may call it by any name you like, but it is a kind of combination of an absolute determinism with an absolute freedom. . . .

If you have an aspiration that is sincere enough or a prayer that is intense enough, you can bring down in you something that will change everything, everything — truly it changes everything.⁶⁹



The Mother: Instead of being upset and struggling, the best thing to do is to offer one's body to the Divine with the sincere prayer, "Let Thy Will be done." If there is any possibility of cure, it will establish the best conditions for it; and if cure is impossible, it will be the very best preparation for getting out of the body and the life without it.

In any case the first indispensable condition is a quiet sur-render to the Divine's will.⁷⁰



Turn your mind completely away from your difficulty, con-centrate exclusively on the Light and the Force coming from above; let the Lord do for your body whatever He pleases. Hand over to Him totally the entire responsibility of your physical being.

This is the cure.⁷¹

Part Four

Medicine and Healing

Medical Treatment and the Body- Consciousness

Sri Aurobindo: As regards malady or illness, it is true that the chief reliance should be on the inner will and secondly on simple remedies. But this rule should not at first be rigorously applied in affections of a strongly physical character, because the gross body is the most obstinately recalcitrant to the will; there it is better in the earlier stages to respect to a certain extent the habits of the bodily consciousness which being physical relies upon physical remedies. When you find that the will is strong enough to deal rapidly with even these affections, then you can dispense with remedies.³



Sri Aurobindo: It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and yoga power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the whole nature is not open or able to respond to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or, if the mind and vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a

particular illness, and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to, — not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body.⁴



The Mother: I am against the indiscriminate use of any medicine, and when a medicine becomes fashionable there is a tendency to use it indiscriminately.¹⁹

An hour's moving about in the sun does more to cure weakness or even anaemia than a whole arsenal of tonics. My advice is that medicines should not be used unless it is absolutely impossible to avoid them; and this "absolutely impossible" should be very strict.²⁰



Nature is the all-round Healer.²³



Sri Aurobindo: Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in

which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.²⁴

It is not the medicine that cures so much as the patient's faith in the doctor and the medicine. Both are a clumsy substitute for the natural faith in one's own self-power which they have themselves destroyed.²⁵

For nearly forty years I believed them when they said I was weakly in constitution, suffered constantly from the smaller and the greater ailments and mistook this curse for a burden that Nature had laid upon me. When I renounced the aid of medicines, then they began to depart from me like disappointed parasites. Then only I understood what a mighty force was the natural health within me and how much mightier yet the Will and Faith exceeding mind which God meant to be the divine support of our life in this body.²⁶

Drugs often cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are at once superfluous.²⁸

It should take long for self-cure to replace medicine, because of the fear, self-distrust and unnatural physical reliance on drugs which Medical Science has taught to our minds and bodies and made our second nature.²⁹



The Mother: The sovereignty of mind has made humanity the slave of doctors and their remedies. And the result is that illnesses are increasing in number and seriousness.

The only true salvation for men is to escape from mental domination by opening to the Divine Influence.³⁰

We cannot counteract the harm done by mental faith in the need for drugs by any external measures. Only by escaping from the mental prison and emerging consciously into the light of the spirit, by a conscious union with the Divine, can we enable Him to give back to us the balance and health we have lost.³¹

Doctors and the Healing Power

Sri Aurobindo: A medical friend of the Mother's used to say that it is the doctor who heals and not his medicines. This is quite true. One must have an element of healing power. Medicines lend their properties to this power. Without this power which is the main thing in a cure, medicines are of very little use.³⁶



The Mother: To go from one doctor to another is the same mistake as to go from one Guru to another. One is on the material plane what the other is on the spiritual. You must choose your doctor and stick to him if you do not want to enter into physical confusion. It is only if the doctor himself decides to consult another or others that the thing can be done safely.³⁸



Let him choose his doctor, because it is the confidence in the doctor that is most important.³⁹



As a general rule I feel that when one goes to a doctor for treatment, one should do what he says.⁴⁰



After all, an illness is only a wrong attitude taken by some part of the body. The chief role of the doctor is, by various means, to induce the body to recover its trust in the Supreme Grace.⁴¹



