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Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

Initiation into Yoga

Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on entering the spiritual path

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The Great Promise of the Lord of Yoga

He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of the spirit; but once it is received, attainment is sure, whether conquered swiftly in the course of one human life or pursued patiently through many stadia of the cycle of existence in the manifested universe.

CWSA 23: 53 (SABCL 20: 47-48) **Sri Aurobindo**

Preparation for the Journey

A long dim preparation is man's life,
A circle of toil and hope and war and peace
Tracked out by Life on Matter's obscure ground.
In his climb to a peak no feet have ever trod,
He seeks through a penumbra shot with flame
A veiled reality half-known, ever missed,
A search for something or someone never found,
Cult of an ideal never made real here,
An endless spiral of ascent and fall
Until at last is reached the giant point
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made
And we break into the infinity of God.
Across our nature's border line we escape
Into Supernature's arc of living light.

Savitri, p. 24 **Sri Aurobindo**

Dedicate all actions to God and see Him in all

(Two brothers, of whom the elder was a pleader, wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo this morning.

The report was that they had seen Sri Aurobindo in a dream asking them to come to him, in addition to the guidance of the spirit of their dead brother.

Sri Aurobindo sent the following instructions to them:)

"The younger brother who has allowed himself to be mediumised should be told that it is very dangerous for him to meddle with this spirit-world without proper knowledge. It is especially dangerous for people who are themselves not strong.

He should, after giving up this practice, make his mind strong by the Karma-yoga. It will require him to give up his desires and his ego. He can do his actions in the spirit

of devotion, offering them all as a sacrifice to God. He can thus practise dedication of all his actions to God and try to see Him in all men and in all happenings. That would be his meditation.

At present he cannot take up this yoga because this is a yoga of self-surrender in which he has to open himself to a higher Power. But as he has already opened himself to other spirits such a passive state would not be good for him. All sorts of spirits would come and try to take possession of his being. So it is not safe for him to take up this yoga, apart from other considerations."

Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Reported by A. B. Purani, 1.1.1924

Instructions to a seeker wanting to take up this yoga

Sri Aurobindo: The Sun is the symbol of the divine Light that is coming down and gives expression to the aspiration asking that divine Light to come down and give impulsion to all the activities of the mind.

In this Yoga, also, we want to bring down that divine Sun to govern not only the mind but the vital and the physical being also. It is very difficult effort. All cannot bear the Light of the Sun when it comes down. Gayatri (mantra) chooses the Divine Light of the Truth asking it to come down and govern the mind. It is the capacity to bear the Light that constitutes the fitness for this Yoga.

You can meditate on this (Gayatri) Mantra keeping in mind the meaning, and you can aspire also to become fit for yoga. When you are able to fix your mind you may remember any one of the forms of the Godhead. You can pray to your Ishta-Devata that he may make you fit for this Yoga and that he may come and work in you.

Really speaking, this Yoga is not done by the power of man; it is done by the Divine Power and so She can bring

about every change in the capacity of the Sadhaka.

Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Reported by A.B.Purani, 21.9.1925

Preparing oneself for the yoga

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

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 unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. 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.

CWM 3: 2

Reading books as preparation

….if it is necessary to prepare oneself by studying books, it is a preparation that takes quite a long time. But if it happens that one can receive a direct teaching, and in all

circumstances, then it goes much more quickly. When you have nobody to guide you, and have to find your way by the help of books, when you don't even have anyone to tell you, "Read that book rather than this one", when you have to find out everything by yourself, it takes time. Many years.

You see, it makes a difference — people don't realise it — it makes a considerable difference to be able to ask the question of someone who has realised the thing, that is, one who has had all the experiences and has reached the end and has the knowledge of the thing. You can ask him: "Is this good? Is this useful, is this harmful?" Then in one minute you have the answer: "Yes, no, do this, read that, don't do that." And it is so convenient.

But when you are all alone — usually not amidst very favourable surroundings, or in any case where people understand nothing of this, don't think about it — if they are not hostile — you have to find out everything by yourself; you have nobody to tell you, "Well, read this book, it is better, it is truer than that one." You have to read a huge number of things, be able to compare them in your own thought, compare the effect they have on you, how far they help you or don't.

Naturally, people who are predestined are guided by the inner Guide. It happens that they come across the book they should read or meet the person who can give them a useful indication; ... After some time they become aware that there was a consciousness there; they did not know very well either where it came from or what it was, or who organised their life, who organised the circumstances of their life — and who helped them at every step to find just the thing which would lead them farther. But it is... it is not very frequent; rather, it is rare. These people are predestined.

Otherwise it is difficult; it takes time, much time. And yet it is just the beginning, you see; it is to find the truths

on which to base one's yoga. It is not yoga; it is the general principles on which one is going to construct one's yoga.

Obviously, those who are particularly interested can find something. It goes without saying that for those who are in India, it is extremely easy, extremely easy; there is a living tradition; whoever wants to do yoga will always find someone to give him information. And even the most ignorant and uneducated have a vague idea of what ought to be done or of what can help them.

CWM 7: 337-38 **The Mother**

Yoga is not by a divided will

This yoga demands a total dedication of the life to the aspiration for the discovery and embodiment of the Divine Truth and to nothing else whatever. To divide your life between the Divine and some outward aim and activity that has nothing to do with the search for the Truth is inadmissible. The least thing of that kind would make success in the yoga impossible.

SABCL 23: 519 **Sri Aurobindo**

An Aspiration to the Sun of Truth

I would like us to make the resolution to raise ourselves each day, in all sincerity and goodwill, in an ardent aspiration towards the Sun of Truth, towards the Supreme Light, the source and intellectual life of the universe, so that it may pervade us entirely and illumine with its great brilliance our minds and hearts, all our thoughts and our actions.

15 December 1911 *The Mother*

The Call and the Fitness

Fitness for the path

Sri Aurobindo : Well, a man may have all the necessary qualifications you speak of and may appear strong, and yet he may not be able to go through; while another man may appear weak and yet something behind intervenes and he is able to go through. So there is no mental rule in this matter. ...

As I say, something in them wants the yoga and pushes them. In some cases it is "destiny" that pushes them. ...

But this can be said that everyone of those who have come in has some chance to go through if he can hold on to it.

Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, A.B.Purani, 20-9-1926

All that we need to know

Who ever was fit, for that matter — fitness and unfitness are only a way of speaking; man is unfit and a misfit (so far as things spiritual are concerned) — in his outward nature. But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. "This is all you know or need to know" and, if you don't, well, even then you have at least somehow stumbled into the path and have got to remain there till you get haled along it far enough to wake up to the knowledge. Amen.

