

Principles and Goals of Integral Education

as propounded by
Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

and the experiment at
Sri Aurobindo International
Centre of Education, Pondicherry

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

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**SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY**

First edition 2005

Rs. 75.00

ISBN 81-7058-806-5

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Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department
Pondicherry - 605 002

Website: <http://sabda.sriaurobindoashram.org>

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

PRINTED IN INDIA

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“Am I what I ought to be?
Am I doing what I ought to be doing?
Am I progressing as much as I should?...
What should I learn in order to make my next progress?
What infirmity must I cure?
What shortcoming must I overcome?
What weakness must I get rid of?...
How can I become capable of understanding
and serving the Divine?”
(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 384)

*

“Supreme Lord, Perfect Consciousness, You alone truly know what we are, what we can do, the progress we must make in order to become capable and worthy of serving You as we want to do. Make us conscious of our capacities, but also of our difficulties, so that we may be able to surmount them and serve You faithfully.”
(*Ibid.*, p. 381)

(The above two citations, meant for the students and the teachers of SAICE, were formulated by the Mother herself.)

Foreword

It is not often realised how important a place Education, in the true sense of the word, occupies in the life, writings and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri Aurobindo was a professor and later Vice Principal at the Baroda College from 1897 to 1905. In 1906, he came to Calcutta as the Principal of the newly founded Bengal National College. At Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother laid the foundation of a new centre of education, and some of the last writings of Sri Aurobindo were meant for the *Bulletin of Physical Education*.

After Sri Aurobindo left his body in December 1950, the Mother announced in the beginning of 1951:

“One of the most recent forms under which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to establish at Pondicherry an International University Centre open to students from all over the world.

It is considered that the most fitting memorial to his name would be to found this University now so as to give concrete expression to the fact that his work continues with unabated vigour.”

And at the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention held on 24th April 1951, the Mother in her inaugural message declared:

“Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he

considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life.

In his name I open today this convention meeting here with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals.”

What could be more clear and emphatic!

This is how Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) came into existence. Right from its birth, the Mother took a direct and personal interest in every aspect of its growth and development, guiding the teachers and herself taking classes for children. Nothing was too small or insignificant to deserve her care and attention.

SAICE is meant to “open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future”, as education is one of the most powerful means of bringing about the supramental transformation in the world. But then this education is and has to be very different from what is normally understood and practised. Drawn by this ideal, more and more individuals and groups want to understand the principles of Integral Education as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to create educational institutions founded on these principles. But the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on education are not found at one place or in one book. There is therefore a need to present these writings in a manner which will be suitable for all types of seekers — Spiritual aspirants who look upon yoga as education and education as yoga, scholars who would like to have an intellectual understand-

ing of the philosophy underlying Integral Education, and teachers and educationists who aspire to live and practise its truth.

It is this need which is fulfilled by this book of Shri Jugal Kishore Mukherjee or Jugal-da as he is known to all of us who have had the privilege of studying and teaching at the SAICE. Jugal-da is eminently suited for this task. A brilliant student, he joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram as a sadhaka at the young age of 24. He has been associated with SAICE from the beginning for now over 56 years and has been teaching a variety of subjects. He has also been in charge of the higher classes of SAICE, named by the Mother "Knowledge", looking after the growth and programmes of young girls and boys, mostly from the ages 18 to 21.

Jugal-da brings to his writings and presentation the aspiration and luminosity of a spiritual seeker, the heart of a devotee and the clear analytical mind of a scientist. His canvas in this book is very wide. He enunciates in depth the principles and goals of Integral Education, the role and responsibility of the teachers and explains the basis of the "Free Progress" system. He also takes up in detail the aim, the purpose and the courses at SAICE and gives an inside view of its practical working. Jugal-da does not hesitate to bring to light the difficulties and obstacles which have been and are still being faced, and the deficiencies which need to be overcome, and the glorious future which awaits us if we can be true to our ideals and follow the path which has been opened before us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

I believe this book will be of great value to teachers and educationists everywhere and of a very special value to the

students and teachers of SAICE. Every seeker can feel here the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through their own words, find the answers to his or her questions, and get the needed guidance, the light and the inspiration for moving individually and collectively towards the supramental future.

VIJAY

Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Pondicherry

Why Is This Book Being Written?

Why is this book being written? There are several reasons for that. The very first reason is that it is by now well recognised that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were not only Mahayogis, masters of spirituality, they were at the same time great educationists as well. Both of them, in their diverse writings, formulated fundamental principles of education with an altogether new non-conventional goal in view. The Mother established a school in Pondicherry in 1943 in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to put into practice these principles of education. She gave this school a wider and higher scope with far-reaching consequences for the future of humanity, by progressively transforming it into a University Centre in 1953. This University Centre is currently known as "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education" more familiarly known as "SAICE", its acronym. Many a novel and original experiment in education has been conducted in this "Centre" under the Mother's direct guidance and is still being conducted under the able supervision of her loving children drawn from the international community. These experiments have broken a new pathway in the field of education, for the building up of a new type of a nobler humanity destined to arise in the not so distant future. Now, many people in the outside world, keenly interested in the future welfare of the human race, are evincing a healthy curiosity about what exactly is going on in SAICE. This book will go a long way to meet their need.

The second reason behind the writing of this book comes from the fact that educationists, college and school teachers, University Vice-chancellors, and interested intellectuals have been coming in a regular stream to visit Sri Aurobindo Ashram to know first-hand the basic guiding principles and the actual working of SAICE, with a sincere desire of incorporating, as

much as possible and as far as practicable, its organic principles and practices in other centres of learning elsewhere. After visiting SAICE, they almost invariably ask for some literature which will pinpoint in their mind the fundamental features of our "Centre of Education". The present book will, we hope, act as a helpful handbook to these friends in a manageably brief compass.

Now comes a third but no less important reason. During the long period when the Mother herself held the reins of "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education", she trained under her own direct guidance many of her children into capable teachers who would properly understand her principles of education, be clear about the true nature of the goal she set before SAICE, and honestly and whole-heartedly try to bring that into fulfilment.

So far so good. But the fact cannot be denied that with the inexorable passage of time many of these Mother-trained early teachers have either retired from active service in the "Centre" or quit their bodies altogether. There is a big void created as a result. And this almost irreparable void is in the very nature of things going to increase with the passage of time. What to do about this matter?

Not only that. Over the years many new teachers, both Indian and foreign, have joined the "Centre of Education" without any previous training under the Mother. They may be quite competent in teaching their academic subjects, but does that suffice to become genuine teachers of SAICE, capable of fulfilling the Mother's expectation?

There is another factor to complicate the matter. This comes from our own students. After completing their studies in SAICE, some of these young people, barely having crossed their teens, express an aspiration to the Ashram authorities that

they would like to join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as permanent sadhakas and sadhikas and serve the Mother. Now, the Ashram Trustees select a few of them to be enrolled as teachers in SAICE in different subjects of their academic competence. And they start teaching young children of our "Centre" without being fully aware of what the Mother actually wanted to achieve in her "Centre of Education" and what she expected from the teachers and students here in the task of fulfilling her goal, or even the principles of education, and the proper method of teaching she advocated. Many among these novice teachers may not have studied with meditative attention the numerous writings of the Mother on every necessary aspect of education. Each one tries to follow his own ad hoc method. The result cannot but be confusion leading us slowly but surely away from all that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo wanted to be done through their International University Centre. These words are unpalatable but better to accept them if true, and take remedial measures in time. The present book is being humbly written and offered to these young novice teachers to partially fill the lacuna in their psychological training as teachers of SAICE.

In fact, quite a few of my former students, turned teachers, made a request to me to compose a book like this for their personal benefit. So it can be said that this book of mine too, as so many of its predecessors, owes its origin to the request of my dear students.

Now a last question: What credentials have I for writing a book of such importance? The answer is: Absolutely none, except, perhaps, the fact that I have been a teacher of this great Centre of Education for more than fifty-five years, since 1949 till this day (2005), first helping the students in Physics and Mathematics and subsequently in the study of the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

My introduction and explanation end here. With a sense of trepidation and humility may I now venture to bring this book to the notice of the reading public for whatever little benefit it may carry to them. All gratitude to the Mother.

J. K. M.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Pondicherry

April 24, 2005

I

Sri Aurobindo's Seven Principles of Education

The world knows Sri Aurobindo as a Mahayogi, a great philosopher, a renowned poet and an accomplished literary critic. But not many people know that he has been a great educationist as well. Even those who are aware of the fact that Sri Aurobindo was a very successful teacher, — first at the Baroda College during the years 1899 and 1906, then in the Bengal National College, Calcutta, in the years 1906 and 1907, — have not much cared to study his educational thoughts and insights or may not even be cognisant of the other fact that the great propounder of Integral Yoga kept up a life-long interest in the subject of what true education should connote and imply. Although Sri Aurobindo had contributed his first thoughts on education as far back as 1894 to the Journal *Indu Prakash* of Bombay and expressed his views on the same subject for the last time in 1949 in the quarterly *Bulletin of Physical Education* published from his Ashram, it came as a pleasant surprise to many of his admirers to hear from the Mother in 1951 after the passing of the Mahayogi that “One of the most recent forms under which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to establish at Pondicherry an International University centre open to students from all over the world.” The Mother was more specific when she revealed on 24 April of the same year at the inaugural session of Sri Aurobindo Memorial

Convention held in Pondicherry:

“Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life.” (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 112)

All of us know that an integral divine transformation of human life and existence in all its manifold expression has been the one consistent and persistent occupation and preoccupation of Sri Aurobindo during the last forty years of his life. Hence, when we come to know from the Mother, his spiritual collaborator in the same great enterprise, that the establishment of a right kind of Centre of Education was conceived by Sri Aurobindo as “one of his most cherished ideals” (*Ibid.*), we cannot but feel eager to know how education can possibly play such a momentous role in the achievement of a total spiritual transformation of man and his life — his life outer as well as inner. For, the type of education that we are habitually acquainted with, that we see practised around us, does not offer any hope, even the slightest hope, of accomplishing this great task of human transformation that Sri Aurobindo, the Integral Yogi has envisaged. Thence arises our natural curiosity to know more precisely Sri Aurobindo’s idea of genuine education, its essential character and traits, as well as its method of execution so that it

may smoothly and infallibly advance towards the fulfilment of the great and noble task the Mahayogi has assigned to it. The present essay is a humble attempt to satisfy this curiosity, although in brief; for, the short compass of a few pages cannot possibly do justice to the adequate presentation of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts in all their multisplendoured rich significance.

To understand the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in all its bearings, to comprehend the logical justification and inter-relation of all its principles and practices, we must first try to understand the basic Vision of Sri Aurobindo as regards man, Nature and the world-process. For, everything, all of Sri Aurobindo's views and formulations, whether literary, philosophical or spiritual, derive organically from his fundamental world-vision. And education is no exception to this general proposition. Sri Aurobindo's educational outlook is entirely moulded by and draws its inspiration from his Integral-synthetic theory of Reality.

After all, this is as it should be. For, sincerity demands that our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence should naturally be the determinant not only of our thought and inner movements but of our whole conception of life, our attitude to it and the trend of all our life-activities.

Now, the integral theory of existence as advanced by Sri Aurobindo looks upon our earthly existence as a becoming with the Divine Being for its origin and object, a progressive evolutionary manifestation with the timeless spaceless Supracosmic as its source and support, the Other-worldly for a condition and connecting link and the Terrestrial for its field,

with human mind and life for its turning-point of release towards a highest perfection. It should be noted that the supracosmic Reality is the supreme truth of every individual's being; to realise it is the highest reach of our consciousness and we have to realise it if we would be really perfect.

But this highest supracosmic Reality is not cut off from the world of manifestation. It is at the same time the cosmic Being, the cosmic Consciousness, the cosmic Will and life; it has put these things forth, not outside itself, but in its own being as its own self-unfolding and self-expression in the framework of Time and Space. There is a divine significance and truth in this cosmic becoming. The manifold self-expression of the Spirit is its high sense.

Thus, a perfect self-expression of the Spirit is the only object of our terrestrial existence. But this cannot be achieved if we do not first grow conscious of the supreme Truth of our being; for the direct touch of the Absolute alone can possibly help us arrive at our own absolute.

But neither is our perfect individual self-expression feasible if we exclude the cosmic Reality. The individual will ever remain incomplete, bound within the confines of a separative ego-consciousness, if he does not open into universality and thus become universal himself.

It follows that a consciously realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an essential condition for the intended fullness of the self-expressing Spirit. Now, this material world, this earth and this human life have, as we have noted above, their divine possibility; but that possibility is evolutionary. A progressive evolution of consciousness is the secret sense of our birth and terrestrial existence.

Earth-life offers the field for a continuously ascending self-unveiling of consciousness and an adventure of self-discovery. The partial consciousness already evolved upon earth is a portent for further evolution and must surely develop in the very nature of things into complete consciousness with all its attendant accomplishments. A perfected and divinised life is what the earth-nature has always been seeking.

In its progressive evolutionary development, consciousness appearing upon earth has been at first rudimentary, half subconscious or just conscious instinct. Advancing step by step, it developed into intelligence in animal man. Advancing still further, it has elevated the thinking animal into the status of a reasoning mental being. But even in his highest elevation man is still weighed down by a heavy stamp of original animality. Therefore mental man has still to evolve out of himself the fully conscious being, a divine manhood which shall be the next product of evolution.

A great responsibility lies with man; for with his advent upon the earth-scene, the evolutionary movement has entered a new phase: it has become conscious of itself. The process of evolution has now the possibility of proceeding ahead with the conscious and deliberate co-operation of the species called man. Man should not therefore be satisfied with the leading of a gloriously opulent intelligent animal existence. He should become awake and aware of his spiritual destiny. An enlightened aspiration, will and seeking should actuate all his movements. He should offer his participating will to the urge of the indwelling Spirit to come out into the open in full glory.

For man as he now is cannot be the last term of earthly

evolution. He is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, his mind and life too are limited forms and instrumentations. He is only a transitional being. A greater destiny beckons him and he should heed the call to the New Adventure. The various tasks set before man, the unique species, by evolutionary Nature may be succinctly described in the luminous words of Sri Aurobindo:

“Man is there to affirm himself in the universe, that is his first business, but also to evolve and finally to exceed himself: he has to change his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness; he has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony; he has to realise his individuality but also to enlarge it into a cosmic self and a universal and spiritual delight of existence.