Sri Aurobindo: Naturally one must know the business. But there is an enormous difference between a man who knows his business and has confidence and intuition and one who knows his business but has not. I have known doctors with an excellent knowledge of medicine who succeeded much less than others who had far less but had dash, decision and drive. . . . The self-confident doctor decides as best he can and acts — if he finds he is making fausse route [on the wrong track], he retraces his steps and corrects. He develops in himself the coup d’oeil [ability to see at a glance] which does not depend only on reasoning and finally manages to be right in the majority of cases. You may say that he may kill his patients when he is wrong. But so does the hesitant doctor by his hesitation— e.g. by not taking a step which is urgently required.⁴²



The Mother: A broad mind, a generous heart, an unflinching will, a quiet steady determination, an inexhaustible energy and a total

trust in one's mission — this makes a perfect doctor.⁴³



Sri Aurobindo: As for saving, one can't save if the patient cherishes the illness, justifies it and refuses to part with it. . . .

What does save is the true will to be saved accompanied by a reliance on the Divine.⁶¹

If you can get the preoccupation of death and grave illness out of his head, that might help. It is his sense of being desperately ill that prevents the force working.⁶²



*Do you think that X could have been cured?
Most people believe that cancer is incurable.*

The Mother: It was possible in his case, at least; but something in him ceased to respond. . . . The last three days his body did not respond either to the force put upon him, or to the medicine given.

*Could not the spiritual help be effective
irrespective of his response?*

In cases like this the entire collaboration of the person concerned is absolutely necessary.

*But if you know the force that is
attacking?*

To detect the force that is attacking is one thing and to drive it out is another. In these cases the mind plays a very great part. . . .

What are the conditions for success in such cases?

Either entire collaboration or complete passivity. These are the two conditions for a cure.⁶³



Sri Aurobindo: Of course it can [cancer can be cured by yoga], but on condition of faith or openness or both. Even a mental suggestion can cure cancer — with luck of course, as is shown by the case of the woman operated on unsuccessfully for cancer, but the doctors lied and told her it had succeeded. Result, cancer symptoms all ceased and she died many years afterwards of another illness altogether.⁶⁶

Intuitive Diagnosis

The Mother: You can see ten people [doctors], those ten people will tell you ten different things! The instability of the diagnosis is for me something absolutely certain. Because there aren't two identical cases — there are analogies, there can even be families of cases, but there aren't two identical cases; so in everyone there are variations. And unless the gentleman is very intuitive, he will start reasoning and then he is sure to make a mistake. . . . I have known one or two sincere doctors, and they admitted to me quite clearly that it was like that. I told them, "From the spiritual standpoint, there cannot be two identical cases."

Nature never repeats itself — there are families, there are analogies, there are similarities, but there aren't two identical cases; therefore you know very well that you don't know. When you study it on its own level, the immense complexity of the possibilities of physical reality is such that unless you have a direct and intimate perception, you cannot know what will happen."⁶⁸



Sri Aurobindo: What the Mother says in the matter is what she said to Dr. X with his entire agreement — viz. reading from symptoms by the doctors is usually mere balancing between possibilities (of course except in clear and

simple cases) and the conclusion is a guess. It may be a right guess and then it will be all right or it may be a wrong guess and then all will be wrong unless Nature is too strong for the doctor and overcomes the consequences of his error — or at the least the treatment will be ineffective. On the contrary if one develops the diagnostic flair one can see at once what is the real thing among the possibilities and see what is to be done. That is what the most successful doctors have, they have this flashlight which shows them the true point. X agreed and said that the cause of the guessing was that there were whole sets of symptoms which could belong to any one of several diseases and to decide is a most delicate and subtle business, no amount of book knowledge or reasoning will ensure a right decision. A special insight is needed that looks through the symptoms and not merely at them. This last sentence, by the way, is my own, not X's.⁷⁰



The Mother: If you want to contact the intuition, you must keep this (Mother indicates the forehead) completely immobile. Active thought must be stopped as far as possible and the entire mental faculty must form — at the top of the head and a little further above if possible — a kind of mirror, very quiet, very still, turned upwards, in silent, very concentrated attention. If you succeed, you can — perhaps not immediately — but you can

have the perception of the drops of light falling upon the mirror from a still unknown region and expressing themselves as a conscious thought which has no connection with all the rest of your thought since you have been able to keep it silent. That is the real beginning of the intellectual intuition.