> *Q: A most stimulating formula I find in your letter — "within there is a soul and above there is Grace"— about which you say "This is all you know or need to know." Is that all really?*

For anyone who wants the spiritual life, yes, it is enough.

> *Q: Can one arrive at what is called "a state of grace" simply by sticking or simply because there is a soul within?*

Yes, one can, plenty of people have done it.

Q: But then the soul is there in everybody and Grace is above everybody. How is it that people have turned their backs on the Divine?

Because of rajasic ego, ambition, vanity — because they believed in their own efforts and not in the Grace.

Q: I have never heard that Grace did everything. And, where it seems to do so, how do we know that somebody has not done sadhana in his past life? You can't deny it, can you?

I could point you at many instances in spiritual history — beginning with the famous Jagai Madhai.* But it is no use against a brain that does not want to admit that 2+2 = 4. You can't affirm it, can you?

Q: Simple sticking won't do. In that case our Asram cat Bushy would have a chance.

Of course she has — of rising to a new grade of birth with all in her favour in the next life.

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* *'The episode of Jagai-Madhai relates to Chaitanya and Nityananda. There are a few versions of the story, but the basic outline of the traditional tale is as follows:*

'Once while chanting the name of Krishna in the streets, Nityananda, a disciple and friend of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, was attacked by Jagai and Madhai, two irreverent drunk brothers who were notorious thieves and hooligans. Madhai threw an earthen pot which cut his forehead. At this point Nityananda is said to have uttered the now famous sentence, in Bengali, "Merechhish kolshir kana, tai bole ki prem debona" (Shall I stop giving you love because you have hit me with an earthen pot?). Chaitanya Mahaprabhu heard of the episode, and moved by divine wrath, wanted to kill the brothers with his divine Chakra. Nityananda begged him to pardon them and they became Chaitanya's disciples, converted by Nityananda's compassion.'

Q: Even Ramakrishna's baby cat type of sadhak has to make a decisive movement of surrender and compel the rest of the being to obedience, which, let me tell you, Sir, is the most difficult thing on earth.

I never heard that the baby cat was like that — if it were it would not be a baby cat. (It is the baby monkey trying to become a baby cat who does that.) But you have evidently so great a knowledge of spiritual things (surpassing mine and Ramakrishna's) that I can only bow my head and pass humbly on to people with less knowledge.

Q: I remember instances where people have failed in their sadhana and gone away. The Divine couldn't do much because he says he doesn't propose to do anything, against the will of the individual, which means aspiration, rejection, surrender, before the Grace comes down.

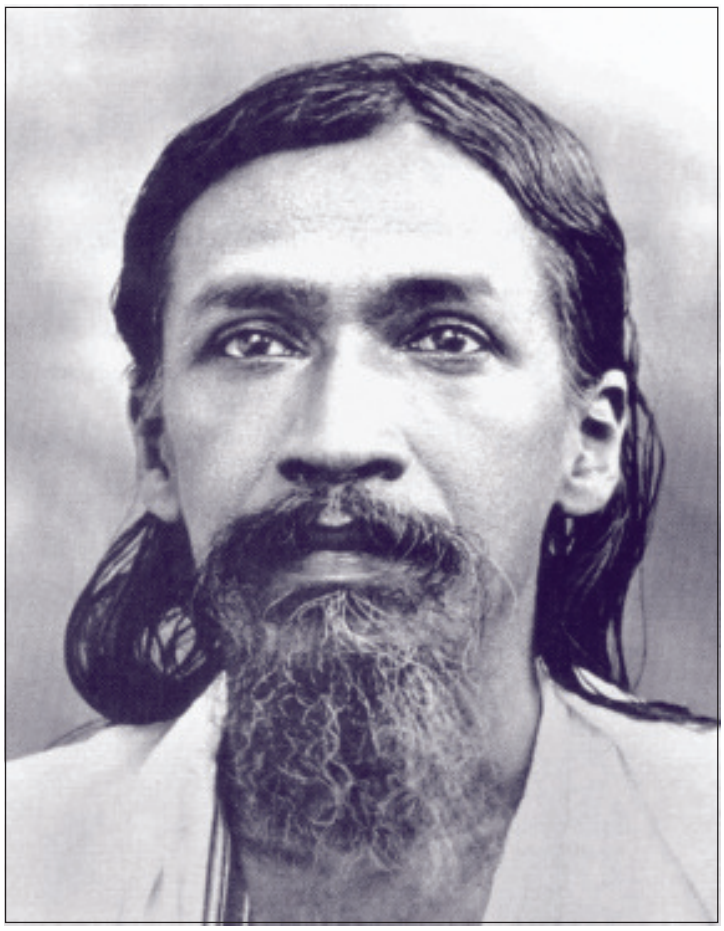
It can mean also waiting on the Grace of the Divine! The will of the individual in this respect does not mean anything like that. If the will of the individual is towards perdition, if his ego becomes hostile to the Divine, then the Divine is not bound to show him a Grace he does not want at all and kicks at.

Sri Aurobindo

Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, Nirodbaran: pp. 465-67

'Bushy, the cat who lived in the Ashram received the Divine Touch of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. She would often meditate in the Mother's Presence. The Mother revealed that after her death she had jumped a number of steps in evolution and taken a human birth due to the divine association in this life.'

Sri Aurobindo is referring to 'Jagai and Madhai' as well as 'Bushy' to indicate that the Grace can come to all, to the worst sinner and to the animal and, if they are open, they too are helped!



With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow? ...

... Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

Excerpt from the poem "Invitation"
written by Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore jail. CWSA 2: 201

Readiness for the Spiritual Life

Signs of readiness for the spiritual life

Q: Are there any signs which indicate that one is ready for the path, especially if one has no spiritual teacher?

Yes, the most important indication is a perfect equality of soul in all circumstances. It is an absolutely indispensable basis; something very quiet, calm, peaceful, the feeling of a great force. Not the quietness that comes from inertia but the sensation of a concentrated power which keeps you always steady, whatever happens, even in circumstances which may appear to you the most terrible in your life. That is the first sign.

A second sign: you feel completely imprisoned in your ordinary normal consciousness, as in something extremely hard, something suffocating and intolerable, as though you had to pierce a hole in a brass wall. And the torture becomes almost unbearable, it is stifling; there is an inner effort to break through and you cannot manage to break through. This also is one of the first signs. It means that your inner consciousness has reached a point where its outer mould is much too small for it — the mould of ordinary life, of ordinary activities, ordinary relations, all that becomes so small, so petty; you feel within you a force to break all that.