A transformation, a chastening and correction of all that is obscure, erroneous and ignorant in his mentality, an ultimate arrival at a free and wide harmony and luminousness of knowledge and will and feeling and action and character, is the evident intention of his nature....

But this can only be accomplished by his growing into a larger being and a larger consciousness: self-enlargement, self-fulfilment, self-evolution from what he partially and temporarily is in his actual and apparent nature to what he completely is in his secret self and spirit and therefore can become even in his manifest existence, is the object of his creation.”

(*SABCL*, Vol. 19, p. 684)

The above quotation from Sri Aurobindo, arranged here in three paragraphs, demands close and attentive perusal from the readers; for it puts in a nutshell the whole meaning and purpose of man's existence upon earth, his role as a biological species, and the all-important programme that Nature and the Divine have set before him. A simultaneous awareness of man's actuality and his great potentiality makes it clear to us that a proper educational system has to be developed which, when rightly conceived and clairvoyantly put into practice, will help man the individual and man the collective being to realise the great destiny that is awaiting the race. And, be it noted, all the principles of education enunciated by Sri Aurobindo are designed to fulfil that very task.

We have advisedly employed the expression "man the individual and man the collective being". For, the insistent problems of man do not pertain to his isolated individual existence alone; they urgently concern his group-life too. Since the beginning of his appearance on earth, man has always dreamed of establishing a fourfold harmony: (i) a perfect harmony within his own subjective being, (ii) a harmony between individual and individual, (iii) a harmony between an individual and the group or groups of which he is a part, and finally (iv) a harmony between the different groups. But the deplorable fact is that all these four types of harmony have eluded the grasp of man. Even a cursory look at the affairs of the world and a glancing introspection into the state of his own inner being cannot but convince any discerning man that something is terribly amiss somewhere in his upbringing and education, which has brought him to the brink of the abyss. All man's agelong efforts at remedying

the situation have inevitably miscarried, because the conventional educationists have not cared to probe the problems to their depths; they have mostly confined themselves to the task of whitewashing the surface and offering palliatives. To solve the problems of man one has perforce to comprehend the complexity of his composite nature and provide for the harmonious fulfilment of all the facets of his being.

It is high time that we renounce the old and effete superstition that the mind of man is the same everywhere and can therefore be passed through the same machine and uniformly constructed to order. There are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education: (i) the man, the individual in his commonness and uniqueness, (ii) the nature or people, and (iii) universal humanity. For, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, "...within the universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation, its commonness and its uniqueness, and between them there stands an intermediate power, the mind of a nation, the soul of a people." (*SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 196) And if education is to be a true building or a living evocation of the latent powers and possibilities of the mind and spirit of the human being, and not just a uniform machine-made fabric, it has to take into consideration all the three factors mentioned above. To quote Sri Aurobindo again:

"...that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul

of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member." (*SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 198)

A further truth that Sri Aurobindo insists upon is that man is not just a living body somehow developed by physical nature which has evolved in him certain vital propensities, an ego, a mind and a reason. Man is not pre-eminently just a reasoning animal of the genus *homo*, nothing more than a thinking, feeling and willing natural existence, a mere mental product of inconscient physical Nature. For if such is the view we take of man — and this view is tacitly adopted by most of the secularist educationists —, the business of educating a child cannot but assume an erroneous character, both in its meaning and content and in its application. For, then, education reduces itself to the task of culturing the mental faculties of the student, training him into an efficient, productive and well-disciplined member of the society and the State as a political, social and economic being. The whole life and education of the individual man will, in that case, be turned towards a satisfaction of his legitimate vital propensities under the precarious government of a trained mind and reason and for the best advantage of the personal and collective ego.

But Sri Aurobindo cannot accept this view of man nor, therefore, these goals of education as ordinarily envisaged. He does not, of course, deny that the things alluded to above *do* represent aspects of human being and living in their actuality and must be given due importance in the early

undeveloped stages of humanity but they are only outward things, parts of the instrumentation, mere accessories and *never* the fundamentals or the whole of the real man. All these are powers of the soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul.

These remarks naturally lead us to the question: What then, is man? And what should be the aim and purpose of his education?

Sri Aurobindo sees in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit; at the summit of his ascent man is bound to rise to something greater than his physical, vital and mental personalities, to his spiritual being. And therein lies the supreme manifestation of the soul of man, his ultimate divine manhood, his real *paramārtha* and the highest *puruṣārtha*.

Sri Aurobindo sees in the nation or the people not merely an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego, but a great collective soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a *svabhāva* and a *svadharma*, and has embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture.

Sri Aurobindo sees in humanity the Universal Spirit manifesting in the human race, evolving through mind and life but with a high and ultimate spiritual aim. There is a spirit, a soul of humanity which is advancing through whatever struggle and concord towards an ultimate human unity, a unity which will at the same time preserve a needed

diversity through the varied culture and life-motives of different peoples: a perfectibility in the life of the human race as in that of the individual is the intended goal of earthly evolution.

If we take such a view of man and his destiny — and, of course, this idea may be disputed by many — the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the Spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation and the human race. And for that the very first thing the educationist has to do, whether he be the teacher or the parent, is to approach things from the subjective standpoint, know accurately and profoundly the psychology of each child as he grows into manhood and to base the system of teaching and training on that inner reality alone. There has to be a new psychic dealing of man with his own being, with his fellow-men and with the ordering of his individual and social life. The aim of education should be to help every individual child to develop his own intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities. Thus the distinctive individual psychology of the child should be the guide in the matter of his upbringing and education. For each human being is a self-developing soul and the sole task before the parent and the teacher is to enable and help the child to educate himself, to develop his potentialities and grow freely as an organic being, and not to knead and pressure him into form like an inert but plastic material.

In a true education, one should not regard the child as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher according

to the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents. And yet, this is what we have been doing all the time in the prevalent systems of education with some cosmetic embellishments here and there. Mostly ignoring the individuality of each child, we seek to pack much stereotyped knowledge into the student's resisting brain, impose a stereotype rule of conduct on his struggling impulses, and mechanically force his nature into arbitrary grooves of training and conditioning — all decided upon from above and outside by authorities entrusted with the charge of "teaching". This sort of "loading process" cannot fail to damage and atrophy the faculties and instruments by which each individual human being is expected to assimilate, grow and create in his self-chosen fields of endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo invites us to discard the lifeless "academic" notion that the studying of subjects and the acquiring of this or that kind of information is the whole, or at least the central purpose in the undertaking called "education". No, the acquisition of various kinds of information from outside is only one and by no means the chief of the means and necessities of education. The central aim of education should be the training of the powers of the child's mind and spirit, the formation or rather the evoking of knowledge and will from within, and the developing of the capacity to use knowledge, character and culture for the highest all-round development of personality. This at least if not more, but there is much more as we shall presently see when we come to deal with the education of the future.

We have just spoken *inter alia* of the process of "evoking knowledge from within". The idea may perhaps sound queer

to those readers who are not well acquainted with the spiritual teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the propounder of the Yoga of Integral Self-Perfection. Constraints of time and space do not allow us to elaborate further on this topic here. However, we may content ourselves with mentioning in brief a few salient principles that the Master-Yogi has recommended for making education luminous and efficient.

First Principle: We must know that all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside. In this view the teacher's role is altogether different from what is normally thought of. In Sri Aurobindo's vision the teacher is not an instructor or task-master; he is just a helper and guide. "His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface." (*Ibid.*, p. 204)

Now, the question is, How to evoke the knowledge that is within? Sri Aurobindo has adumbrated the process in chapter III of his opuscule *The Brain of India*. The inquisitive reader may refer to the relevant passages there. We quote here only one significant sentence indicating the beneficial result of the process: "The highest reach of the sattwic development is when one can dispense often or habitually with outside aids, the teacher or the text book, grammar and dictionary and learn a subject largely or wholly from within". (*SABCL*, Vol. 3, pp. 336-37)

Second Principle: It should never be forgotten that every one has his own *svabhāva* and *svadharma*, his intrinsic self-nature and the characteristic turn of his being. He has something divine in him, “something his own, a chance of perfection” and fulfilment in whatever sphere the Divine “offers him to take or refuse.” The chief aim of education “should be to discover it, develop it and use it” to the maximum extent possible. The teacher should try to help the child to draw out that in him which is best and noble and make it perfect for a worthy use. And for this the mind of the student has to be consulted in its own growth. The teacher must not seek to hammer the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher: the student himself must be induced to expand according to his own nature. Otherwise, if we try to disregard the child’s *svadharma* or self-nature and attempt to bring him up in a way not congenial to his divinely ordained turn and temperament, the results can only be disastrous to a great extent. As Sri Aurobindo has warned us:

“There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own *dharma* is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common.”
(*SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 204)

Third Principle: Every child is, in his characteristic fashion, full of various *samskāras* or impressions both inborn and acquired. The teacher has to be cognisant of this ground reality, take the child as he is and begin his teaching from there. For, the principle of effective and creative teaching is to “work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be.” Therefore, the teacher in his hasty and rash ignorance should not try to lift and divorce the child from his natural soil and milieu and transplant him in an imported atmosphere. In Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development.” (*Ibid.*, p. 205)

Fourth Principle: Education has to be national but not parochial and sectarian. A superficial consideration may easily lead one to believe that to speak of a “national education” is to talk arrant nonsense. For, is not education something universal in nature, transcending the borders of any particular country? Mankind and its needs, one may aver, are the same everywhere and truth and knowledge also are one and have no country. How can one then talk of offering any “national” education to a child?

A deeper consideration will not fail to expose the fallacious nature of this line of reasoning. A nation or a people is

not, let us remember, just a geographical unit or an arbitrary conglomerate or an assemblage of men brought about by the vagaries of History. A veritable nation is a specific soul-manifestation of the universal Spirit just as every individual human being is. It has a uniqueness of its own just as it has some elements in common with the other nations of the world. It is expected to play a distinct role in the comity of nations and bring its own rich contribution to the total multi-aspected flowering of humanity as a whole.

And, according to Sri Aurobindo, India is such a nation and if its citizens have to fulfil their intended creative roles and enrich the composite but harmoniously blended civilisation of the world, Indians should have a national education which will be truly “national” in spirit but at the same time organically imbibing and assimilating every possible positive and constructive element derived from other national educational efforts.

Thus Indian “national education” does not mean on the one hand an obscurantist retrogression to the past forms that were once a living frame of our culture but are now dead or dying things, nor the taking over of any foreign patterns — however suitable to other countries — only with certain differences, additions, subtractions, modifications of detail and curriculum and giving it a gloss of Indian colour. A rightly conceived Indian “national education” will be one which will be faithful to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit. It has to take its foundation on our own being, our own mind and our own spirit.

Thus, when Sri Aurobindo speaks of Indian national

education, it is then not a question between modernism and antiquity but between an imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future, not a return to the fifth century but an initiation for the centuries to come, not a reversion but a break forward away from the present artificial falsity to her own greater innate potentialities. (*Vide, SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 194*)

Fifth Principle: We have to change the focus of our educational efforts from the “furnishing” of knowledge to the adequate building up of the faculties of knowledge and the strengthening of the moral fabric of the student, of each individual student. We should not try, as we habitually do now, to erect a huge superstructure of “knowledge” in the mind of the student without first preparing a solid foundation to sustain that “knowledge”. We have to encourage the student to have a free play of his intelligent attentive thought on the subject of his study; we must correct the habit of spoiling his instruments of knowledge by the adoption of false methods. We should bear in mind that “Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it can only be part of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is no education.” (*SABCL, Vol. 3, p. 331*)

Therefore, instead of thinking that our task is over once we provide the student with an ever-increasing store of knowledge and skill in various fields of study, we have to devise a great and unique discipline involving a perfect “education” of the soul and mind of the child and for that we

have first to find the secret of success in a profound knowledge of the working of consciousness in man. The teacher must know how to train and develop in the child his various faculties of memory, imagination, perception, reasoning, judgment, concentration, etc., which help to build the edifice of thought and knowledge for the knower. These faculties must not only be equipped with sufficient tools and materials supplied from outside but clairvoyantly trained to bring into play fresh materials and to use skilfully those of which they are in possession.

The teacher has to know how to handle and develop the innate powers of the four layers of man's mind or *antahkaranas* (i) *Chitta* or the basic storehouse of memory, (ii) *Manas* or mind proper — the so-called 'sixth sense', (iii) *Buddhi* or intellect — the real instrument of thought, and (iv) *Bodhi* or the faculty of direct knowledge.

The teacher has to fulfil another important task. Since the foundation of the ever-growing structure of knowledge can be sustained with solid stability only if the student is provided with a sufficient fund of energy — sufficient to bear the demands of a continually growing activity of the memory, judgment and creative power, — the teacher should be capable of helping the child to discover the source of infinite energy and tap its resources as and when the demands arise. For, we should not forget that "The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual, but the basis, the foundation on which the life and energy stand and work, is physical.... To raise up the physical to the spiritual is Brahmacharya, for by the meeting of the two the energy which starts from one and produces the other is enhanced and fulfils itself." (*Ibid.*, p. 334)

Sixth Principle: It needs no emphasising that the development of the intellect and the culture of mental faculties alone cannot enable the child to grow into full manhood. His ethical-aesthetic nature too has to be developed at the same time. When we say so, we are surely not referring to any conventional "moral training" with the help of moral text-books lifelessly imparted by the teacher who acts as a "hired instructor" or a "benevolent policeman" without any correspondence with his own personal conduct. That sort of moral training cannot but make the child insincere and a hypocrite, mechanically and artificially professing high things but never caring to put them into effective practice. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out: "You can impose a certain discipline on children, dress them into a certain mould, lash them into a desired path, but unless you can get their hearts and natures on your side, the conformity to this imposed rule becomes a hypocritical and heartless, a conventional, often a cowardly compliance." (*SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 209)

Yet it is an axiomatic truth that the education of the intellect divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature is patently injurious to human progress. But this perfection can be brought about in the child's nature only if the teacher becomes perfect in the matter and sets a living personal example before his student. He should act as a wise friend and guide and helper to the student and draw the latter to the right path of development by silent but potent suggestion, and the best method of suggestion, let us repeat, is the personal example of the teacher. To be worthy of bearing the title, a "teacher" should be able to help a child under

his tutelage to develop in himself the following qualities:

Thirst for knowledge, purity of thought and feeling and action, courage, ardour, nobility, beneficence, skill, industry, good taste, balance, sense of proportion, lofty strength and steadfastness of will, self-discipline, etc.