It is a discipline to be followed. For a long time one may try and not succeed, but as soon as one succeeds in making a “mirror”, still and attentive, one always obtains a result, not necessarily with a precise form of thought but always with the sensations of a light coming from above. And then, if one can receive this light coming from above without entering immediately into a whirl of activity, receive it in calm and silence and let it penetrate deep into the being, then after a while it expresses itself either as a luminous thought or as a very precise indication here (Mother indicates the heart), in this other centre. . . .

There comes a time when one feels a kind of inner guidance, something which is leading one very perceptibly in all that one does. But then, for the guidance to have its maximum power, one must naturally add to it a conscious surrender: one must be sincerely determined to follow the indication given by the higher force.⁷⁹



Should a doctor tell a patient the truth about a terminal illness?

The Mother: Obviously, there could be only one solution: to lose the mental consciousness that gives you the perception or sensation that you are telling a “lie” or a “truth”; and you can obtain that only when you get to the higher state in which our notion of falsehood and truth disappears. Because when we speak from the ordinary mental consciousness, even when we are convinced that we are telling the whole truth, we are not doing so; and even when we think we are telling a lie, sometimes it isn’t one. We do not have the capacity to discern what is true and what isn’t — because we live in a false consciousness. But there is a state in which, first, you no longer make “personal” decisions, and then you are like a mirror reflecting the exact need, the true (spiritual, that is) need of the patient, for instance, and exactly when he needs to know so that the rest of his life (whatever time he has left to live) brings him the maximum possibilities of progress. . . .

In my opinion, from a practical and external standpoint, I have more often seen cases in which the lie had a bad effect than cases in which the truth had a bad effect. But everything depends on the doctor’s consciousness.

I know, and with certainty, that if you can be in that clear consciousness, you will see that the

state of illness was certainly a necessity, often a willed necessity (not only accepted and undergone, but willed) by the soul in order to go faster on the path — to save time, to gain lives. And if you can, if you have the power to bring that soul into contact with the force that governs its existence and leads it towards progress, towards the Realisation, you do a work of quite a superior quality.

You know this: the same words, the same sentences, spoken by someone who sees and knows and spoken by the ordinary ignorant person, change entirely in nature and power — and in action. There is a way of saying things which is the true way, whatever words you speak. . . .

You see, he puts the problem from a purely mental standpoint: to tell what is conventionally called the “truth” (which isn’t true), or to tell what is conventionally called a “lie” (which may not at all be what you think it is: it isn’t a lie, but simply the contradiction or opposite of what you consider to be the “truth” — same thing). But in order to find the solution, you have to climb up there — where you see, where you can see in a totally concrete way that that “truth” isn’t absolute and that “lie” isn’t absolute, that there is something else — another way of seeing — in which things are no longer like that. And then... then if you could speak the True Thing, the right word (word or sentence), have the thought which is the true thought in every case — what

marvellous power you would have over your patient! It would be magnificent.⁸³

Spiritual Healing



Mother, is it possible to develop in oneself the capacity to heal?

The Mother: In principle, everything is possible by uniting consciously with the Divine Force. But a method has to be found, and this depends on the case and the individual.

The first condition is to have a physical nature that gives energy rather than draws energy from others.

The second indispensable condition is to know how to draw energy from above, from the inexhaustible impersonal source. In this way the more one spends the more one receives, and one becomes an inexhaustible channel rather than a vessel that empties itself by giving. It is through steadfast aspiration that one learns.⁸⁴



Sri Aurobindo: The Divine Forces are meant to be used — the mistake of man individualised in the Ignorance is to use it for

the ego and not for the Divine. It is that that has to be set right by the union with the Divine Consciousness and also by the widening of the individual being so that it can live consciously in the universal. Difficult it is owing to the fixed ego-habit, but it is not impossible.⁸⁸



One can cure only if the disease isn't necessary to the individual's development.⁹²