There is yet another sign: when you concentrate and have an aspiration, you feel something coming down into you, you receive an answer; you feel a light, a peace, a force coming down; and almost immediately— you need not wait or spend a very long time — nothing but an inner aspiration, a call, and the answer comes. This also means that the relation has been well established.

CWM 4: 97

The first thing necessary

Q: Will you say something to us about Yoga?

What do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain to peace and calm? To serve humanity?

None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it? Do you feel that your very *raison d'être* is the Divine and without it there is no meaning in your existence? If so, then only can it be said that you have a call for the Path.

This is the first thing necessary — aspiration for the Divine.

The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration — concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.

Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness 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.

CWM 3: 1

The starting-point for finding the soul

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of

the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you decentralise, extend and widen yourself; you begin to live in all things and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings, live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvelous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation; there are others, many others. All help you to go beyond the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with snares and problems to be solved, which demand an unfailing determination. It is like the explorer's trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land, of some great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery which requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few simple words of advice may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on this subject have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice. And yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction. ...

CWM 12: 32-33 **The Mother**

Entering the Spiritual Life

The first few signs of entry

Q: When can one say that one has truly entered the spiritual path?

The first sign (it is not the same for everybody) but in a chronological order, I believe, is that everything else appears to you absolutely without importance. Your entire life, all your activities, all your movements continue, if circumstances so arrange things, but they all seem to you utterly unimportant, this is no longer the meaning of your existence. I believe this is the first sign.

There may be another; for example, the feeling that everything is different, of living differently, of a light in the mind which was not there before, of a peace in the heart which was not there before. That does make a change; but the positive change usually comes later, very rarely does it come at first except in a flash at the time of conversion when one has decided to take up the spiritual life. Sometimes, it begins like a great illumination, a deep joy enters into you; but generally, afterwards this goes into the background, for there are too many imperfections still persisting in you....

It is not disgust, it is not contempt, but everything appears to you so uninteresting that it is truly not worth the trouble of attending to it. For instance, when you are in the midst of certain physical conditions, pleasant or unpleasant (the two extremes meet), you say to yourself, "It was so important to me, all that? But it has no importance at all!" You have the impression that you have truly turned over to the other side.

Some imagine that the sign of spiritual life is the capacity to sit in a corner and meditate! That is a very, very com-

mon idea. I do not want to be severe, but most people who make much of their capacity for meditation — I do not think they meditate even for one minute out of one hour. Those who meditate truly never speak about it; for them it is quite a natural thing. When it has become a natural thing, without any glory about it, you may begin to tell yourself that you are making progress. Those who talk about it and think that this gives them a superiority over other human beings, you may be sure, are most of the time in a state of complete inertia.

CWM 4: 103

Opening the inner doors

There are all kinds of meditations.... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result—this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea—simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one's power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquillity. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns.

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and

moreover you will not be sure of the result; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else—simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and especially of what may not, and above all without desiring that something may come — simply, the joy of an aspiration which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more and more in a constant concentration. And there I may assure you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is, it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realised when you do this. These possibilities may be very different according to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be silent, going behind appearances, calling a force which answers, waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living consciously in this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time something will happen.

CWM 4: 104-05

The first movement on the path

> *Q: "The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances..." I did not quite understand "the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances..."*

People are occupied with outward things. That means that

the consciousness is turned towards external things—that is, all the things of life which one sees, knows, does—instead of being turned inwards in order to find the deeper truth, the divine Presence. This is the first movement. You are busy with all that you do, with the people around you, the things you use; and then with life: sleeping, eating, talking, working a little, having a little fun also; and then beginning over again: sleeping, eating, etc., etc., and then it begins again. And then what this one has said, what that one has done, what one ought to do, the lesson one ought to learn, the exercise one ought to prepare; and then again whether one is keeping well, whether one is feeling fit, etc. This is what one usually thinks about.

So the first movement — and it is not so easy — is to make all that pass to the background, and let one thing come inside and in front of the consciousness as the important thing: the discovery of the very purpose of existence and life, to learn what one is, why one lives, and what there is behind all this. This is the first step: to be interested more in the cause and goal than in the manifestation. That is, the first movement is a withdrawal of the consciousness from this total identification with outward and apparent things, and a kind of inward concentration on what one wants to discover, the Truth one wants to discover. This is the first movement.

Many people who are here forget one thing. They want to begin by the end. They think that they are ready to express in their life what they call the supramental Force or Consciousness, and they want to infuse this in their actions, their movements, their daily life. But the trouble is that they don't at all know what the supramental Force or Consciousness is and that first of all it is necessary to take the reverse path, the way of interiorisation and of withdrawal from life, in order to find within oneself this Truth which has to be expressed.

For as long as one has not found it, there is nothing to express. And by imagining that one is living an exceptional life, one lives only in the illusion of one's exceptional state. Therefore, at first not only must one find one's soul and the Divine who possesses it, but one must identify oneself with it. And then later, one may begin to come back to outward activities, and then transform them; because then one knows in what direction to turn them, into what to transform them. One can't jump over this stage.

One must first find one's soul, this is absolutely indispensable, and identify oneself with it. Later one can come to the transformation. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere: "Our Yoga begins where the others end."

CWM 7: 349-50

To do the yoga one must want it consciously

You see, one may have a very good will, a life oriented towards a divine realisation, in any case, a kind of more or less superficial consecration to a divine work, *and not do yoga*.

To do Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not; but if one doesn't, one can still have a life of goodwill, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily— all that—one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference.

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with. You must know what it is, you must take a resolution about it; but once you have taken the resolution, you must no longer flinch. That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing. You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, "I want to do

yoga"; and that is why I don't think that I have ever pressed you from this point of view. I can speak to you about the thing. Oh! I tell you a lot about it, you are here for me to speak to you about it; but individually it is only to those who have come saying, "Yes, in any case I have my idea about the yoga and want to do it"; it is good.

And then for them it's something different, and the conditions of life are different, specially inwardly. Specially within, things change.

There is always a consciousness there acting constantly to rectify the situation, which puts you all the time in the presence of obstacles which prevent you from advancing, make you bump against your own errors and your own blindnesses. And this acts only for those who have decided to do the yoga. For others the Consciousness acts like a light, a knowledge, a protection, a force of progress, so that they may reach their maximum capacities and be able to develop as far as possible in an atmosphere as favourable as possible — but leaving them completely free in their choice.