In Sri Aurobindo's words: "The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature."

These last few words, "ready to develop into divine nature", lead us to the consideration of the seventh and last principle, the principle of future education.

Seventh Principle: We cannot stop at the borders of ordinary humanity with all its basic insufficiencies and limitations. And education cannot be allowed to confine itself to the sole task of catering to the needs of the sensational, economic, rational or political man. Commercialism has been the bane of modern civilisation; a sensational activism is still its driving force. Modern education has not been able to redeem the sensational man who still lives in the vital substratum, but only wants it to be stimulated from above. As a result, thought and art and literature have been cheapened, and talent and genius have been made to run in the grooves of popular success.

Or, at times, education is given another dimension, and its main object and form are conceived to be not so much cultural but scientific, utilitarian and economic. The value of education in that case lies not so much in the building up of a noble specimen of humanity but in the preparation of the efficient individual unit to take his appointed place in the body of the economic organisation.

Or, at its best, education is planned to turn the mostly infrarational human being into a rational creature, and the disordered human group into a rationalised human society. But this hope has been belied; right information and right training alone have not been able to solve the problems of man. For, as Sri Aurobindo has so aptly observed: "...it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego." (*SABCL*, Vol. 19, pp. 1057-58)

Where do we go then from here? And how to come out of this cul-de-sac? What is needed for that is a large and profound view of human life and destiny, and a solid foundation in a rightly conceived education different in nature and scope from what it is now. We must penetrate down to the fundamentals with an effort of clear, sound and luminous thinking and know precisely what are the fundamentals and what the accessories of true education. If our new educational venture has to succeed when others of the past or even of the present have failed in the task of the regeneration of man, it has to disengage itself from all ambiguities and be clear about its essential sense, its primary aim and basic procedure.

About the pitfalls inherent in starting new educational experiments without precise clarity about the basics, what Sri Aurobindo has remarked with some poignant wit is worth pondering.

"To be satisfied with a trick of this kind is to perform a

somersault round our centre of intellectual gravity, land ourselves where we were before and think we have got into quite another country, — obviously a very unsatisfactory proceeding.

...nothing is easier than to start off on a false but specious cry or from an unsound starting-point and travel far away from the right path on a tangent that will lead us to no goal but only to emptiness and failure.” (*SABCL*, Vol. 17, pp. 192, 193)

The basic assumptions guiding the new education of the future,—and those are not mere intellectually cogitated assumptions but wise insights born of spiritual experience, — are, in an adaptation of the language of Sri Aurobindo:

(1) All life, even the vital and material life, is indeed a manifestation of the universal Power in the individual but veiled in a disguising Maya, and to pursue the lower life for its own sake is to persist in a stumbling path and to enthrone our nature’s obscure ignorance and not at all find the true truth and complete law of existence. (*Vide, SABCL*, Vol. 13, pp. 549-50)

(2) “... the pursuit of intellectual, ethical and social standards, the mind that insists on salvation by the observance of... moral law, social duty and function or the solutions of the liberated intelligence, is... indeed a very necessary stage” of human development, but it is not the complete and last truth of existence. “The soul of man has to go beyond to some more absolute Dharma of man’s spiritual and immortal nature.” (*Ibid.*, p. 550)

(3) One has to rise beyond the mere terrestrial preoccupu-

pation; for, a supreme and arduous self-fulfilment by self-exceeding is the goal of human endeavour. The spiritual life is a nobler thing than the life of external power and enjoyment. The thinker is greater than the man of action but the spiritual man greater than the thinker. The soul that lives in God is more perfect than the soul that lives only in outward mind or only for the claims and joys of thinking and living matter." (*Vide, SABCL, Vol. 14, p. 70*)

(4) Once the individual has built the substructure, when he has paid his debt to society, filled well and admirably his place in its life, helped its maintenance and continuity and taken from it his legitimate and desired satisfactions, there still remains the greatest thing of all, his own self, the inner being, the soul which is a spiritual portion of the Infinite, one in its essence with the Eternal. This self, this soul he has to find, he is here upon earth for that. He has to come out of his ego-imprisonment and become a universal soul, one with all existence. Then two different possibilities will open up for him: he can either act in divine liberty for the good of all living things or else turn to enjoy in solitude the bliss of eternity and transcendence. (*Vide, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 114, 115*)

(5) But not a withdrawal into supracosmic transcendence nor a dwelling in some supraterrrestrial heavens, but an attainment of divine perfection of human being and living here upon earth is the central aim of our existence. "All life is a secret Yoga, an obscure growth of Nature towards the discovery and fulfilment of the divine principle hidden in her which becomes progressively less obscure, more self-conscious and luminous, more self-possessed in the human

being by the opening of all his instruments of knowledge, will, action, life to the Spirit within him and in the world." Mind, life and body are the means of this growth, but they can find their last perfection only by opening out to the Divine. The education of the future should be designed to help man in fulfilling this ideal of integral perfection. (*Vide, SABCL, Vol. 21, pp. 590, 591*)

So we see that education changes its meaning and content in Sri Aurobindo's vision of the education of the future. The revealing and finding of the divine Self in man should, in Sri Aurobindo's view, be "the whole first aim of all its [the spiritualised society's] activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure." (*SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 240*)

But how to fulfil this aim? Surely not by any external manipulation of human nature or through the artifice of externally contrived education and social machinery. No social machinery can possibly cut human mind and life into perfection, for mind and life are only instruments of the soul and unless this soul is given a lead in the matter, nothing tangible or permanent can be achieved. Every teacher has to realise that there is a soul or psychical entity in every individual behind his physical-vital-mental parts and this represents the fundamental truth of his existence, the individual self-manifesting divinity within him. He should know that the evocation of this psychical entity, the real man within, is the most rewarding object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the deepest truth and law of its own being.

And what will be the contribution of this psychic being

if it is made to come out into the open? Sri Aurobindo assures us:

“It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front,’ will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception.” (*Ibid.*, p. 28)

Will the élite of today pay any heed to these words of Sri Aurobindo? Most probably not. Because the ideas may seem to them too outlandish and the hope of changing human nature by this inner means too chimerical a dream. But whether they believe it or not, Sri Aurobindo assures us that what is demanded of us is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and therefore radically impossible. For “what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation.” (*SABCL*, Vol. 19, p. 1059)

And this possibility can surely enter the domain of

practicability if only we can shake off from us the disabling clingings of past notions and habits and arm ourselves with an active faith and robust optimism in the divine possibility of man. What is necessary for the success of this new educational venture of the future, for the birth of a new humanity, is that “there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible... and to find the way.” (*Ibid.*, p. 1060)

Is it too much to expect in this Hour of God that some of us who are actively involved in the task of finding the right kind of education for the children of the future, admit the new truth revealed by the Master-Yogi, turn our minds to this “new knowledge of oneness, and world and God and soul and Nature, a knowledge of oneness, a knowledge of universal Divinity” (*SABCL*, Vol. 13, p. 575) and make this new knowledge and vision the sole motive of all our action for the sake of the divine fulfilment upon earth?

Let us close this long essay on Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts and insights on education by quoting a significant passage from the Master-Yogi who has been a distinguished educationist at the same time:

“This is an hour in which, for India as for all the world, its future destiny and the turn of its steps for a century are being powerfully decided, and for no ordinary century, but one which is itself a great turning-point, an immense turn-over in the inner and outer history of mankind. As we act now, so shall the reward of our Karma be meted out to us, and each call of this kind at such an hour is at

once an opportunity, a choice, and a test offered to the spirit of our people. Let it be said that it rose in each to the full height of its being and deserved the visible intervention of the Master of Destiny in its favour.” (*SABCL*, Vol. 27, pp. 506-07)

II

The Mother's Eleven Goals of Education

It is by now well known that the Mother has given the world a well-structured integral philosophy of education. This philosophical vision is unique in many respects — both in its objectives and in its method of implementation. Thus, a centre of learning established anywhere in the world but drawing its inspiration from the Mother's educational teachings cannot but be basically different from most other schools and colleges found elsewhere. For the aim of true education should be, in the Mother's view, to give the students a chance to distinguish between the ordinary life and the life of truth — to see things in a different way. And the teacher's mission should be to open the eyes of the children to something which they will not find in conventional schools.

To crave for money and worldly recognition or to be engrossed in the pursuit of "career-building" must not be the characteristic trait of the students educated in the Mother's way. For, as she has said, the aim of education is not to prepare someone to "succeed" in life and society but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost. Here are some of her words addressed to the students:

"Do not aim at success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the threshold of *a new world*, participating in its birth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There

is no interest more worthwhile.” (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 120)

If the students are made aware of these basic truths, it cannot but be that certain definite traits will mark out the pupils studying under the benign influence of the Mother's philosophy of education. But what are these traits? We have the answer in the Mother's own delineation:

“To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true...”

(*Ibid.*, pp. 353-54)

The purpose of the present paper is to draw the attention of the readers to some of the principal educational goals envisaged by the Mother. She has spoken a lot and written much on educational matters and has left us detailed instructions concerning all possible aspects of a truth-based education. A judicious study of her published guidance brings into clear focus eleven well-defined goals that an educationist should keep in view while seeking to discharge his responsibility towards his students. The students on their part should assiduously try to attain these eleven educational goals. For even a small measure of success in this field will adequately equip them to face life and its problems with their heads high and hearts free.

What follows is a succinct account of the eleven educational goals envisaged by the Mother in her writings on education.

First Goal: To Live in the Right Way

A teacher's primary responsibility to his students is to help them in a meaningful way to mould their thinking and living along right lines. Instead of confining himself solely to the task of teaching an academic subject, he should try by all possible means to turn the attention of his pupils from the undesirable rut of ordinary living and make them conscious of the true *raison d'être* of man's existence upon earth. A student should be helped to grow up as a *jijnasu*, a "questing consciousness", who loves to think and reflect and ask deep questions such as, "Why am I here? Why is there an earth at all? Why are there men? Why do I live? What is the purpose of life?"

The teacher should be vigilant that his students do not get attached to the mode of ordinary human living. But what do we mean by "ordinary human living"? The Mother has characterised it in the following words:

"[This] is the attitude of men in general: they come into life, they don't know why; they know that they will live a certain number of years, they don't know why; they think they will have to pass away because everybody passes away, and they again don't know why; and then, most of the time they are bored because they have nothing in themselves, they are empty beings and there is nothing more boring than emptiness; and so they try to

fill this by distraction, they become absolutely useless, and when they reach the end, they have wasted their whole existence, all their possibilities — and everything is lost.” (CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 313-14)

And what is then the right way of living? To make the point clear we may be permitted to refer to what the Mother said in answer to a question put to her:

“It is not a question of preparing to read these works or other works. It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so, out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to... [the students] to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing; it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to live and become a *true being* — and that the aim of the education... is to prepare the children and make them fit for *that life*.” (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 117)

So this is the first educational goal set by the Mother: To live in the right way.

Second Goal: To Acquire a Mould of Aspiring Consciousness

The students should not degenerate into actuality-bound, “practical-minded”, unprogressive human beings possessing nothing else but a dull and coarse common sense. Instead, they should be helped to develop in themselves the spirit of

adventurous optimism and to look towards all that is high and wide and noble and true. It would be the sacred task of the teachers to instil into their students an unquenchable ardour and intensity of aspiration, an inner enthusiasm for the glorious unknown and for the undreamt-of perfection, the will to conquer the future, the will always to look ahead and to want to move on as swiftly as one can towards— what *will be*. The students should be helped to discern between the fugitive joys and superficial pleasures ordinary life can offer and the marvellous things that life, action and growth would be in a future world of perfection and truth. They should be aided to cultivate within themselves the certitude that what belongs to the future is essentially true and not the fossils of the present.

In short, the “Students’ Prayer” as formulated by the Mother should be a living reality with every student and correspond to his actual state of aspiration. Here is that Prayer:

“Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.”

Third Goal: To Develop the Zeal for Perpetual Progress

One of the principal tasks before a teacher is to instil into his students a thirst for continuous learning and uninterrupted progress. Instead of passing one’s time as somnolent children, the students should develop a learning attitude, what may be called a “state of progress”, in which one can

learn and make progress at every moment. For, when one is indeed in such a frame of consciousness, one is prompted from within, before every situation and circumstance of life, to ask oneself: "What is it that I should learn from this particular circumstance? What progress should I make to overcome myself? What is the weakness that I must eliminate? What is the inertia that I must conquer?"

While speaking about the beneficial effects of such an attitude of learning and progress, the Mother has said:

"...everything, no matter what, the least little circumstance in life, becomes a teacher who can teach you something, teach you how to think and act.... Your attitude is so different. It is always an attitude which is awaiting a discovery, an opportunity for progress, a rectification of a wrong movement, a step ahead, and so it is like a magnet that attracts from all around you opportunities to make this progress. The least things can teach you how to progress." (CWM, Vol. 6, p. 154)

This, then, is the third educational goal: to inculcate in the students an insatiable urge for progress.

Fourth Goal: To Learn to Concentrate and Forget One's Ego

The Mother has remarked that the essential worth of a person may be judged by the power and quality of his concentration. Now, the fact is that an average student's nature suffers from the disability of an inert subjection to the impacts of things and demands as they come into the mind

pell-mell, without order or control. His habitual attention is a haphazard imperfect one, managed fitfully, irregularly, with a more or less chance emphasis on this or that object according as they happen to interest him at the moment. It is the teacher's responsibility to help the student overcome this "restless, leaping, fickle, easily tired, easily distracted" movement of his consciousness, which usually creates a kind of haziness in the brain, something cloudy, like a fog somewhere. The student should be trained in the art of gathering all his attention and focussing all his energies upon whatever he is doing at the moment.