*[Regarding a flower with the significance
"Material Power to Heal"]*

The Mother: I would like that to be permanently established. When someone tells me, "I have a pain here", I pass my hand like this and it is gone. The hands feel, they feel it is possible. They are so conscious of the Vibration — they feel that anything is possible. The other day, E fell down, I don't know how, and she injured her knee, she was covered with bruises and scratches. . . . Then this hand [Mother's right hand] quite spontaneously went and passed over her knee, like that, and I felt all the vibrations at my fingertips: it is like needles — needles of light — and it vibrates and vibrates and vibrates. So I put my hand like that, and suddenly she said, "Oh!..." She was flabbergasted: all the pain had gone. But there were marks, bruises — they should go, but it takes time. On me the effect is almost immediate, especially the right hand. But I would like it to have a sort of absoluteness.

Because the decision to intervene isn't mental at all: suddenly the hand is simply compelled to do it, so it does it. Well, in that case, it should be absolute.... There is still the influence of the others' thought and all that, what a useless jumble!⁹⁵



Sri Aurobindo: To want unwaveringly the welfare of another both in the head and the heart, is the best help one can give.⁹⁷



Sri Aurobindo: Yes, one's bad thoughts and good thoughts can have a bad or a good effect on others, though they have not always because they are not strong enough — but still that is the tendency. It is therefore always said by those who have this knowledge that we should abstain from bad thoughts of others for this reason. It is true that both kinds of thought come equally to the mind in its ordinary state; but if the mind and mental will are well developed, one can establish a control over one's thoughts as well as over one's acts and prevent the bad ones from having their play. But this mental control is not enough for the sadhak. He must attain to a quiet mind and in the silence of the mind receive only the Divine thought-forces or other divine Forces and be their field and instrument.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Beyond Illness and Healing

The Transformation of Suffering

The Mother: If you can face suffering with courage, endurance, an unshakable faith in the divine Grace, if instead of shunning it when it comes to you, you can enter into it with this will, this aspiration to go through it and find the luminous truth, the unvarying delight which is at the core of all things, the door of pain is often more direct, more immediate than that of satisfaction or contentment. . . .

Pain brings us back to a deeper truth by forcing us to concentrate in order to be able to bear, to face this thing that crushes us. It is through pain that one most easily recovers the true strength, when one is strong. It is through pain that one most easily recovers the true faith, the faith in something that is above and beyond all pain.

. . . To seek suffering and pain is a morbid attitude which must be avoided; but to run away from it out of forgetfulness, through a superficial, frivolous movement, in a spirit of diversion, is cowardice. When pain comes, it comes to teach us something. The quicker we learn it, the more the need for pain diminishes; and when we know the secret, it will no longer

be possible to suffer, for that secret reveals to us the reason, the cause, the origin of suffering, and the way to pass beyond it.

The secret is to emerge from the ego, out of its prison, unite ourselves with the Divine, merge into Him, not to allow anything to separate us from Him. Then, once one has discovered this secret and realises it in one's being, pain loses its justification and suffering disappears. It is an all-powerful remedy, not only in the deeper parts of the being, in the soul, in the spiritual consciousness, but also in life and in the body.

There is no illness, no disorder that can resist if this secret is discovered and put into practice not only in the higher parts of the being, but in the cells of the body.

If one knows how to teach the cells the splendour that lies within them, if one knows how to make them understand the reality by which they exist, which gives them being, then they too enter the total harmony, and the physical disorder which caused the illness vanishes as do all other disorders of the being.

But for that, you must not be cowardly or fearful. When physical disorder attacks you, you must not be afraid, you must not run away from it; you must face it with courage, calmness, confidence, with the certitude that illness is a false-hood and that if you turn entirely, in full confidence, with a complete quietude to the divine Grace, It will settle in these cells as It is established in the depths of

the being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.⁴



The Mother: This delight, this wonderful laughter that dis-solves every shadow, every pain, every suffering! You only have to go deep enough within yourself to find the inner Sun, to let yourself be flooded by it; and then there is nothing but a cascade of harmonious, luminous, sunlit laughter, which leaves no room for any shadow or pain.

In fact, even the greatest difficulties, even the greatest sorrows, even the greatest physical pain... if you can look at them from that standpoint, from there, you see the unreality of the difficulty, the unreality of the sorrow, the unreality of the pain

— and there is nothing but a joyful and luminous vibration.