CWM 7: 198-99

Yoga: An inner decision and not an outer conversion

The decision must come from within. Those who come consciously for the yoga, knowing what yoga is, well, their conditions of living here are... outwardly there is no difference but inwardly there is a very great difference. There is a kind of absoluteness in the consciousness, which does not let them deviate from the path: the errors one commits become immediately visible with consequences strong enough for one not to be able to make any mistake about it, and things become very serious.

... But the day you make a choice — when you have done it in all sincerity and have felt within yourself a radical deci-

sion—the thing is different. There is the light and the path to be followed, quite straight, and you must not deviate from it. It fools no one, you know; yoga is not a joke. You must know what you are doing when you choose it. But when you choose it, you must hold on to it. You have no longer the right to vacillate. You must go straight ahead. There!

CWM 7: 199-200

Take up the yoga only if it is your sole aim

To do the yoga, this yoga of transformation which, of all things, is the most arduous—it is only if one feels that one has come here for that (I mean here upon earth) and that one has to do nothing else but that, and that it is the only reason of one's existence — even if one has to toil hard, suffer, struggle, it is of no importance —"This is what I want, and nothing else" — then it is different. Otherwise I shall say, "Be happy and be good, and that's all that is asked of you. Be good, in the sense of being understanding, knowing that the conditions in which you have lived are exceptional, and try to live a higher, more noble, more true life than the ordinary one, so as to allow a little of this consciousness, this light and its goodness to express itself in the world. It would be very good." There we are.

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost.

CWM 7: 200

The beginnings of a true spiritual life

In the ordinary life there's not one person in a million who has a conscious contact with his psychic being, even momentarily. The psychic being may work from within, but so invisibly and unconsciously for the outer being that it is

as though it did not exist. And in most cases, the immense majority, almost the totality of cases, it's as though it were asleep, not at all active, in a kind of torpor.

It is only with the sadhana and a very persistent effort that one succeeds in having a conscious contact with his psychic being. Naturally, it is possible that there are exceptional cases — but this is truly exceptional, and they are so few that they could be counted—where the psychic being is an entirely formed, liberated being, master of itself, which has chosen to return to earth in a human body in order to do its work. And in this case, even if the person doesn't do the sadhana consciously, it is possible that the psychic being is powerful enough to establish a more or less conscious relation. But these cases are, so to say, unique and are exceptions which confirm the rule.

In almost, almost all cases, a very, very sustained effort is needed to become aware of one's psychic being. Usually it is considered that if one can do it in thirty years one is very lucky — thirty years of sustained effort, I say. It may happen that it's quicker. But this is so rare that immediately one says, "This is not an ordinary human being." That's the case of people who have been considered more or less divine beings and who were great yogis, great initiates.

CWM 7: 269 **The Mother**

Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have - soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God. Others give nothing; these whatever their position, power and riches are for the Divine purposes valueless cyphers.

CWM 1: Fascimile *The Mother*

Choosing the Path

The Divine chooses the disciple

*Q: Mother, here it is said: "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite."**

It is a magnificent sentence!

And it is absolutely true. There is in *Thoughts and Glimpses* also a sentence like this where I think he uses the word "God" instead of the Infinite. But the idea is the same—that it is God who has chosen you, the Divine who has chosen you. And that is why you run after Him!

And this is what gives — that's what he says, doesn't he? — this is what gives that kind of confidence, of certitude, precisely, that one is predestined; and if one is predestined, even if there are mountains of difficulties, what can that matter since one is sure to succeed! This gives you an indomitable courage to face all difficulties and a patience that stands all trials: you are sure to succeed.

And it's a fact — in fact, it is like that: the moment you thought about it, well, you thought about it because someone thought about you; you chose because you were chosen. And once you have been chosen, you are sure of the thing. Therefore, doubts, hesitations, depressions, uncertainties, all this is quite simply a waste of time and energy; it is of no use at all.

From the moment one has felt just once within himself: "Ah! *This* is the truth for me", it is finished; it is finished, it is settled. Even if you spend years cutting your way through the virgin forest, it's of no importance — it is finished, it is settled.

That is why I told you one day, "After all, you all are here because you have wanted it somewhere; and if you

* Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "The Four Aids".

wanted it somewhere, it means that the Divine wanted it thus in you."

CWM 7: 338-39

Q: Sweet Mother, "The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light and Power and Ananda." (Sri Aurobindo, SABCL 20: 81)

Does the Supreme choose the being who will be his instrument, or does the being choose to become his instrument?

You can take it as you like.

One can't tell who began! But the two usually take place at the same time.

If you want an order of priority, it is evident that the Divine exists before the individual, so it must be the Divine who has chosen first! But that is a choice prior to terrestrial life. In the order of the ordinary human consciousness it may be one or the other or both at the same time. In fact, it is likely that the Divine is the first to notice that this or that being is ready! But he who is ready generally does not know it to begin with, so he has the impression that it is he who has decided and is choosing. But this is more of an impression than a reality.

And once you are chosen, it is ineluctable, you can't escape even if you try.

CWM 8: 23

Freedom of choice for the road and the time to reach

... there are some who follow a very straight path and arrive very quickly; there are others who love labyrinths, it takes longer. But the end is there, the goal is there. I know by experience that there isn't one being who, were it only once in his life, has had a great urge towards... it doesn't matter what he calls it — let us say the Divine for facility of

speech, who is not sure to arrive; even if he turns his back on Him at a certain time, it's of no importance — he is sure to arrive. He will have to struggle more or less, will have more or less difficulty, but he is sure to succeed one day. It's a soul that has been chosen, it has become conscious because its hour has come — once the hour has come, well, the result will follow more or less quickly. You can do this in a few months; you can do it in some years; you can do it in some lives — but you will do it.

And what is remarkable is that this freedom of choice is left to you and that, if you decide within yourself that you will do it in this lifetime, you will do it. And I am not speaking here of a permanent and continuous decision because then you can arrive in twelve months. No, I mean: if you have suddenly been seized by this, "I want this", even once, in a flash, the seal is put, there, like that.

... (There we are.)

That's not a reason for wasting time on the way; that's not a reason for just following all the meanderings of the labyrinth and arriving with... with considerable rubbish when you are at the end. No. But, in any case it is a reason for never despairing, whatever the difficulties may be. ...

If one decided to go quite straight upon his path, whatever the cost — knowing how to bear a few difficulties, facing discomforts, without weakness, you see — well, one would avoid much trouble. But some people go only if they are taken by the scruff of the neck and dragged with a terrible force. Then they shout that they are violently forced.

However, it's they who wanted it.