At the same time, the student should be taught how to forget his little ego and petty self-infatuation. He should be helped to *become* what he is himself doing and not remain the small person complacently looking at himself doing it. About this aspect of education, here is what the Mother has said:

"One may... do what one does as a consecration to the Divine, altogether disinterestedly, but with a plenitude, a self-giving, a total self-forgetfulness: no longer thinking about oneself but about what one is doing.... If, in oneself, one succeeds in becoming what one does, it is a great progress. In the least little details, one must learn this... When you are at school, you must become the concentration which tries to catch what the teacher is saying... You must not think of yourself but only of what you want to learn... And the best way is to be able to concentrate upon what one is doing instead of concentrating upon oneself." (*CWM*, Vol. 4, pp. 363, 364, 365)

So, this is the fourth educational goal envisaged by the Mother: how to increase the power of concentration and forget one's little ego and its petty interests.

Fifth Goal: To Know Oneself and to Choose One's Own Destiny

The Mother has said: "... the finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself." (CWM, Vol. 12, p: 167)

And this is what she means by "knowing oneself" and "mastering oneself":

"To know oneself means to know the motives of one's actions and reactions, the why and the how of all that happens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies."

(*Ibid.*, p. 167)

Hence the Mother's emphatic advice to all those entrusted with the task of educating young children:

"Essentially, the *only thing* you should do assiduously is to teach them [the students] to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves *and* to will what they want to be. That is infinitely more important than teaching them what happened on earth in former times, or even how the earth is built, or even... indeed, all sorts of things which are quite a necessary grounding if

you want to live the ordinary life in the world..."

(CWM, Vol. 8, p. 182)

Sixth Goal: To Overcome the Tyranny of Lower Desires

While dealing with their students, the teachers are often confronted with the spectacle of the youngsters and adolescents being constantly harassed by blind desires of many kinds. The problem is compounded hundredfold because of the fact that most often the students cannot sufficiently distinguish between a genuine need and a mere desire-impulse. They are apt to take all their desires for needs or necessities and plunge themselves into these with passionate abandon.

It is the teacher who has to step in here and help his students to turn their attention from all undesirable pulls and orient their desire-impulses into the right kind of channels. Here is the Mother's advice concerning this important issue:

"In fact,... one should begin by shifting the movement [of desire] to things which it is better to have from the true point of view, and which it is more difficult to obtain.... For example, when a child is full of desires, if one could give him a desire of a higher kind—instead of its being a desire for purely material objects, you understand, an altogether transitory satisfaction—if one could awaken in him the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to become a remarkable person... in this way, begin with that. As these things are difficult to do, so, gradually, he will develop his will for these things."

(CWM, Vol. 6, p. 413)

To come out of the prejudicial habit of always hankering after a trivial something or the other, becomes the sixth educational goal in the Mother's philosophy of education.

Seventh Goal: To Make the Enlightened Reason the Governor of Life

Young people mostly live by impulses; they are not "reasonable" creatures. They have to be carefully taught how to control the imperious urges of their impulses and obey only those which are in conformity with their deepest aspiration and the luminous ideals they wish to follow in life. The students should develop in themselves a kind of mental discernment whose role it will be to govern the rest of the being. Of course, in the further development of the being towards spiritual illumination the reason itself has to be transcended and be replaced by intuition. But that is miles and miles away. Also, we should never forget what Sri Aurobindo has said in this connection:

"It is not by becoming irrational or infrarational that one can go beyond ordinary nature into supernature; it should be done by passing through reason to a greater light of superreason. This superreason descends into reason and takes it up into higher levels even while breaking its limitations; reason is not lost but changes and becomes its own true unlimited self, a coordinating power of the supernature." (*SABCL*, Vol. 20, p. 269)

The following words of the Mother should act as a guiding light so far as this particular question is concerned:

“Of course, it is well understood that reason is not the supreme capacity of man and must be surpassed, but it is quite obvious that if you don’t have it, you will live an altogether incoherent life.... The least thing will upset you completely and you won’t even know why, and still less how to remedy it. While someone who has established within himself a state of active, clear reasoning, can face attacks of all kinds, emotional attacks or any trials whatever.... Well, reason can stand back a little, look at all that, smile and say, ‘Oh! no, one must not make a fuss over such a small thing.’

If you do not have reason, you will be like a cork on a stormy sea.” (CWM, Vol. 8, p. 184)

To make the enlightened reason, the liberated intelligence free from the slavery to vital impulses and physical appetites, the governor of life is, then, the seventh educational goal envisaged in the Mother’s philosophy of education.

Eighth Goal: To Be Self-disciplined

In the Mother’s view, the education of children should be based on a principle of genuine freedom and a glad and spontaneous choice on the part of the students; rules, regulations and restrictions should be reduced absolutely to the minimum.

But why should it be so? What is its necessity and justification? The Mother answers:

“... from the spiritual point of view this is infinitely more valuable. The progress you will make because you feel

within yourself the need to make it, because it is an impulsion that pushes you forward spontaneously, and not because it is something imposed on you like a rule — this progress, from the spiritual point of view, is infinitely greater. All in you that tries to do things well, tries to do it spontaneously and sincerely; it is something that comes from within you, and not because you have been promised rewards if you do well and punishments if you do badly. Our system is not based on this.”

(CWM, Vol. 6, p. 431)

But the question may arise: What is the place of discipline in this type of free system of education? The answer is: There must be discipline but of another order. For, freedom does not mean either whimsicality or lax waywardness. The essential and all-important difference lies in the fact that in the system of education envisioned by the Mother, instead of exacting from the students an externally imposed conventional discipline of ordinary institutions, the teachers are expected to help their pupils to have an inner self-discipline set by themselves, solely for the love of progress and perfection, their own perfection, the perfection of their being and nature.

The acquisition of this excellent virtue of spontaneous self-discipline constitutes the eighth educational goal that has to be set before the students.

Ninth Goal: To Help Every Individual Child to Blossom

One of the most basic goals in the Mother's system of education is to attend to the inner needs of every individual

student. The education imparted should not be impersonal and group-oriented. It has to be sensitive to the total personality of each individual child. Therefore the task of a teacher teaching in the Mother's way becomes much more exacting than that of the teachers in the conventional schools. As the Mother has said:

“The teacher should not be a book that is read aloud, the same for everyone, no matter what his nature and character. The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself and to discover what he is capable of doing....

The old method of the seated class to which the teacher gives the same lesson for all, is certainly economical and easy, but also very ineffective, and so time is wasted for everybody.” (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 369)

To be a successful teacher teaching in the right way as recommended by the Mother, one should scrupulously refrain from stereotyping his manner of teaching, from making it the same for all the students. There should be great flexibility and clairvoyance on the part of the teacher. He should not make any fixed rules or theories beforehand and apply them more or less blindly, irrespective of the needs of individual students. He should remember that each case is different and requires a different procedure.

Tenth Goal: To Develop Genuine Individuality

The Mother has always insisted that the students should be patiently helped to disengage their true nature from the

opaque covering of foreign influences pouring in upon them all the time from outside. They should be their own selves and not act the spurious selves with which they identify themselves without even knowing it. The Mother has referred on many an occasion to the absolute necessity of this process of "individualisation". Here are, for instance, some relevant passages from what she spoke to a group of students on 28 July 1954:

"... at least ninety-nine parts of an individual's character are made of soft butter... on which if one presses one's thumb, an imprint is made.

Now, everything is a 'thumb': an expressed thought, a sentence read, an object looked at, an observation of what someone else does, and of one's neighbour's will. And all these wills... [are] intermingled, each one trying to get the uppermost and causing a kind of perpetual conflict within....

"So one is tossed like a cork on the waves of the sea.... One day one wants this, the next day one wants that, at one moment one is pushed from this side, at another from that, now one lifts one's face to the sky, now one is sunk deep in a hole. And so this is the existence one has!" (*CWM*, Vol. 6, pp. 256-57)

Hence arises the necessity of helping the students discover their true nature and essential individuality which can stand as a rock of self-defence against any undesirable invading influence.

Let us close our discussion of the tenth educational goal

by quoting some significant words of the Mother:

“First one must become a conscious, well-knit, *individualised* being, who exists in himself, by himself, independently of all his surroundings, who can hear anything, read anything, see anything without changing. He receives from outside only what he wants to receive; he automatically refuses all that is not in conformity with his plan and nothing can leave an imprint on him unless he agrees to receive the imprint. Then one begins to become an individuality!” (*Ibid.*, p. 257)

Eleventh Goal: An All-round Development of All the Instruments

It may be stated without much ado that the basic Vision that should permeate all educational effort is that the earthly life is the destined field of a progressive self-manifestation of the Spirit and that the students, as everybody else, should prepare themselves as instruments, as perfectly as possible, to express adequately and without any distortion or diminution the divine Will in the world.

Now, the mind, the heart, the vital and the body are the four instruments of manifestation of the Spirit. Thus, there is the mental being which produces thoughts, the emotional being which produces feelings, the vital being which produces the power of action and the physical being that acts and gives form to everything else. Now, the basic duty of a teacher is to help his students in the task of developing these four instruments to as great a perfection as practicable. The mind, the heart, the vital and the body should be cultivated,

educated and trained. They must not be left like shapeless pieces of stone. In the Mother's words:

“When you want to build with a stone you chisel it; when you want to make a formless block into a beautiful diamond, you chisel it. Well, it is the same thing. When with your brain and body you want to make a beautiful instrument for the Divine, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, complete what is missing, perfect what is there.” (*CWM*, Vol. 5, p. 48)

We have discussed in brief eleven distinct educational goals set by the Mother before the students. But what is the best way of attaining these goals? It goes without saying that a great responsibility devolves upon the teachers in this matter. For, they are the direct intermediaries and instruments for the fulfilment of the great Vision. And it is surely not by acquiring technical competence in the subjects they are to teach that the teachers can expect to be successful in the task of discharging the sacred responsibility they bear towards their students. No, there is only one way out and that is for the teachers to put into practice what they are supposed to preach. And it should be clearly understood as the Mother has pointed out, that “each one, whatever his worth and capacity, can and must progress constantly to realise an ideal which is much higher than the present realisation of humanity.... The main thing is to keep the certitude that whatever may have been accomplished, one can always do better if one wants to.” (*CWM*, Vol. 12, pp. 358-59)

III

The Role and Responsibility of the Teachers

It is by now clear to our readers that Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is not just an ordinary school, college or university having for its sole aim the excellent training of its alumni in various academic subjects. The Mother has placed before it very high extra-academic goals. Indeed these goals are its real *raison d'être*; academic excellence and competence in various disciplines of knowledge is only a necessary but no more than a complementary achievement.

Now the fact cannot be overstressed that to help in the fulfilment of the real aims of SAICE, it will not do for the members of its teaching staff to be only equipped with sufficient knowledge in their respective academic subjects. They have to be a special type of human beings, indeed, seriously practising sadhakas and sadhikas. They have to be imbued with a burning aspiration to belong to the emerging humanity of the coming future and set a constant living example of all that the Mother would like to be realised in the life of its students. In other words, a great and onerous responsibility lies on the teachers of this Centre of Education and without their sincere and whole-hearted co-operation, its aims and purposes cannot be brought into fulfilment. Hence, on many an occasion, the Mother has sharply drawn the attention of these teachers to what she expects of them and what they

have to grow into. Here are a few passages from the Mother's writings touching on various aspects of this question.

(1) "And if, among these teachers and instructors, some are not worthy of their post, because by their character they give a bad example, their first duty is to become worthy by changing their character and their action; there is no other way." (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 360)

(2) *Question: "Mother, don't you think that to become a teacher or an instructor here, especially for the little ones, it is necessary to have lived in the Ashram for a certain length of time?"*

The Mother's Answer:

"It is a certain attitude of consciousness which is necessary—and unfortunately, living even several years in the Ashram does not always lead to this right attitude.

Truly speaking, teachers should be taken *on trial* to see if they can acquire this right attitude and adapt themselves to the needs of their task." (*Ibid.*, pp. 366-67)

(3) *Question: "Mother, what do you mean by 'a certain attitude of consciousness'?"*

The Mother's Answer:

"The attitude of consciousness which is required is an inner certitude that, in comparison with all that is to be known, one knows nothing; and that at every moment one must be ready to learn in order to be able to teach.

This is the first indispensable point.

There is a second one. It is that outer life, as we know it, is a more or less illusory appearance and that we must constantly keep a living aspiration for the Truth." (*Ibid.*, p. 367)

(4) "Whatever imperfections the teachers and instructors here may have, they will always be better than those from outside. For all who work here do so without remuneration and in the service of a higher cause. It is clearly understood that each one, whatever his worth or capacity, can and must progress constantly to realise an ideal which is still much higher than the present realisation of humanity.

But if one is truly eager to do one's best, it is by doing the work that one progresses and learns to do it better and better.

Criticism is seldom useful, it discourages more than it helps. And all goodwill deserves encouragement, for with patience and endurance, there is no progress which cannot be made.

The main thing is to keep the certitude that whatever may have been accomplished, one can always do better if one wants to." (*Ibid.*, pp. 360-61)

(5) "Teachers must not be absent on the days and at the times of their classes. If a person is obliged to have external activities during school-hours, he cannot be a teacher." (*Ibid.*, p. 193)

(6) *Question:* "Mother, You have said that the teacher must be a discerning psychologist, a Guru. You know very well that we are far from being all that. The teachers being what they are, how should the system of education be organised in order to improve our way of teaching?"

The Mother's Answer:

"By doing what they can, knowing that they have everything to learn. In this way they will gain experience and do things better and better. That is the best way to learn, and if they do it in all sincerity, in two or three years they will become experts and will be truly useful.

Naturally, work done in this way becomes really interesting and makes the teachers as well as the students progress." (*Ibid.*, pp. 376-77)

(7) *Question:* "Mother, You said the other day that there were teachers who were not capable, and that they should stop teaching. What is the criterion for assessing the capacity of a teacher?"

The Mother's Answer:

"First, he must understand, he must know what we want to do and understand well how to do it.

Secondly, he must have a power of psychological discernment in dealing with the students, he must understand his students and what they are capable of doing.