In fact, this is the most powerful way of dissolving difficulties, overcoming sorrows and removing pain. The first two are relatively easy — I say relatively — the last one is more difficult because we are in the habit of considering the body and its feelings to be extremely concrete and positive; but it is the same thing, it is simply because we have not learned, we are not in the habit of regarding our body as something fluid, plastic, uncertain, malleable. We have not learned to bring into it

this luminous laughter that dissolves all darkness, all difficulty, all discord, all disharmony, everything that jars, that weeps and wails.

And this Sun, this Sun of divine laughter, is at the centre of all things, the truth of all things. We must learn to see it, to feel it, to live it.⁶

Glossary

Adhara, Adhar — vessel; the physical, vital and mental system as a vehicle of the consciousness and force of the Spirit.

adverse forces — forces of the vital world that oppose the higher movement of evolution and are agents of disharmony in human life at its present stage; also referred to as hostile or anti-divine forces.

Ananda — bliss; the unvarying delight which is at the core of all things.

anti-divine forces — see adverse forces.

Ayurveda — the ancient Vedic system of Indian medicine.

body-consciousness — the consciousness that belongs to the body and is concerned with its functionings. It is a part of the physical consciousness, below the level of the physical mind and largely subconscious, but possessing an instinctive knowledge.

Brahmic consciousness — awareness of the eternal Reality (Brahman) that is expressed in the universe.

Chakras — the seven centres of consciousness in the subtle body, connecting the subliminal being on its various levels with the outer personality.

Divine Force — see spiritual force.

evolution — the progressive manifestation of consciousness in matter. Having reached the human level, its next step according to Sri Aurobindo will be to go beyond mind to Supermind and reveal the Spirit integrally in life.

Force — see spiritual force.

gnostic — pertaining to the gnosis or spiritual knowledge beyond mind, especially on the plane of Supermind.

Grace — the free and irresistible action of the Spirit working for the best in all circumstances with the power to override the mechanical determinism of cosmic laws.

Guru — a spiritual guide; a teacher of any branch of ancient knowledge in the Indian tradition.

Hakimi — a Muslim system of medicine, also called Unani.

Higher Mind — the luminous thought-mind that is the first of several planes of consciousness between ordinary mind and Supermind. On all of these planes, according to Sri Aurobindo, “the realisation of the One is the natural basis of consciousness”; but on the higher planes, “the vision of the workings of the One becomes ever wider and is attended with a greater instrumentality of Force”.

hostile forces — see adverse forces.

inconscience, the inconscient—the negation of consciousness from which evolution in this world

began. Until it is transformed by Supermind, it persists as the cause of the inability of matter to embody the truth and immortality of the Spirit.

Integral Yoga — a form of Yoga that seeks to manifest the Spirit in life and matter by effectuating a transformation in all parts of our nature.

intuition — a faculty of direct perception derived from knowledge by identity and not dependent on reasoning. Intuition at its highest, in Sri Aurobindo's terminology, is the plane of consciousness just below Overmind and can be experienced only at an advanced stage of Yoga. What is usually called intuition is diluted and mixed with inferior mental or vital movements (mental intuition, vital intuition) or else an imitation (false intuition).

Karma — the sum of one's actions, each action being viewed as a link in a chain of cause and effect extending over many lives.

Kundalini Shakti — the latent power asleep in the lowest of the Chakras, where in the Indian tradition it is described as coiled up like a snake.

Maya — the power of consciousness to shape finite appearances out of infinite existence.

Medea — a sorceress in Greek mythology, in whose cauldron Aeson was rejuvenated and Pelias perished.

mental — pertaining to mind, the faculty of thought and intelligence, which is the instrument of a kind of cognition where the subject is separate from the object; an intermediate range of the spectrum of

consciousness which has found expression in the human stage of evolution.

mental world — a supraphysical plane of existence governed by the mental principle.

nervous — see vital-physical.

nervous envelope — a vital-physical aura that surrounds and protects the body.

overmental — belonging to the Overmind.