CWM 7: 339-40

Everyone follows his own path

One can't make a general rule for the order of impor-

tance of the paths, it is an exclusively personal affair. And there is a time when one understands very well, it is apparent, that no two paths are alike, no two paths can be alike, and that every man follows his own path and that this is the truth of his being. One can, if one looks from a sufficient height, see a difference in the speed of advance, but it does not always conform to the external signs; and one could say a little humorously, that it is not always the wisest who goes fastest!

CWM 8: 324

Be vigilant as to whom you go for spiritual Initiation

The number of people who are tormented because they had the misfortune of meeting a so-called sannyasin,[1] is considerable, considerable. I am not telling you this to frighten you, because here you are protected, but it is a fact. While receiving initiation these men have received the imposition of a force from the vital world, which is extremely dangerous.... This is not always the case, but most often this is what happens.

Because sincerity is so rare a virtue in the world, one ought to bow down before it with respect when one meets it. Sincerity — what we call sincerity, that is to say, a perfect honesty and transparency: that there may be nowhere in the being anything which pretends, hides or wants to pass itself off for what it is not.

CWM 8: 73

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1. Later the Mother added the following commentary: "Of course, this refers only to those who put on the orange robe with the sole purpose of hiding their egoistic passions behind the veil of a dress which is generally respected. There can be no question about those who have a pure heart and whose dress is simply the outer sign of their integral consecration to the spiritual life."

Aspiration: The starting point of spiritual life

Q: Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo writes: "A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it." (The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL 20: 155)

Isn't the psychic fire always lit?

It is not always lit.

Q: Then how to light it?

By aspiration.

By the will for progress, by the urge towards perfection.

Above all, it is the will for progress and self-purification which lights the fire. The will for progress. Those who have a strong will, when they turn it towards spiritual progress and purification, automatically light the fire within themselves. And each defect one wants to cure or each progress one wants to make—if all that is thrown into the fire, it burns with a new intensity. And this is not an image, it is a fact in the subtle physical. One can feel the warmth of the flame, one can see in the subtle physical the light of the flame. And when there is something in the nature which prevents one from advancing and one throws it into this fire, it begins to burn and the flame becomes more intense.

CWM 8: 251

What is ordinarily called a spiritual experience is the intense need for something other than the life one lives, and most often this awakens after difficulties or disappointments or pain or sorrow, all these things which bring unhappiness and at the same time arouse the aspiration for a better state. It is this that is generally at the root of spiritual experiences: it is something negative.

The positive need to know the Divine and unite with

Him usually comes much later. I say usually; there are exceptions, but usually it is at first a flight from the miseries of life which pushes you towards the spiritual life. Very few people, if they were in a state of perfect inner and outer harmony and nothing unpleasant or painful happened to them, very few people would think of the Divine; they would not concern themselves with Him, they would be content with the half-measures of ordinary things and would not seek for an absolute. ...

But, when one has found this spiritual life, one realises that it is everywhere behind all appearances, as well as directly, without appearances. Behind appearances it also exists; this is what he says: we must find and reconcile these oppositions. There is a place or a state of consciousness in which they are reconciled.

But, first, one must go like this *(a gesture of ascent)*, and then one comes back like this *(a gesture of descent)*. There!

CWM 8: 96

Q: Sweet Mother, where does our true spiritual life begin?

The true spiritual life begins when one is in communion with the Divine in the psychic, when one is conscious of the divine Presence in the psychic and in constant communion with the psychic. Then the spiritual life begins, not before. The *true* spiritual life.

When one is united with one's psychic being and conscious of the divine Presence, and receives the impulses for one's action from this divine Presence, and when the will has become a conscious collaborator with the divine Will—that is the starting point.

Before that, one may be an aspirant to the spiritual life, but one doesn't have a spiritual life.

CWM 8: 135 **The Mother**

Initiation into Yoga

Guru, Mantra and Shastra

The usual agency of this revealing is the Word, the thing heard (*Śruta*). The Word may come to us from within; it may come to us from without. But in either case, it is only an agency for setting the hidden knowledge to work. The word within may be the utterance of the inmost soul in us which is always open to the Divine; or it may be the word of the secret and universal Teacher who is seated in the hearts of all. There are rare cases in which none other is needed, for all the rest of the Yoga is an unfolding under that constant touch and guidance; the lotus of the knowledge discloses itself from within by the power of irradiating effulgence which proceeds from the Dweller in the lotus of the heart. Great indeed, but few are those to whom self knowledge from within is thus sufficient and who do not need to pass under the dominant influence of a written book or a living teacher.

Ordinarily, the Word from without, representative of the Divine, is needed as an aid in the work of self-unfolding; and it may be either a word from the past or the more powerful word of the living Guru. In some cases this representative word is only taken as a sort of excuse for the inner power to awaken and manifest; it is, as it were, a concession of the omnipotent and omniscient Divine to the generality of a law that governs Nature. ...

If the Yoga is guided by a received written Shastra,— some Word from the past which embodies the experience of former Yogins,— it may be practiced either by personal effort alone or with the aid of a Guru. The spiritual knowledge is then gained through meditation on the truths that are taught and it is made living and conscious by their re-

alisation in the personal experience; the Yoga proceeds by the results of prescribed methods taught in a Scripture or a tradition and reinforced and illumined by the instructions of the Master. This is a narrower practice, but safe and effective within its limits, because it follows a well-beaten track to a long familiar goal.

For the sadhaka of the integral Yoga it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal Knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture.

CWSA 23: 54-56 (SABCL 20: 48-49) **Sri Aurobindo**

Practice with perseverance and patience

(Mother speaks to the children:) So, this is to tell you that you must not be impatient, that you must understand that in order to really possess knowledge, whatever it may be, you must put it into practice, that is, master your nature so as to be able to express this knowledge in action. All of you who have come here have been told many things; you have been put into contact with a world of truth, you live within it, the air you breathe is full of it; and yet how few of you know that these truths are valuable only if they are put into practice, and that it is useless to talk of consciousness, knowledge, equality of soul, universality, infinity, eternity, supreme truth, the divine presence and... of all sorts of things like that, if you make no effort yourselves to live these things and feel them concretely within you. And don't tell yourselves, "Oh, I have been here so many years! Oh, I would very much like to have the result of my efforts!" You must know that very persistent efforts, a very steadfast endurance are necessary to master the least weakness, the least pettiness, the least meanness in one's nature. What is

the use of talking about divine Love if one can't love without egoism? What is the use of talking about immortality if one is stubbornly attached to the past and the present and if one doesn't want to give anything in order to receive everything?

You are still very young, but you must learn *right away* that to reach the goal you must know how to pay the price, and that to understand the supreme truths you must put them into practice in your daily life.