Naturally, he must know the subject he is teaching....

But the most important thing is that he must have psychological discernment." (*Ibid.*, p. 378)

IV

The Mother on the Method of Teaching

It is by now well known to most educationists and even to the general public that Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education established in Pondicherry by the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a unique institute of learning distinguished in many significant ways from most other normal schools and colleges. The Mother wanted it to function with very great aims and purposes behind it. It is not merely a highly efficient academic training which is in view here. Above everything else, how to help the students to grow into consciously aspiring men and women of the future, well, this was the central goal behind its founding. Now, it is quite clear that the full and successful realisation of this noble goal demands the concurrence of three components: the teachers, the students and the proper method of teaching. The teachers should be well aware of the real nature of their task; the students on their part should well understand why they have come to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to pursue their studies in its school; and the proper method of teaching should be adopted here which will help in the flowering of the young boys and girls to the maximum extent possible.

If even one of the three components is deficient in functioning, the attempt before the "Centre" is bound to fail and in course of time it cannot but degenerate into one amongst a million conventional institutions of learning. In the present

paper we propose to concentrate our attention on the third component, the method of teaching, and clearly indicate what the Mother wanted it to be and what pitfalls she wanted her "Centre" to avoid if it would be of service to her in the fulfilment of her goal. For that the best course would be to meditate on some of the passages from the Mother's writings touching upon this aspect of the problem.

(1) "There is one thing that I must emphasise. Don't try to follow what is done in the universities outside. Don't try to pump into the students mere data and information. Don't give them so much work that they may not get time for anything else. You are not in a great hurry to catch a train. Let the students understand what they learn. Let them assimilate it. Finishing the course should not be your goal. You should make the programme in such a way that the students may get time to attend the subjects they want to learn. They should have sufficient time for their physical exercises. I don't want them to be very good students, yet pale, thin and anaemic.... [The students'] progress will not be just in one direction at the cost of everything else. It will be an all-round progress in all directions." (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 170)

(2) *On general education and specialisation:*

A proposal was made by some teachers that the students should give up some subjects in order to concentrate on those they wished to learn. Here is the Mother's comment on this proposal of specialisation:

"That depends. It cannot be made the general rule; for

many of them [the students] it would not be much use. They have not reached a stage where they would be able to concentrate more on certain subjects if they have fewer subjects to study. The only result would be to encourage them to slacken — the very opposite of concentration! — and it would lead to a waste of time.

The solution does not lie there. What you should do is to teach the children to take interest in what they are doing — that is not the same thing as interesting the students! You must arouse in them the desire for knowledge, for progress. One can take an interest in anything — in sweeping a room, for example — if one does it with concentration, in order to gain an experience, to make a progress, to become more conscious.” (*Ibid.*, p. 171)

(3) “Most teachers want to have *good students*: students who are studious and attentive, who understand and know many things, who can answer well.... This spoils everything. The students begin to consult books, to study, to learn. Then they rely only on books, on what others say or write, and they lose contact with the super-conscious part which receives knowledge by intuition. This contact often exists in a small child but it is lost in the course of his education.

For the students to be able to progress in the right direction, it is obvious that the teachers should have understood this and changed their old way of seeing and teaching. Without that, my work is at a standstill.” (*Ibid.*)

(4) "It is not so much the details of organisation as the *attitude* that must change.

It seems that unless the teachers themselves get above the usual intellectual level, it will be difficult for them to fulfil their duty and accomplish their task." (*Ibid.*, p. 172)

(5) *Question*: "R was absent today... and I found, after the class, that he has Your permission to stop coming to my class and take woodwork instead."

The Mother's Answer:

"He told me he liked much better to do manual work instead of studies. I thought he was right in his instinct and his choice was the best for his nature. So I gave him the permission required." (*Ibid.*, p. 186)

(6) *Question*: "Should we put the children of each category together?"

The Mother's Answer:

"That has both advantages and disadvantages. The grouping of students should be made according to the resources at our disposal and the facilities we have. The arrangement should be flexible so that it can be improved upon if necessary." (*Ibid.*, p. 372)

(7) "All studies, or in any case the greater part of studies consists in learning about the past, in the hope that it will give you a better understanding of the present. But

if you want to avoid the danger that the students may cling to the past and refuse to look to the future, you must take great care to explain to them that the purpose of everything that happened in the past was to prepare what is taking place now, and that everything that is taking place now is nothing but a preparation for the road towards the future, which is truly the most important thing for which we must prepare.” (*Ibid.*, p. 169)

(8) “It is by cultivating intuition that one prepares to live for the future.” (*Ibid.*)

(9) “Think rather of the future than of the past.” (*Ibid.*)

(10) “You must be very careful to see that there is no overlapping in the lessons that you teach. Your subjects are related to each other. If two teachers begin to speak on the same point, naturally there will be some difference in their points of view. The same thing seen from different angles looks different. This will bring confusion in the young minds of the students and they will start comparison amongst the teachers, which is not very desirable. So each one should try to take up his own subject without wandering about in other subjects.” (*Ibid.*, p. 186)

(11) “It is not through uniformity that you obtain unity. It is not through uniformity of programmes and methods that you will obtain the unity of education.

Unity is obtained through a constant reference,

silent or expressed, as the case demands, to the central ideal, the central force or light, the purpose and the goal of our education.

The true, the supreme Unity expresses itself in diversity. It is mental logic that demands sameness. In practice, each one must find and apply his own method, that which he understands and feels. It is only in this way that education can be effective." (*Ibid.*, p. 172)

(12) *Question*: "If we are to have a new system [of education], what exactly will this system be?"

The Mother's Answer:

"It will be put into practice in the best way possible, according to the capacity of each teacher." (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

V

“Free Progress” in Education

“Free Progress” is a key concept of immense import in the educational vision of the Mother. But what does she mean by this free progress of an individual student at SAICE? She was once specifically asked this question. One of her children asked her: “Mother, would you please define in a few words what you mean essentially by ‘free progress’?” The Mother answered:

“A progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions or preconceived ideas.” (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 172)

The first part of the Mother’s answer makes everything absolutely clear. But, in practice, the problem becomes acutely difficult for the teachers, the students, the parents and the guardians, indeed for everybody. For how many among the students are aware of their soul, far be it to be always guided by their psychic being in choosing at every moment the specific line of their progress in life?

But luckily the second half of the Mother’s answer provides a direction for us. To realise one’s soul and be guided by it alone is surely the ultimate accomplishment, *siddhi*; but before that many more preparatory steps have to be taken which are within everybody’s reach, if one is sincere and persistent in one’s effort. One of these steps is to grow

into a truly rational being who seeks after truth at any cost and whose reasoning intelligence is made really free and is no more under the subjugation of his physical and vital instincts, desires and passions. "*Mano... prana-sarira-neta*", "Mind should be the leader of the vital and the physical", and not the other way round. When the case is different, one is apt to confuse licence and waywardness with freedom, and the lower nature's weaknesses and urges with the soul's will. Indeed, our psychological constitution is highly complex; it contains not only the psychic prompting at its profoundest centre, but here, there, everywhere in it many other urges and impulses push us at every moment to act as involuntarily moved blind unconscious puppets. To be so guided is surely not what the Mother designates as being guided by one's soul. Hence the very first task before the teachers and the parents is to teach their students and wards how to become conscious of the detailed functioning of their psychology and be watchful masters of their own movements. Here is a long passage from the Mother's writing which is worth quoting. Every teacher should ponder over the implications of what the Mother has said here if he would like to prepare his students to become fit candidates for making their free progress genuine and effective. This is what the Mother said concerning the proper bringing up of the children and young adults:

"It is an invaluable possession for every living being to have learnt to know himself and to master himself. To know oneself means to know the motives of one's actions and reactions, the why and the how of all that hap-

pens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies.

To give a moral law to a child is evidently not an ideal thing; but it is very difficult to do without it. The child can be taught, as he grows up, the relativity of all moral and social laws so that he may find in himself a higher and truer law. But here one must proceed with circumspection and insist on the difficulty of discovering that true law. The majority of those who reject human laws and proclaim their liberty and their decision to 'live their own life' do so only in obedience to the most ordinary vital movements which they disguise and try to justify, if not to their own eyes, at least to the eyes of others. They give a kick to morality, simply because it is a hindrance to the satisfaction of their instincts.

No one has a right to sit in judgment over moral and social laws, unless he has taken his seat above them; one cannot abandon them, unless one replaces them by something superior, which is not so easy.

In any case, the finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and master himself." (*Ibid.*, p. 167)

Now, once this preliminary psychological training (of knowing himself and mastering himself) is well grounded in the psychology of a student, the teachers can well take the risk and grant him sufficient freedom to discover himself and govern and shape his own destiny following his inner urge; for he is marked for the future. When a few teachers com-

plained to the Mother once that most of the students would not be able to utilise the freedom offered to them but would rather misuse and waste their time and energy, she forcefully declared:

“In spite of what one might think, the proportion of very good students is satisfactory. If out of 150 students, there are 7 individuals of genuine value, it is very good.”
(*Ibid.*, p. 173)

In any case, the Mother would want that for the proper flowering of an individual student with all his potentialities and possibilities coming out into open realisation, the free progress system of education needs to be adopted. Instead of a teacher deciding everything for his students, even what he benevolently considers good for them, he should afford all scope to the students themselves for revealing their personalities and the deeper urges and capabilities of their being; and then and only then guide them along those lines with their full and joyous collaboration at every step of the educational adventure. Here are some guidelines from the Mother destined for the teachers in the matter of the fulfilment of this sacred but onerous task.

(1) “The teacher must find out the category to which each of the children in his care belongs. And if after careful observation he discovers two or three exceptional children who are eager to learn and who love progress, he should help them to make use of their energies for this purpose by giving them the freedom of

choice that encourages individual growth.

The old method of the seated class to which the teacher gives the same lesson for all, is certainly economical and easy, but also very ineffective, and so time is wasted for everybody." (*Ibid.*, p. 369)

(2) "I said we should give freedom of choice to exceptional children because for them it is absolutely indispensable if we truly want to help them to develop fully.

Of course this freedom of choice can be given to all the children, and after all it is a good way to find their true nature; but most of them will prove to be lazy and not very interested in studies. But, on the other hand, they may be skilful with their hands and be willing to learn to make things. This too should be encouraged. In this way the children will find their true place in society, and will be prepared to fulfil it when they grow up.

Everyone should be taught the joy of doing well whatever he does, whether it is intellectual, artistic or manual work, and above all, the dignity of all work, whatever it may be, when it is done with care and skill." (*Ibid.*, pp. 369-70)

(3) "What is important is to give the children the chance to see and judge for themselves." (*Ibid.*, p. 371)

(4) "[The age at which the freedom can be given to the children] depends on the case. Some children are fully developed at the age of fourteen or fifteen. It is different for each one. It depends on the case." (*Ibid.*)

(5) "The teacher must not be a machine for reciting lessons, he must be a psychologist and an observer." (*Ibid.*)

(6) "The school should be an opportunity for progress for the teacher as well as for the student. Each one should have the freedom to develop freely." (*Ibid.*, p. 169)

(7) *Question:* "How are we to teach the children to organise the freedom that You give us here?"

The Mother's answer:

"Children have everything to learn. This should be their main preoccupation in order to prepare themselves for a useful and productive life.

At the same time, as they grow up, they must discover in themselves the thing or things which interest them most and which they are capable of doing well. There are latent faculties to be developed. There are also faculties to be discovered.

Children must be taught to like to overcome difficulties, and also that this gives a special value to life; when one knows how to do it, it destroys boredom for ever and gives an altogether new interest to life.

We are on earth to progress and we have everything to learn." (*Ibid.*, p. 368)

(8) "To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere." (*Ibid.*, p. 167)

(9) "... if the individual can progress at his maximum the group will necessarily benefit by it." (*Ibid.*, p. 182)

VI

Problems in “Free Progress” System

If we adopt the system of “Free Progress” in imparting education to the students in our school, some basic problems arise and confront the teachers and the organisers, and they demand satisfactory solutions. Here, for example, is one of them which was placed before the Mother:

Question: “Mother, when we attempt to organise the children into categories based on their capacity for initiative, we see that there is a mixture of levels of achievement in various subjects. That makes the work very difficult for certain teachers who are in the habit of taking ordinary [conventional] classes in the old classical way. [How to solve this problem?]”

The Mother’s Answer:

“We are here to do difficult things. If we repeat what others do, it is not worth the trouble; there are already many schools in the world.

Men have tried to cure the ignorance of the masses by adopting the easiest methods. But now we have passed that stage and humanity is ready to learn better and more fully. It is up to those who are in the lead to show the way so that others can follow.” (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 373)

Then a second question followed which was equally important:

“Mother, how do You conceive the organisation of our education, to enable the children to discover their capacities and then follow the path of their individual development?”

The Mother’s Answer:

“That is what we are trying to do here. It depends on the teacher. I do not have a theory one could put down on paper....

But doing it well depends on the teacher, on the trouble he takes, and on his power of psychological understanding. He must be capable of recognising the character and possibilities of the student, so that he can adapt his teaching to the needs of each individual.”
(*Ibid.*, pp. 373-74)

The Mother was more explicit about what she meant by “category of children”. She said:

“The categories of character.

In assessing the possibilities of a child, ordinary moral notions are not of much use. Natures that are rebellious, undisciplined, obstinate, often conceal qualities that no one has known how to use. Indolent natures may also have a great potential for calm and patience.

It is a whole world to discover and easy solutions are not of much use. The teacher must be even more

hardworking than the student in order to learn how to discern and make the best possible use of different characters." (*Ibid.*, p. 375)

Here is another practical problem and the Mother's clinching reply to it:

Question: "In this method of work, the teacher must devote sufficient time to each one individually. But the teachers are few in number. How can we respect the needs of each one as fully as possible and at the same time satisfy all those who ask for help?"

The Mother's Answer:

"One cannot make a theory. It depends on each case, the possibilities and circumstances. It is an attitude which the teacher must have and apply as well as he can, and better and better if possible." (*Ibid.*, pp. 377-78)

Now follow two significant questions, the second one being a ticklish one, and the Mother's answers to them are quite illuminating.