Overmind — a plane of cosmic consciousness just below Supermind. Overmind differs from Supermind in that, although it knows the infinite unity, it subordinates it to the play of multiplicity. Due to this limitation, its power is ultimately insufficient for the transformation that is the object of Integral Yoga.

physical consciousness — the consciousness in the body (sometimes including the subtle body).

physical mind — the part of the physical consciousness that gives mental form to physical experience.

psychic — pertaining to the soul; the inmost being which is normally hidden from us in the depths of our subliminal consciousness. It supports our evolution from life to life and is the key to the possibility of transformation.

Purusha — the inner conscious being, experienced as distinct from the outer nature, whose movements it witnesses and upholds.

rajasic — dominated by rajas, the kinetic and turbulent mode of energy which is characteristic of the vital part of the nature (cf. tamasic and sattwic).

rasa — sap, juice; essence; taste; the essence of delight in all things.

Sadhak — one who seeks spiritual realisation by Sadhana.

Sadhana — spiritual discipline; practice of Yoga.

sadhu — a holy man; an ascetic.

Sat — existence in its unconditioned purity, timeless, spaceless, formless and indivisible.

sattwic — dominated by sattva, the harmonising and intelligent mode of energy which is proper to the mental part of the nature (cf. tamasic and rajasic).

Shastra — the systematic formulation of any aspect of the

science and art of life. soul — see psychic.

Spirit — the one Self of all, whose nature is immortal existence, consciousness, force and bliss. Although it has concealed itself behind the appearances of the material world, it is the source of all things and is present everywhere. It can be experienced through Yoga and embodied in life through an integral transformation.

spiritual force — the power of the Spirit; in the Integral Yoga it may descend from any plane of spiritual consciousness from Higher Mind upwards.

subconscient, subconscious — below the level of normal conscious awareness; an obscure and incoherent part of the being which borders on inconscience and exerts a powerful influence on the body.

subliminal — behind the outer consciousness; the inner being. According to Sri Aurobindo, it has “a consciousness much wider, more luminous, more in possession of itself and things than that which wakes upon our surface”.

subtle body — a body made of subtle physical substance, forming part of the subliminal being and supporting the gross (physical) body.

subtle physical — belonging to the lowest of the immaterial planes of existence, that which resembles most closely the physical world in which we live, but is beyond the range of the outward senses.

Supermind — the plane of consciousness on which the limits of mind (including the spiritual mind planes from Higher Mind to Overmind) are entirely transcended; its nature is a knowledge of infinite unity expressing itself in an infinite multiplicity.

supramental — belonging to the Supermind.

supraphysical — not perceptible to the physical senses or physical instruments, but capable of being known by faculties that can be developed through Yoga.

tamas — see tamasic.

tamasic—dominated by tamas, the inert and unintelligent mode of energy which is characteristic of the physical part of the nature (cf. rajasic and sattwic).

Tantras — the texts of a particular system of Yoga, in which the Kundalini Shakti is awakened by specific processes and ascends through the Chakras.

transformation — radical change in the inner and outer nature in all its parts, brought about progressively in Integral Yoga by the action of forces belonging to higher and higher planes of consciousness up to Supermind.

Upanishad — any of a class of ancient Sanskrit texts regarded as the source of the Vedanta philosophy.

vital — pertaining to the life-force; the part of our nature that links the mental and the physical. Its essential function is enjoyment and possession; its energies are necessary for the fullness of our embodied existence, but can be the cause of many disturbances until they are purified and transformed by Yoga.

vital mind — the part of the consciousness that gives mental form to vital movements such as impulses, desires and emotions.

vital-physical — pertaining to the part of the life-force that is involved in the states and activities of the body (sometimes including the subtle body).

vital world — a supraphysical plane of existence governed by the vital principle.

Yoga — literally, union; any of various methods of transcending the normal limits of human nature and entering into contact and union with a higher consciousness and greater reality. In this book, the word usually refers to the Integral Yoga developed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Yoga-Shakti — the spiritual force activated by the practice of Yoga.

Yogi (also Yogin) — one who practises Yoga; one who has achieved the self-mastery or spiritual realisation sought through any form of Yoga.

Yogic force — see spiritual force.

Yogin — see Yogi.