CWM 9: 71-72

Passing through to the other side

... So long as your mind is real for you, your way of thinking something true for you, real, concrete, it proves that you are not there yet. You must first pass through to the other side. Afterwards you will be able to understand what I am telling you.

Pass through to the other side.

It is not true that one can understand little by little, it is not like that. This kind of progress is different. What is more true is that one is shut up in a shell, and inside it something is happening, like the chick in the egg. It is getting ready in there. It is in there. One doesn't see it. Something is happening in the shell, but outside one sees nothing. And it is only when all is ready that there comes the capacity to pierce the shell and to be born into the light of day.

It is not that one becomes more and more perceptible or visible: one is shut in—shut in—and for sensitive people there is even that terrible sensation of being compressed, of trying to pass through and then coming up against a wall. And then one knocks and knocks and knocks, and one can't go through.

And so long as one is there, inside, one is in the false-

hood. And only on the day when by the Divine Grace one can break the shell and come out into the Light, is one free.

This may happen suddenly, spontaneously, quite unexpectedly.

I don't think one can go through gradually. I don't think it is something which slowly wears and wears away until one can see through it. I haven't had an instance of this so far. There is rather a kind of accumulation of power inside, an intensification of the need, and an endurance in the effort which becomes free from all fear, all anxiety, all calculation; a need so imperative that one no longer cares for the consequences.

One is like an explosive that nothing can resist, and one bursts out from one's prison in a blaze of light.

After that one can no longer fall back again.

It is truly a new birth.

CWM 9: 136-37

New birth into the spiritual life

... As long as you tell yourself, "Yes, this I can see, this I can touch, the pain I suffer from, the hunger that torments me, the sleep that makes me feel heavy, this is real, this is concrete..." *(Mother laughs)*, that means that you have not yet crossed over to the other side, you are not born into the spirit.

(Silence)

In fact, the vast majority of men are like prisoners with all the doors and windows closed, so they suffocate, which is quite natural. But they have with them the key that opens the doors and windows, and they do not use it.... Certainly there is a time when they don't know they have the key, but long after they have come to know it, long after they have been told about it, they hesitate to use it and doubt whether

it has the power to open the doors and windows or even that it is a good thing to open them! And even when they feel that "after all, it might be good", there remains some fear: "What will happen when these doors and windows are opened?..." and they are afraid. They are afraid of being lost in that light and freedom. They want to remain what they call "themselves". They like their falsehood and their bondage. Something in them likes it and goes on clinging to it. They still have the impression that without their limits they would no longer exist.

That is why the journey is so long, that is why it is difficult. For if one truly consented to cease to exist, everything would become so easy, so swift, so luminous, so joyful—but perhaps not in the way men understand joy and ease. In truth, there are very few people who do not enjoy fighting. There are very few who could accept the absence of night, few can conceive of light except as the opposite of darkness: "Without shadows there would be no picture. Without struggle, there would be no victory. Without suffering there would be no joy." That is what they think, and so long as one thinks in this way, one is not yet born into the spirit.

CWM 9: 430 -31 **The Mother**

The call to Yoga may come in several ways

All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No Yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence. The soul that is called to this deep and vast inward change, may arrive in different ways to the initial departure. It may come to it by its own natural devel opment which has been leading it unconsciously towards

the awakening; it may reach it through the influence of a religion or the attraction of a philosophy; it may approach it by a slow illumination or leap to it by a sudden touch or shock; it may be pushed or led to it by the pressure of outward circumstances or by an inward necessity, by a single word that breaks the seals of the mind or by long reflection, by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence. According to the nature and the circumstances the call will come.

CWSA 23: 69 (SABCL 20:63)

Mere idea or intellectual seeking is not enough

But in whatever way it [a strong awakening] comes, there must be a decision of the mind and the will and, as its result, a complete and effective self-consecration. The acceptance of a new spiritual idea-force and upward orientation in the being, an illumination, a turning or conversion seized on by the will and the heart's aspiration, — this is the momentous act which contains as in a seed all the results that the Yoga has to give. The mere idea or intellectual seeking of something higher beyond, however strongly grasped by the mind's interest, is ineffective unless it is seized on by the heart as the one thing desirable and by the will as the one thing to be done. For truth of the Spirit has not to be merely thought but to be lived, and to live it demands a unified single-mindedness of the being; so great a change as is contemplated by the Yoga is not to be effected by a divided will or by a small portion of the energy or by a hesitating mind. He who seeks the Divine must consecrate himself to God and to God only.

CWSA 23: 69-70 (SABCL 20: 63) **Sri Aurobindo**

Tests for readiness

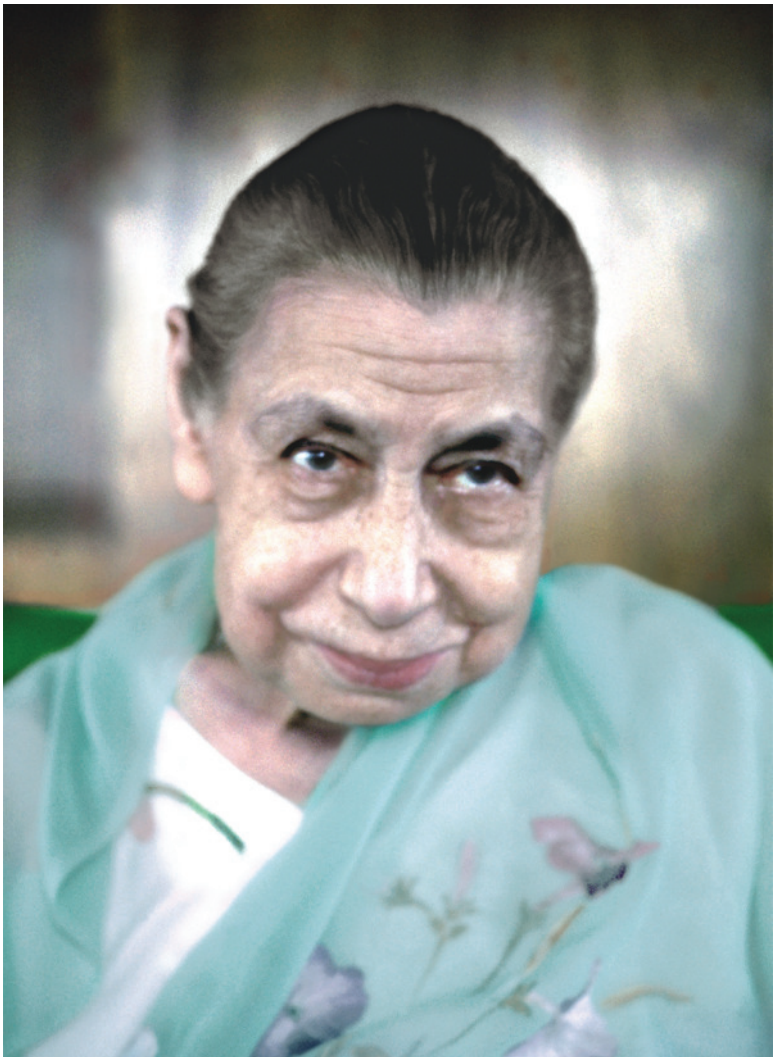
In all times the aspirant, before receiving initiation, had to pass through tests. In the schools of antiquity these tests were artificial and by that they lost the greater part of their value. But it is no longer so now. The test hides behind some very ordinary every-day circumstance and wears an innocent air of coincidence and chance which makes it still more difficult and dangerous.