Question: "The education we are given here at present differs little from the education that is given elsewhere. This is precisely why we should try here to educate the latent and spiritual faculties of the student. But how can we do this in school?"

The Mother's Answer:

“This cannot be done by any external method. It depends almost entirely on the teacher’s attitude and consciousness. If he does not have the vision and the inner knowledge himself, how can he transmit them to his students?” (*Ibid.*, pp. 174-75)

Then the Mother adds:

“To tell the truth, we rely mainly on the all-surrounding atmosphere charged with spiritual force, which has an effect even if it is not perceived or felt.” (*Ibid.*, p. 175)

Now the puzzling question of a particular teacher who wrote: “‘Free Progress’ education being essentially an education governed and guided by the soul of the individual, I am, as a teacher in our school, confronted with a serious personal problem of apparent contradiction. I don’t even know whether I have a soul, but as a teacher I am expected to help the students and ‘insist on the growth of their soul’— some light, please.”

The Mother's Answer:

“The contradiction comes from the fact that you want to ‘*mentalise*’ and this is impossible. It is an attitude, an inside attitude mostly but which governs the outside action as much as *possible*. It is something to be *lived* much more than to be taught.” (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

One Specific Problem: The Problem of the Multitude

If one adopts the "Free Progress" System in any Centre of Education, the organisers and those in charge of teaching are bound to encounter a serious problem, the problem of an inordinately large number. Normally, many, many students are apt to enrol in any particular school and even in any particular class. How to cater to the individual needs of this huge number and help them adequately and effectively in their particularised individual growth and development? Does it not seem well-nigh impossible?

Luckily the problem is not so intractable in practice as it seems at first. For the number of outstanding students deserving really free progress in a class or in the whole school is not actually very large. The preponderant majority of the normal run of students are not eager for self-determined individual progress nor are they capable of effectively working under their own discipline: they require the spur of imposed discipline coming from some outside authority like their teachers and guardians if they would at all utilise their available time and energies in the proper way.

So the totality of the students in a school or in a class will automatically get sorted out in two categories: the category of lethargic, psychologically "asleep", normal students and a second category of a relatively few "awakened" children who are meant by Nature to be children of the new future and who require special attention from their illumined teachers to bring out in full all their latent or hidden potentials and possibilities. As this second category of

students is not unmanageably large, these students can be easily attended to. But adequate care should be taken to select specially qualified teachers for this purpose, equipped in every respect, intellectual, moral, psychological and even spiritual. Any and every individual merely competent in his academic subject or subjects will not be able to do the job at all; he or she would, on the contrary, damage the interests of the students and stunt their true development.

The upshot of all this preliminary discussion is that every centre of education should provide for two types of classes, the classical, conventional, fixed system for the majority of the students, and the "Free Progress" classes for the limited few who show by their nature and behaviour that they are the shining lights of the future. The teachers should possess a keen and clairvoyant discerning power to judge rightly which of his students belong to which category and send them to the class suited to them. There should not be any fixity or permanence in this matter: there should be adequate and fool-proof arrangement for periodic transfer of any particular student from one type of class to the other. Everyone should be given adequate opportunity to reveal his real capacity and worth and migrate to the educational milieu which will help him in his flowering.

With all the extraneous constraints under which it has to function, a normal educational centre that is under outside management may not find it feasible to adopt this dual system of classes suggested here. Be that as it may, we at SAICE should have no hesitation in this matter and venture to introduce it among our students who are residing in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and basking in the invisible but effective

spiritual ambience of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

For the clear understanding of the readers, we append below a few relevant passages from the Mother's writings on education which will throw a helpful light on all the aspects of the problem and on how to deal with them.

The Mother Speaks:

(1) "The classes as a whole may be reorganised so as to fulfil the needs of the majority, that is to say, of those who, in the absence of any outside pressure or imposed discipline, work badly and make no progress.

But it is essential that the present system of education in the new ["Free Progress"] classes should be maintained, in order to allow outstanding individuals to show themselves and develop freely. That is our true aim. It should be known—we should not hesitate to proclaim it—that the whole purpose of our school is to discover and encourage those in whom the need for progress has become conscious enough to direct their lives. It ought to be a privilege to be admitted to these Free Progress classes.

At regular intervals (every month, for example) a selection should be made and those who cannot take advantage of this special education should be sent back into the normal stream." (*Ibid.*, p. 173)

(2) "The criticisms made in the report apply to the teachers as much as to the students. For students of high capacity, one teacher well versed in his subject is enough

—even a good textbook, together with encyclopaedias and dictionaries would be enough. But as one goes down the scale and the capacity of the student becomes lower, the teacher must have higher and higher capacities: discipline, self-control, consecration, psychological understanding, infectious enthusiasm, to awaken in the student the part which is asleep: the will to know, the need for progress, self-control, etc.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 173-74)

(3) “Just as we organise the school in such a way as to be able to discover and help outstanding students, in the same way, the responsibility for classes [in the “Free Progress” System] should be given to outstanding teachers.

So I ask each teacher to consider his work in the school as the best and quickest way of doing his Yoga. Moreover, every difficulty and every difficult student should be an opportunity for him to find a divine solution to the problem.” (*Ibid.*, p. 174)

At times, if the circumstances so demand, a teacher may adopt the two systems simultaneously for one of his classes. Here is a question from a teacher placed before the Mother concerning his dual psychological tendencies and the novel solution suggested by Her.

(4) *Question: “I have observed two contradictory kinds of ideas in myself: one kind in favour of individual work, another in favour of group work.”*

The Mother's Answer:

"Isn't it possible to divide the class time into two parts (equal or unequal according to the need) and to try out both systems? This would give diversity to the teaching and provide a wider field for observation of the students and their capacities." (*Ibid.*, p. 183)

Once a suggestion was made that the two systems might preferably be combined for all the students irrespective of their individual character variations and the classes fused. The Mother answered in detail:

(5) "All of them [teachers of contrary opinions] are both right and wrong at the same time.

First of all it seems that after the age of seven, those who have a living soul are so awake that they are ready to find it, if they are helped. Below seven this is exceptional.

There are great differences among our children. First there are those who have a living soul. For them there is no question. We must help them to find it.

But there are others, the ones who are like little animals. If they are children from the outside, whose parents expect them to be taught — for them the ["fixed"] classes are suitable. It is of no importance.

The problem is not whether to have classes and programmes or not. The problem is to choose the children.

Up to the age of seven, children should enjoy themselves. School should all be a game, and they learn as they play. As they play they develop a taste for learning,

knowing and understanding life. The system is not very important. It is the attitude of the teacher that matters. The teacher should not be something that one endures under constraint. He should always be the friend whom you love because he helps and amuses you.

Above the age of seven, the new system [of “Free Progress” classes] can be applied to those who are ready, provided that there is a class where the others can work in the ordinary way. And for that class the teacher should be convinced that what he is doing is the right method. He should not feel that he is relegated to an inferior task.” (*Ibid.*, p. 184)

The Mother explains elsewhere why there should be provision for both types of classes. Here is the passage:

(6) “There are some things that we cannot do [here in our Centre of Education]. For example, if we wanted to bring up all the children by the new method, we would have to take them all on trial for one or two months, find out those who can follow, and send the others back to their families....

We must therefore produce the solution *within*. There are children who don’t like the new method — responsibility worries them. I have received intimation of this in letters from children. We can only leave them as they are.” (*Ibid.*, p. 185)

One last point. To bring up a particular individual through proper education to the fullest flowering of all his potenti-

alities in every field of his total being and nature is not at all an easy or simple task. And there is not a single rigidly fixed method for that which has to be mechanically applied to produce the required result. Therefore patience and plasticity and creative, adaptive and innovative skill are greatly needed on the part of every single teacher put in charge of the upbringing of the children. He should not be dogmatic in his approach to education and look askance at other fellow teachers for their own separate ways of teaching. We conclude the discussion of this very important point by quoting here some relevant passages from the Mother's writings.

(7) "Everyone, without exception, *without exception*, should know that he is not someone who knows and applies what he knows. Everyone is learning to be what he should be and to do what he should do." (*Ibid.*, p. 185)

(8) "I have read with satisfaction what you say about your work and I approve of it for *your own work*."

But you must understand that other teachers can conceive their own work differently and be equally right." (*Ibid.*)

(9) "When people do not agree, it is their pettiness, their narrowness which prevents them from doing so. They may be right in their idea... but they may not be doing the right thing, if they don't have the necessary opening." (*Ibid.*, p. 184)

(10) "I take this opportunity to assure you that spiritual

progress and the service of Truth are based on harmony and not on division and criticism.” (*Ibid.*, p. 185)

(11) “Progress lies in widening, not in restriction.

There must be a bringing together of all points of view by putting each one in its true place, not an insistence on some to the exclusion of others.” (*Ibid.*)

(12) “True progress lies in the widening of the spirit and the abolition of all limits.” (*Ibid.*, p. 186)

Now a few more extracts from the Mother’s writings which will offer to all the teachers of SAICE much food for deep contemplation:

(13) “To the teachers and students [of SAICE]:

The [“Free Progress” System] classes are in accord with the teaching of Sri Aurobindo.

They lead towards the realisation of the Truth.

Those who do not understand that are turning their backs on the future.” (*Ibid.*, p. 175)

(14) “The old method of teaching is obviously outdated and will be gradually abandoned throughout the whole world.

But to tell the truth, each teacher, drawing his inspiration from modern ideas, should discover the method which he finds best and most suited to his nature.” (*Ibid.*, p. 182)

(15) "Ordinary classes belong to the past and will gradually disappear. As for the choice between working alone or joining the ["Free Progress"] classes, that depends on you. Because to teach and to conduct a class one must move away from theory and intellectual speculations to a very concrete application which has to be worked out in all its details." (*Ibid.*, p. 182)

(16) "Learning to teach while taking a class is certainly very good for the would-be teacher, but certainly less useful for the students." (*Ibid.*, p. 183)

All that has gone before concerns equally the method of teaching: in the old conventional "fixed class" method or the system of "Free Progress" based on the fullest scope given to the realisation of the talents, *swadharmas* and the potentialities of individual students. But one thing should be made absolutely clear. A student of SAICE, to whichever stream of classes he may belong, must not forget even for a moment that he is studying in a Centre of Education built by the Mother and bearing the hallowed name of Sri Aurobindo. It is not just another school, maybe more efficient in its academic teaching, and having for its sole goal the building up of good and well-qualified citizens of the country. No, surely that is not its purpose. The two first essays of this present book ("Sri Aurobindo's Seven Principles of Education" and "The Mother's Eleven Goals of Education") have made it unambiguously clear what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo basically expect from *every* student of their Centre of Education established in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry,

irrespective of the system under which he or she is trained. These fundamental goals should always be kept in view and these should guide and animate all his efforts here at all times, whatever may be the academic subjects he has been studying in the Centre. If a particular student radically strays away from this indicated Path, he will find himself a misfit here and bring trouble both to himself and to other students in SAICE. But what to do with such wayward children? Let these words of the Mother remove our doubts and misgivings.

(17) Question: "Should those who are much attracted by the pleasures of ordinary life,... come to study in our school? For, as a rule, one feels that this is why most of our students go out during the holidays, and every time they come back they need quite a long time to readjust themselves here."

The Mother's Answer:

"Those who are strongly attached to ordinary life and its agitation should not come here, for they are out of their element and create disorder.

But it is difficult to know this before they come, for most of them are very young, and their character is not yet well formed.

But as soon as they are caught in the frenzy of the world, it would be better, for themselves and for others, that they return to their parents and their habits." (*Ibid.*, p. 361)

(18) "We want here only children that can be considered as an élite. The organisation must be made for them. Those who cannot fit in, they have only to go after a one year trial." (*Ibid.*, p. 181)

VII

Training in the Use of the “Free Progress” System

(A few practical words to the students)

The Mother favoured the “Free Progress” System of education for the outstanding students for the full flowering of all their potential and for the development of their true *swadharmā*, self-nature. But it is not very easy on the part of an untrained average student to utilise the methodology of free progress in the right way. For example, in the Higher Course of SAICE, where the free progress system is in full operation since 1968, it is found that many students fumble in practice in making the proper choice. For, there, an individual student has full freedom to choose (i) the subjects of his study, (ii) the teachers whose active help he would solicit for his studies, and (iii) the way he would like to be taught a particular subject, in a Comprehensive, Major or even in a Minor way. Also, the student has complete freedom to initiate the study of a new subject at any time of the academic session, or even give up the study of a subject with a particular teacher under whom he was studying till then. Now, all these operations the student has to carry out in the “free” way, that is to say, as a psychologically “free” individual and not as someone who acts under the bondage of his passing impulses or extraneous motives. Egoistic desires, whims and idiosyncracies should have no say in the matter. But this is what happens mostly in practice if the student is not previ-

ously shown what is actually meant by "exercising one's free choice".

But a student may at this point raise the puzzled query: "Am I not already 'free'? Am I not acting all the time in my daily life as a free individual? And if so, what is this queer proposal of training me in freedom?"

If we ask the student at this point: "Will you please give me a few examples of your free actions?" he may perhaps promptly answer: "Well, I took two slices of bread at breakfast this morning. I went to my friend's place this evening and spent half an hour chit-chatting. I saw a film on TV last night. I have taken up Physics as one of my subjects of study and not Chemistry or Biology. I have decided to study German as a foreign language and that with the assistance of, say, Manimala-di and not of the other five available teachers in the Higher Course; etc. Are not these apt examples of free actions of a free individual?"

We are sorry to point out that none of these instances exemplify "free" actions. All of these have arisen out of the conscious, semi-conscious or even subconscious prompting of various factors beyond one's deliberate control. One has acted in most of the cases of one's daily life as the puppet of various urges and impulses beyond one's conscious control. To act freely one has first to "know" oneself and "master" oneself. Without having sufficient training in these two psychological operations, it is vain to expect that one can use the "Free Progress" system in the right and convenient way.

To remove any possible lingering doubt in the mind of the students, let us cite two concrete examples, which, we hope, will make the point unambiguously clear.

First Example: Let us imagine that on one sultry summer day of May, in the scorching heat of the mid-day sun, a bullock-cart driver is driving his beast of burden along a pitch road of Pondicherry. The famished animal appears to be terribly tired. Saliva is trickling down its muzzle. Tears are flowing from the corners of its eyes. Incapable of drawing the cart fast, the bullock slows down. Being angry and exasperated, the cart-driver gives the animal two hard lashes and it immediately gathers speed and even trots for some time.

Now our question is: Has the beast of burden gathered its speed *voluntarily* of its own “free” will and deliberate decision? The students will answer, and that too promptly, “Surely not — it is the alien will of the cart-driver which is at the root of the accelerated speed of the bullock.” Very good. Now let us go to a second more sophisticated example.

Second Example: Imagine for a moment that a few of us, myself and a number of students have been sitting in a particular classroom and seriously discussing a philosophical topic. Suddenly, a tiny whining boy appears in the room and starts crying at a loud pitch and thereby disturbs our discussion.

I appeal to the tiny tot four or five times to stop crying or to go away from our classroom. But the boy, being a sample of egoistic human consciousness, has already developed a budding personal vanity and self-importance and does not want to tolerate any contradiction coming from any quarter. Its spontaneous tendency is to oppose it. It has developed no psychological *freedom* to curb this tendency. And I take this fact into consideration and decide to adopt a roundabout

stratagem to stop the child from crying and disturbing us, by "frying him in his own oil"; that is to say, I seek to utilise one of his own weaknesses as a thorn to take out a second thorn. Let me elucidate.

The boy is still in our room and crying all the time in a loud voice in spite of everybody's repeated appeals to him to stop whining.

Suddenly I take a counter pose and command the tiny tot in a stern voice: "Look fellow, you *have* to cry very loudly for five long minutes without a moment's respite. Start; start without delay. We won't allow you to go out of this room until you have carried out my order. Start crying, I say, without any further delay."

The boy may get puzzled for a moment but then his self-pride becomes active with redoubled force. In his egoistic blindness, he cannot see through the game I have been playing and vehemently protests: "No, I *will not* cry; I cannot bear carrying out at anybody else's order. I am free and as a free being I decide to become silent and quit this place." And our purpose is adequately served.

Now the question is: Did the boy stop crying of his own free will, exercising his own free choice? Surely not. He acted as a slave to *my* will without knowing it at all. And that is precisely our situation all the time during our daily life if we have not learnt how to know and master all our psychological movements. And that exactly is what is needed if a student would like to fulfil his function as a participant in the "Free Progress" classes of SAICE. But how to prepare oneself for this important and interesting task? Let us proceed to the elaboration of this training procedure although

necessarily in brief.

Man's psychological field is always subject to various psychological factors like urges and influences, desires and tendencies, promptings and drives, half-known or secret, open or camouflaged, and all these coming from inside oneself or from the world environment outside. These various forces combine and jostle together to form a psychological resultant like the polygon of forces in Physics; and the resultant is at the root of man's actions and reactions. So we are all the time just like puppets, although we vainly pride ourselves on our claim to act always as free agents. To become really free, before acting or reacting, or before taking any decision whatsoever in any matter, we have to look within and analyse carefully the nature of this driving resultant. We have to ask ourselves a set of three questions: What? How? and Why? What is the exact character of the resultant that is trying to push me to any particular action or reaction? And, then, how did the resultant arise in me, gain in intensity and seize me in its grasp? Finally, and this is the most crucial question: why did this particular resultant appear in me at this moment to push me inexorably to its active manifestation? In other words, *why* did I think in this way, or feel in this way now? On analysis, I shall find that my psychological consciousness on the surface will be prompt enough to furnish an explanation which will be pleasant and justifiable so that my action or reaction or decision may seem to myself proper and right. And, as a result, I stick to my decision of the moment and carry it out in practice. But this will not do if I would like to act and react as a genuinely free being and not as a slave to my hidden psychological forces. And for

that, we have to clearly understand another interesting psychological phenomenon. Let us clarify the point.

To simplify matters, let us point out that an individual human being, a mental creature but inheriting his physical-vital nature and evolutionary animal propensities, is always pulled by two contrary urges: (i) an urge towards pleasures, happinesses and satisfactions of all sorts, a felicific tendency; and (ii) an élan towards the discovery of what is right and good at that moment and in that given situation, a truth-seeking drive. These two types of urges are almost always in conflict and fight to gain control of the dynamic will of the individual, to make him act out the resultant. The Upanishads have declared that the *manomayapurusah prana-sarira-neta*, "mind is the leader of the vital and the physical". But in fact, it is not so. Instead of being the leader, it is most often led by the physical and vital pushes and passions. And as the function of the mind is to justify and give reasons, it seeks to side with the promptings of the body and the vital and rationalise them by all means.

To make our exposition easy and simple and confine it to a reasonably short compass, let us broadly generalise and define "mind" as the truth-seeking faculty of man, and the "vital" as the "pleasure-hunting" factor in the same human being. These definitions are not correct definitions at all and will not apply on all occasions and in every situation but let us ignore that point for the moment and keep to the rough nomenclatures as given above. Let us recapitulate before we proceed further: Mind — the faculty that seeks to know what is right and good and true; Vital — the faculty hunting after pleasures, happinesses and satisfactions. The vital is, by our

simplistic definition, supposed to be blind and impetuous; whereas the mind is considered to be poised, discriminatory and rational. Now these two faculties in man quite often come into conflict in the affairs of daily life and the dealings of an individual. Man's behaviour and nature and the mode of his actions and reactions are mostly governed and shaped by the outcome of the conflict between these two opposing contenders. And this typifies one's actions and decisions at five different levels of human behaviour. These may be succinctly described as follows:

1. The vital is active and dominant, and the mind is silent and passive. Result: the individual is, in a given situation, completely driven by the psychological resultant and there is no "freedom" at all.

2. Mind tries to wage a semblance of fight and then buckles and allows the vital to go on its wayward track. Man continues to act as a slave.

3. Mind, instead of fighting, justifies the case of the pleasure-seeking vital and the individual smoothly glides downhill. Surely this is not the manner of a "free" man.

4. Mind offers a successful battle and holds its ground and keeps the vital at bay. Result: the individual does indeed what he thinks to be right at that moment but the recalcitrant vital goes on strike and withdraws all the energy and happiness from the being, which is surely not a desirable state.

5. Mind becomes, not only the successful "leader" but the "converter" of the vital, so much so that the latter finds genuine happiness in collaborating with the mind and giving its complete adhesion to all that the "senior brother" decides. And this is what is needed.

And the student wishing to derive the maximum advantage from the "Free Progress" system of education should train himself assiduously and persistently to come to this fifth stage of his psychological functioning and act as a harmonised homogeneous being at all times and act and react rightly and with illumined deliberation before every event and in all circumstances.

And for that he has to keep a well-defined and well-formulated central goal of life before his eyes at all moments of his daily life. He should not live his life in an *ad hoc* way like an errant wave on the surface of the sea. And at every moment he should judge with reference to the goal what he should do or not do in a given situation. And this should apply in his academic field also: for example, what subjects should he seek to study and under which teachers and in which way? Should he give up a particular subject at any particular moment of the Academic Session or, perhaps, should he initiate the study of a new subject with the previous teacher himself or with an altogether new teacher? etc. In other words, everything should be done by him as a truly "free" individual as our discussion before has shown and not mechanically in a puppet-like fashion or in the unconsciously manipulated way like the crying child of our analogy before. And if he can do this always and that too sincerely and consistently, he will deserve to be reckoned as a fit member of the Mother's "Free Progress" Classes. Otherwise the unimaginably great amount of freedom granted to him will come to nothing and, in actual practice, he will completely misuse this freedom and continue to act under the goad of his whims and fantasies or under the involuntary constraints

of all that is in vogue around him.

Here ends our short delineation of the training procedure meant to turn an ordinary average student into one who fully deserves to participate in the framework of the “Free Progress” system as defined by the Mother.

VIII

SAICE: Aims and Purpose Behind

Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education established by the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and popularly known under its acronym, SAICE, has now a reputation all over the world as an educational institution of excellent teaching tradition, being animated at the same time with very high and noble man-making ideals. This is not just a college or university of the ordinary genre, may be of an excellent quality. It has been founded by the Mother with a particular end in view and that characterises its functioning, also the motives and aspirations of its students and teachers. But what is this special goal that SAICE has set before itself through all these long years since its founding about sixty years back?

The Mother established in December 1943, in the town of Pondicherry and under the auspices of the world-renowned Sri Aurobindo Ashram a primary school for some children of a few devotees and disciples. In 1953 she extended its scope and converted it into a University Centre with much more profound and far-reaching goals before it. This Centre, originally named as "Sri Aurobindo International University Centre" was later given the designation of "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education". In popular parlance the educationists and others know it as "SAICE".

To go back in history, we may recall that after the passing of Maharishi Sri Aurobindo, the great prophet of the Life

Divine, on December 5, 1950, the Mother revealed:

“One of the most recent forms under which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to establish at Pondicherry an International University Centre open to students from all over the world.

It is considered that the most fitting memorial to his name would be to found this University now so as to give concrete expression to the fact that his work continues with unabated vigour.” (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 111)

After that a convention of distinguished educationists from India and abroad was held in Pondicherry in April 1951 and the Mother herself opened this Memorial Convention with these significant words:

“Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life.

In his name I open today this convention meeting here with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals.” (*Ibid.*, p. 112)

Such were the prophetic words of the Mother, the lifelong divine collaborator of Sri Aurobindo in his unique mission of transfiguring humanity. Now, Sri Aurobindo is no longer

in his physical body: the Mother too has left her physical frame in 1973. More than thirty years have passed since then. The teachers and students of the early days have, in course of time, left the Centre of Education; new teachers and students have taken their place. In future others will come and replace them in their turn. And this is the inexorable law of life. But one thing should remain steady and constant through all the changes of outward circumstances: we are, of course, referring to the aims and purpose set by the Mother behind the establishment of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Otherwise, it will be a great tragedy for all concerned. It is therefore the sacred duty of all the teachers, students and organisers of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education to keep vividly alive in their memory and consciousness these aims and ideals and make a persistent and sincere effort to realise them in practice even if it be in a small measure. For, as Krishna has emphatically stated in the Gita, *svalpam apyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*. "Even a little of the practice of this principle will save us from great peril."

As an effective means of fulfilling this task, we append below some passages from the Mother which will act as a ready reminder to the teachers and students of SAICE so that, in the medley of their various distracting activities of daily life, they may not forget what the Mother expects from them as students and teachers of this great Centre of Education which has been founded to fulfil one of Sri Aurobindo's cherished dreams. Surely we owe him at least this much of gratitude.

(1) *Question: “What is the real purpose, the aim of our Education Centre? Is it to teach Sri Aurobindo’s works? And these only? And all or some of these? Or is it to prepare the students to read Sri Aurobindo’s works and Mother’s? Is it to prepare them for the Ashram life or also for other ‘outside’ occupation? There are so many opinions floating around... on what basis can we work without any real sure knowledge? I pray, Mother, give us your guidance.”*

The Mother’s Answer:

“It is not a question of preparing to read these works or other works. It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so, out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to those who are here to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing; it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to live and become a *true being*—and that the aim of the education here is to prepare the children and make them fit for *that life*.

For all the rest, the human ways of thinking and living, the world is vast and there is place out there for everybody.

It is not a number that we want — it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.”
(*Ibid.*, pp. 117-18)

(2) “It should be known and we should not hesitate to

say openly that the purpose of our school is to discover and encourage those in whom the need for progress has become conscious enough to orient their life." (*Ibid.*, p. 118)

(3) "For us, however, this particular endeavour is one among many; it is only one movement in our Sadhana. We are engaged in many other things. To bring one particular item of work to something like perfection requires time and means and resources which are not at our disposal. But we do not seek perfection in one thing, our aim is an integral achievement." (*Ibid.*, pp. 118-19)

(4) "There are people who write wanting to join our University and they ask what kind of diploma or degree we prepare for, the career we open out. To them I say: go elsewhere, please, if you want that; there are many other places, very much better than ours, even in India, in that respect. We do not have their equipment or magnificence. You will get there the kind of success you look for. We do not compete with them. We move in a different sphere, on a different level." (*Ibid.*, p. 119)

(5) "But this does not mean that I ask you to feel superior to others. The true consciousness is incapable of feeling superior. It is only the small consciousness that seeks to show its superiority.... Rise above all that. Do not be interested in anything other than your relation with the Divine, what you wish to do for Him. That is the only thing interesting." (*Ibid.*)

(6) “To develop the spirit of service is part of the training here and it completes the other studies.” (*Ibid.*, p. 120)

(7) “The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society, but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost.” (*Ibid.*)

(8) “Do not aim at success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the threshold of *a new world*, participating in its birth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worthwhile.” (*Ibid.*)

(9) *Not a religious education but a spiritual education.* The Mother elucidates: “You must not confuse a religious teaching with a spiritual one.

Religious teaching belongs to the past and halts progress.

Spiritual teaching is the teaching of the future — it illumines the consciousness and prepares it for the future realisation.

Spiritual teaching is above religions and strives towards a global Truth.

It teaches us to enter into direct relations with the Divine.” (*Ibid.*)

(10) *Question: “Why are we here in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram?”*

The Mother's Answer:

“There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in his external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.

You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the Ashram, that is to say, still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus become the representatives of the new race.

Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favourable conditions with regard to the environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.

Now, all depends on your will and your sincerity. If you have the will no more to belong to ordinary humanity, no more to be merely evolved animals; if your will is to become men of the new race realising Sri Aurobindo's supramental ideal, living a new and higher life upon a new earth, you will find here all the necessary help to achieve your purpose; you will profit fully by your stay in the Ashram and eventually become living examples for the world." (*Ibid.*, pp. 116-17)

(11) "From the worldly standpoint, from the point of view of result achieved certainly things can be done better. But I am speaking of the effort put in, effort in the deepest sense of the word.... With that effort in your work the Divine is satisfied; the eye of the Consciousness that has viewed it is indeed pleased. Not that from the human standpoint one cannot do better." (*Ibid.*, p. 118)

(12) "An outside view may find many things to criticise and criticise much, but from the inner view what has been done has been done well. In an outside view, you come with all kinds of mental, intellectual formations and find there is nothing uncommon in what is done here. But thereby you miss what is behind: the Sadhana. A deeper consciousness would see the march towards a

realisation that surpasses all. The outside view does not see the spiritual life; it judges by its own smallness.” (*Ibid.*, p. 119)

(13) “We are not here to do (only a little better) what the others do.