It is only to those who can conquer the mind's preferences and prejudices of race and education that India reveals the mystery of her treasures. Others depart disappointed, failing to find what they seek; for they have sought it in the wrong way and would not agree to pay the price of the Divine Discovery. CWM 13: 373-74

In ancient times the disciple had to undergo severe tests to prove his ability for initiation. Here we do not follow that method. Apparently there is no test and no trial. But if you see the truth, You will find that here it is much more difficult. There the disciple knew that he was undergoing a period of trial and after he had passed through some outward tests, he was taken in. But here you have to face life and you are watched at every moment. It is not only your outer actions that count. Each and every thought and inner movement is seen, every reaction is noticed. It is not what you do in the solitude of the forest, but what you do in the thick of the battle of life that is important.

Are you ready to submit yourself for such tests? Are you ready to change yourself completely? You will have to throw off your ideas, ideals, values, interests and opinions. Everything will have to be learnt anew. If you are ready for all this, then take a plunge; otherwise don't try to step in.

CWM 14: 43 **The Mother**



When *I* say that I have initiated someone, I mean that I have revealed myself to this person, *without words*, and that he was capable of seeing, feeling and knowing What I am.

CWM 13: 84 **The Mother**

Call to the Great Adventure

There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: "I invite you to the great adventure."

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails — a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will never be again in the same way. If that interests you... well, let us embark. ...

One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed, and then... set off walking into the unknown. And — come what may!

CWM 9: 152



The Approach to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga

Open to the Mother by service, bhakti, aspiration

Everyone who is turned to the Mother is doing my Yoga. It is a great mistake to suppose that one can "do" the Purna Yoga i.e. carry out and fulfil all the sides of the Yoga by one's own effort. No human being can do that. What one has to do is to put oneself in the Mother's hands and open oneself to her by service, by bhakti, by aspiration; then the Mother by her light and force works in him so that the sadhana is done. It is a mistake also to have the ambition to be a big Purna Yogi or a supramental being and ask oneself how far have I got towards that. The right attitude is to be devoted and given to the Mother and to wish to be whatever she wants you to be. The rest is for the Mother to decide and do in you.

CWSA 32: 151-52 (SABCL 25: 130)

Become a child new born from the Mother

One may practise yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this yoga the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the supramental cannot find a sufficient base in a spiritualised mind alone. If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this yoga can

be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible.... If there is a refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the sadhana.

SABCL 24: 1095-96 **Sri Aurobindo**

Let all things belong to the Divine

When you come to the Divine, you must abandon all mental conceptions; but, instead of doing that, you throw your conceptions upon the Divine and want the Divine to obey them. The only true attitude for a Yogi is to be plastic and ready to obey the Divine Command whatever it may be; nothing must be indispensable to him, nothing a burden. Often the first impulse of those who want to live the spiritual life is to throw away all they have; but they do it because they want to be rid of a burden, not because they want to surrender to the Divine. Men who possess wealth and are surrounded by the things that give them luxury and enjoyment turn to the Divine, and immediately their movement is to run away from these things,—or, as they say, "to escape from their bondage". But it is a wrong movement; you must not think that the things you have belong to you,— they belong to the Divine. If the Divine wants you to enjoy anything, enjoy it; but be ready too to give it up the very next moment with a smile.

CWM 3: 54

Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be

When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended

in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clingings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE.

CWM 3: 83 - 84 **The Mother**

A yoga of Divine Life

You have apparently a call and may be fit for Yoga; but there are different paths and each has a different aim and end before it. It is common to all the paths to conquer the desires, to put aside the ordinary relations of life, and to try to pass from uncertainty to everlasting certitude. One may also try to conquer dream and sleep, thirst and hunger, etc. But it is no part of my Yoga to have nothing to do with the world or with life or to kill the senses or entirely inhibit their action. It is the object of my Yoga to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power and Bliss of the divine Truth and its dynamic certitudes. This Yoga is not a Yoga of world-shunning asceticism, but of divine life. Your object, on the other hand, can only be gained by entering into Samadhi and ceasing in it from all connection with world-existence.

CWSA 35: 541-42 (SABCL 26: 99-100)

Surrender to the Higher Consciousness is indispensable

This Yoga accepts the value of cosmic existence and holds it to be a reality; its object is to enter into a higher Truth-Consciousness in which action and creation are the expression not of ignorance and imperfection, but of the

Truth, the Light, the Divine Ananda. But for that, surrender of the mortal mind, life and body to that Higher Consciousness is indispensable, since it is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond mind to a Supramental Consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power. Only those who can accept the call to such a change should enter into this Yoga.

A mere restless dissatisfaction with the ordinary life is not a sufficient preparation for this Yoga. A positive inner call, a strong will and a great steadiness are necessary for success in the spiritual life.

SABCL 23: 545

Keep yourself always turned to the Mother

Once one has entered the path of Yoga, there is only one thing to do, to fix oneself in the resolution to go to the end whatever happens, whatever difficulties arise. None really gets the fulfilment in Yoga by his own capacity it is by the greater Force that stands over you that it will come and it is the call, persistent through all vicissitudes, to the Force, by which the fulfillment will come. Even when you cannot aspire actively, keep yourself turned to the Mother for the help to come that is the one thing to do always.

CWSA 32: 294 (SABCL 25: 327-28) **Sri Aurobindo**

What the sadhak has to seek is the full opening to the Divine, the psychic change of his consciousness, the spiritual change. Of that change of consciousness, selflessness, desirelessness, humility, bhakti, surrender, calm, equality, peace, quiet sincerity are necessary constituents.

SABCL 23, 504 Sri Aurobindo



'No one is initiated in this Yoga in any formal way. Those are accepted by the Mother who are found to be called or chosen from within for this path or for Sri Aurobindo's work. That acceptance is sufficient. Those are considered as called or chosen who can open and be receptive to the Power that goes from her here and can feel its working. If by doing what he is doing now, he can in time thus open and receive and feel the Power that will be a sign that he is meant for this way of Yoga. Nothing else is needed; prayer and aspiration are sufficient, if there is sincerity and a true call within.'

CWSA: Vol 35: 542 — 23 February 1930

The object of the yoga is to enter into and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness, to love the Divine for the Divine's sake alone, to be tuned in our nature into the nature of the Divine, and in our will and works and life to be the instrument of the Divine. Its object is not to be a great yogi or a Superman (although that may come) or to grab at the Divine for the sake of the ego's power, pride or pleasure. It is not for Moksha though liberation comes by it and all else may come, but these must not be our objects. The Divine alone is our object.

SABCL 23: 503 — Sri Aurobindo

A Story of Initiation

(Retold by the Mother)

This evening I am going to read to you a short story which seemed quite instructive to me. It is a tale of ancient times, of what used to happen before there were printing presses and books, of the days when only the Guru or the Initiate had the knowledge and gave it only to those he considered worthy of having it. And for him, usually, "to be worthy of having it" meant putting into practice what one had learnt. He gave you a truth and expected you to practise it. And when you had put it into practice, he consented to give you another. ...

So here's my story (Mother reads):

Once upon a time there was a Mahatma who was a great ascetic and a great pandit. He was honoured by all, full of years and wisdom. His name was Junun. Many young boys, many young men used to come to him to receive initiation. They stayed in his hermitage, became pandits themselves, then returned home after a long and studious retreat.

One day a young man came to him. His name was Yusuf Hussein. The Mahatma agreed to let him stay with him without even asking who he was. Four years went by, thus, until one morning Junun sent for Yusuf and, for the first time, questioned him: "Why have you come here?" Without a second thought Yusuf answered: "To receive religious initiation." Junun said nothing. He called a servant and asked him, "Have you prepared the box as I asked you?"

"Yes, Master, it is there, quite ready."

"Bring it without further delay," said Junun.

With great care the servant placed the box before the Mahatma. He took it and gave it to Yusuf: "I have a friend

who lives there on the banks of the river Neela. Go and take this box to him from me. But take good care, brother, don't make any mistake on the way. Keep this box carefully with you and give it to the man whom it is for. When you come back I shall give you initiation." Once again the Mahatma repeated his advice and described the route Yusuf had to follow to reach the river Neela. Yusuf bowed down at his Guru's feet, took the box and started on his way.

The retreat where the Mahatma's friend lived was quite far away and in those days there were no cars or railways. So Yusuf walked. He walked the whole morning, then came the afternoon. The heat was intense and radiated everywhere. He felt tired. So he sat down in the shade of an old tree by the roadside to rest a little. The box was very small. It was not locked. Besides, Yusuf had not even paid attention to it. His Guru had told him to carry a box, and he had started off without another word.

But now, during the afternoon rest, Yusuf began to think. His mind was free to wander with nothing to occupy it.... It would be very rare indeed if on such occasions some foolish idea did not cross the mind.... Thus his eyes fell on the box. He began to look at it. "A pretty little box!... Why, it does not seem to be locked.... And how light it is! Is it possible that there is anything inside? So light.... Perhaps it is empty?" Yusuf stretched out his hand as though to open it. Suddenly he thought better of it: "But no.... Full or empty, whatever is in this box is not my concern. My Guru asked me to deliver it to his friend, nothing more. And that's all that concerns me. I should not care about anything else."

For some time Yusuf sat quietly. But his mind would not remain quiet. The box was still there before his eyes. A pretty little box. "It seems quite empty," he thought, "what harm would there be in opening an empty box?... If it had

been locked I would understand, that would be bad.... A box which is not even locked, it can't be very serious. I'll just open it for a moment and then shut it again."

Yusuf's thought turned round and round that box. It was impossible to detach himself from it, impossible to control this idea that had crept into him. "Let me see, only a quick glance, just a glance." Once again he stretched out his hand, drew it back once more, then again sat still. All in vain. Finally Yusuf made up his mind and gently, very gently, he opened the box. Hardly had he opened it than pfft! a little mouse jumped out... and disappeared. The poor mouse all stifled in its box did not waste a second in leaping to freedom!

Yusuf was bewildered. He opened his eyes wide and gazed and gazed. The box lay there empty. Then his heart started throbbing sadly: "So, the Mahatma had sent only a mouse, a tiny little mouse.... And I couldn't even carry it safe and sound to the end. Indeed I have committed a serious fault. What shall I do now?"

Yusuf was full of regrets. But there was nothing more to do now. In vain he went round the tree, in vain he looked up and down the road. The little mouse had actually fled.... With a trembling hand Yusuf closed the lid and in dismay resumed his journey. When he reached the river Neela and the house of his Master's friend, Yusuf handed the Mahatma's present to him and waited silently in a corner because of the fault he had committed. This man was a great saint. He opened the box and immediately understood what had happened.

"Well, Yusuf," he said, turning to the young aspirant, "so you have lost that mouse.... Mahatma Junun won't give you initiation, I am afraid, for in order to be worthy of the supreme Knowledge one must have a perfect mastery over

one's mind. Your Master clearly had some doubts about your will-power, that is why he resorted to this little trick, to put you to the test. And if you are not able to accomplish so insignificant a thing as to keep a little mouse in a box, how do you expect to keep great thoughts in your head, the true Knowledge in your heart? Nothing is insignificant, Yusuf. Return to your Master. Learn steadiness of character, perseverance. Be worthy of trust so as to become one day the true disciple of that great Soul."

Crestfallen, Yusuf returned to the Mahatma and confessed his fault. "Yusuf," he said, "you have lost a wonderful opportunity. I gave you a worthless mouse to take care of and you couldn't do even that! How then do you expect to keep the most precious of all treasures, the divine Truth? For that you must have self-control. Go and learn. Learn to be master of your mind, for without that nothing great can be accomplished."

Yusuf went away ashamed, head down, and from then on he had only one thought: to become master of himself.... For years and years he made tireless efforts, he underwent a hard and difficult tapasya, and finally succeeded in becoming master of his nature. Then, full of confidence Yusuf went back to his Master. The Mahatma was overjoyed to see him again and find him ready. And this is how Yusuf received from Mahatma Junun the great initiation.

Many, many years went by, Yusuf grew in wisdom and mastery. He became one of the greatest and most exceptional saints of Islam.

CWM 9: 68-70 **The Mother**

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