We are here to do what the others *cannot do* because they do not have the idea that it can be done.

We are here to open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future.

Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of Sri Aurobindo’s help.” (*Ibid.*, p. 113)

(14) “We are here to do better than elsewhere and to prepare ourselves for a supramental future. This should never be forgotten. I appeal to the sincere goodwill of all so that our ideal may be realised.” (*Ibid.*, p. 114)

Here ends our section on the aims and purpose of the Education Centre the Mother established in Pondicherry in the name of Sri Aurobindo and which is still functioning there and will continue to function till its destined goal is achieved.

IX

SAICE: Courses of Study

It is well understood by most educationists that in Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education there cannot be any fixed syllabus for all the students of the same academic level, for "Free Progress" is the favoured norm there and in the free progress of the students it is inconceivable that different students, studying under the guidance of teachers of their choice and pursuing the lines of their own development, will have to be bound by the same fixed quantum of syllabus. But what about the nature of the Courses themselves? Is there any bias there in favour of some particular genre of studies? Is there any negative feeling, if not any pronounced antipathy, towards certain other courses and subjects? These questions arise because of some valid considerations. Let us elucidate.

Everybody is well aware of the fact that Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry is a reputed spiritual institution known all over the world for its distinctive brand of the Integral Yoga, Purna Yoga. Many hundreds of sadhakas and sadhikas permanently residing there are seriously practising this integral way of self-development and self-transformation. And Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is an indivisible integral part of the Ashram organisation and culture. Hence it is obviously expected that a religious-spiritual bias will definitely be at work in choosing the courses of study in the "Centre" and there will be a natural

downgrading of the common non-spiritual secular subjects. But is it really so? Of course, those who are somewhat knowledgeable automatically reject the idea of any pronounced religious training there. For they know that the teachings and world-philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are far removed from the propagation of any credal religion and its tenets: what they emphasise is an experiential spiritual outlook on life and the world-existence. And when such is the situation in fact, it is quite expected that the Ashram's Centre of Education will concentrate on "spiritual Courses of studies" in its Curriculum and neglect, if not actually denigrate, subjects like various branches of materialistic sciences and such other exotic secular disciplines which grip the interest of normal men of the world. But it may come as a surprising revelation to many when they come to know that the case is quite different and all subjects, even the most mundane, are taught to the students in this International Centre of Education with equal interest and enthusiasm. But why so? Why the cultivation of these subjects in an avowedly spiritual Ashram institution?

A similar problem puzzled many Ashramites when in the mid-forties of the last century the Mother introduced in Sri Aurobindo Ashram a full-fledged programme of physical education, ostensibly for the young school children but actually open to all the inmates of the Ashram, even to the veteran sadhakas and sadhikas of quite an advanced age. Sports and Physical education activities in Sri Aurobindo Ashram? What an anomaly! And Sri Aurobindo supporting the Mother in her new initiative! It was difficult to reconcile the two things on the part of many old-day sadhakas and

sadhikas of whom the vocal and forceful spokesman was no other person than the famous Dilip Kumar Roy who went so far as to write many a letter to Sri Aurobindo pointing out to him the oddity of the situation and asking for some clear explanation. Sri Aurobindo did not mind the tone of the letters addressed by his beloved disciple. He was compassion and love incarnate and explained patiently in letter after letter the genesis and the development of physical culture in the Ashram. He even wrote two long highly luminous articles on physical education and justified its appearance in his spiritual Ashram: These articles were published at that time in the Ashram Journal, *Bulletin of Physical Education*. Interested readers may look through these two articles and gain much insight. (The articles have been reprinted in *SABCL*, Vol. 16.)

Be that as it may, let us revert to our original discussion. The question that was raised was whether there is any compatibility between the spiritual nature of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the enthusiastic study of "secular" subjects in its "Centre of Education". The answer is: Not only compatible but actually necessary. But how? To comprehend the answer properly, we must know the basic tenets of Sri Aurobindo's world-vision.

In the normal conception of traditional ascetic spirituality, Matter and Spirit are antithetical; love of the earthly existence and a truly spiritual realisation are not compatible. To have one, one has to renounce the other. But in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga-philosophy, the Supreme One has at the same time a triple aspect, an aspect of transcendence, a second aspect of world-immanence, and a third one of indi-

viduation in every living sentient being. To know and realise him integrally, one cannot exclude any of these aspects; one has to realise him integrally everywhere. The world is not cut off from the Supreme; it is His own manifestation in infinitely multiform ways. To seek Him, find Him, and recognise His manifestation in Time and Space as beyond Time and Space, and in every object and in every creature, even in every phenomenon, is the valid goal of human existence. Everything else is a part of this achievement.

And if it is so, all life can and should become the field of Yoga; of course, if it is approached appropriately. The Divine manifestation is everywhere; He is peeping through everything but from behind an opaque veil created by our separative egoistic ignorance or Avidya. To lift this veil and see face to face the One who is Many, also to penetrate His manifold manifestation through phenomena of different categories and marvel at its infinite richness with spiritually ecstatic delight, should be the right object behind the study of various subjects. Thus it is not the subject as such but the spirit and the attitude behind its study that changes the quality of everything. There are not two different types of subjects, secular and spiritual; there are only two different types of knowledge, secular and spiritual, lower and higher; and this depends on how one approaches the study and investigation of a particular subject. The same subject offers us ordinary worldly knowledge if we study it in one way but leads us to spiritual knowledge if, instead, we investigate it in a different way. Thus SAICE does not exclude, on principle, any particular subject from its study Course; it only shows how to study it in order to lift it to a higher level.

After this preliminary introductory discussion of the truth behind, let us quote some passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which will make clear to our readers' mind what courses of study are offered to the students in Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and why.

(1) "To unite East and West, to give the best of one to the other and make a true synthesis, a University will be established for all kinds of studies. Our school will form a nucleus of that University." (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 218)

(2) "The division between 'ordinary life' and 'spiritual life' is an outdated antiquity." (*Ibid.*, p. 403)

(3) A teacher complained to the Mother that [what, according to his estimation, were] trivial and useless things were being taught [to the students...]

The Mother's Answer:

"Your difficulty comes from the fact that you have still the old belief that in life some things are high and others low. It is not exact. It is not the things or the activities that are high or low, it is the consciousness of the doer which is true or false.

If you unite your consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness and manifest It, all you think, feel or do becomes luminous and true. It is not the subject of the teaching which is to be changed, it is the consciousness with which you teach that must be enlightened." (*Ibid.*, p. 175)

(4) *Question: "Up to the secondary level, it is understood that the children are too young to know about Yoga and to decide whether they want to take up Yoga or not. So the education to them is education and nothing else.*

But for the Higher Course [here the students' ages vary from eighteen to twenty-one], I think, it must be made clear that only those who are here for Yoga can be admitted as members of this Course — then the education becomes Yoga.

If Mother gives Her directive on this point, it will make things very clear to many of us."

The Mother's Answer:

"It is not quite like that. In all the sections, Primary, Secondary and Higher Course, the children will follow yogic methods in their education and prepare and try to bring down new knowledge. So all the students can be said to be doing Yoga.

A distinction must be made, however, between those doing Yoga and the disciples. To be a disciple one has to surrender and the decision to do so must be full and spontaneous. Such decisions have to be taken individually — when the call comes — and it cannot be imposed or even suggested." (Ibid., pp. 179-80)

(5) *Question: "Sri Aurobindo, in one of his letters, has written about the young people and their readiness for sadhana. I enclose a copy of this letter for you to see. [See SABCL, Vol. 24, pp.1615-16.] I should like to*

know from you [Mother,] if the warning given by Sri Aurobindo in this letter against enthusiastically communicating to the young people the ideas and feelings about spiritual life should be kept in mind while speaking to our students in the class? Is there a danger of 'lighting an imitative and unreal fire' in them as Sri Aurobindo says here?"

The Mother's Answer:

"This quotation is splendid and very, very useful.

Certainly the warning given by Sri Aurobindo must be strictly kept in mind when speaking to the young people who are bound to change their mind easily.

In class you must remain very objective." (*Ibid.*, pp. 192-93)

(6) "Do not divide what is one. Both science and spirituality have the same goal — the Supreme Divinity. The only difference between them is that the latter knows it and the other not." (*Ibid.*, p. 248)

(7) *Question*: "We discussed the future. It seemed to me that nearly all the teachers were eager to do something so that the children could become more conscious of why they are here [in Sri Aurobindo Ashram as students of its Centre of Education]. At that point I said that in my opinion, to speak to the children of spiritual things often has the opposite result, and that these words lose all their value."

Mother commented at this point:

“ ‘Spiritual things’—what does he mean by ‘spiritual things’?... Spiritual things.... They [the students] are taught history *or* spiritual things, they are taught science *or* spiritual things. That is the stupidity. In history, the Spirit is there; in science, the Spirit is there — the Truth is everywhere. And what is needed is not to teach it in a false way, but to teach it in a true way. They cannot get that into their heads.” (*Ibid.*, p. 403)

“Mother, wouldn’t it be better if the teachers were to concentrate solely on the subjects they are teaching, for you are taking care of the spiritual life?”

The Mother’s Rejoinder:

“There is no ‘spiritual life’! It is still the old idea, still the old idea of the sage, the sannyasin, the... who represents spiritual life, while all the others represent ordinary life — and it is not true, it is not true, it is not true at all.

If they still need an opposition between two things — for the poor mind doesn’t work if you don’t give it an opposition — if they need an opposition, let them take the opposition between Truth and Falsehood, it is a little better; I don’t say it is perfect, but it is a little better. So, in all things, Falsehood and Truth are mixed everywhere: in the so-called ‘spiritual life’,... in those who think they represent the life divine on earth, all that—there also, there is a mixture of Falsehood and Truth.

It would be better not to make any division....

For the children, precisely because they are chil-

dren, it would be best to instil in them the will to conquer the future, the will to always look ahead and to want to move on as swiftly as they can towards... what will be..." (*Ibid.*, p. 404)

Let us close this section on Study Courses in SAICE with three passages from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which will make the position of his Integral Yoga-philosophy unambiguously clear.

(1) "The spiritual life does not need, for its purity, to destroy interest in all things except the Inexpressible or to cut at the roots of the Sciences, the Arts and Life. It may well be one of the effects of an integral spiritual knowledge and activity to lift them out of their limitations, substitute for our mind's ignorant, limited, tepid or trepidant pleasure in them a free, intense and uplifting urge of delight and supply a new source of creative spiritual power and illumination by which they can be carried more swiftly and profoundly towards their absolute light in knowledge and their yet undreamed possibilities and most dynamic energy of content and form and practice. The one thing needful must be pursued first and always; but all things else come with it as its outcome and have not so much to be added to us as recovered and reshaped in its self-light and as portions of its self-expressive force." (*SABCL*, Vol. 20, pp. 134-35)

(2) "This then is the true relation between divine and human knowledge; it is not a separation into disparate

fields, sacred and profane, that is the heart of the difference, but the character of the consciousness behind the working. All is human knowledge that proceeds from the ordinary mental consciousness interested in the outside or upper layers of things, in process, in phenomena for their own sake or for the sake of some surface utility or mental or vital satisfaction of Desire or of the Intelligence. But the same activity of knowledge can become part of the Yoga if it proceeds from the spiritual or spiritualising consciousness which seeks and finds in all that it surveys or penetrates the presence of the timeless Eternal and the ways of manifestation of the Eternal in Time." (*Ibid.*, p. 135)

(3) "A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature.... The mental and physical sciences which examine into the laws and forms and processes of things, those which concern the life of men and animals, the social, political, linguistic and historical and those which seek to know and control the labours and activities by which man subdues and utilises his world and environment, and the noble and beautiful Arts which are at once work and knowledge, — for every well-made and significant poem, picture, statue or building is an act of creative knowledge, a living discovery of the consciousness, a figure of Truth, a dynamic form of mental and vital

self-expression or world-expression, — all that seeks, all that finds, all that voices or figures is a realisation of something of the play of the Infinite and to that extent can be made a means of God-realisation or of divine formation. But the Yogin has to see that it is no longer done as part of an ignorant mental life; it can be accepted by him only if by the feeling, the remembrance, the dedication within it, it is turned into a movement of the spiritual consciousness and becomes a part of its vast grasp of comprehensive illuminating knowledge.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 132-33)

SAICE: The Status of “Certificates”

There is much confusion reigning in the minds of people, both inside SAICE and in quarters outside, as regards the question whether this particular educational Institution of the Mother's creation issues “Certificates” to its “successful” students or not. Some swear by the Mother's well-known declaration that Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education established in Pondicherry does not issue any Certificate nor does it confer any degree or diploma to the successful candidate after proper academic examination. But there are others who affirm equally strongly that they personally know many cases where the alumni of SAICE have secured lucrative jobs or have entered other institutions of higher learning on the basis of some “papers” issued to them by SAICE. And these “papers” they call “Certificates”. Both the affirmations have some truth behind them. But, then, how to resolve this apparent contradiction? The present article has for its aim the removal of confusion in this matter and the putting forward of the facts as they have evolved over the years and now prevail in SAICE.

In the early forties of the last century there were barely a few children in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Later on, a few more came from outside, mostly children of disciples and devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and started residing in the Ashram. For the education of these very young children the Mother established a school in the Ashram with the name

of “Sri Aurobindo Ashram School”. Of course, there was no question of giving any “Certificates” to these tiny tots.

As these children grew up in age and some of them decided to go away from the Ashram to lead an ordinary worldly life outside, the question arose whether they should be given some official certificate of recognition to enable them to pursue their higher education elsewhere. As the Mother had established her education Centre with a very high and different end in view, she decided that giving of certificates and degrees would be going counter to her principles of education. Later on, someone asked the Mother for some clarification and she explained her position quite at length. Here are some relevant portions of the Mother’s reply and the original question that was put before her.

Question: “Why are no diplomas and certificates given to the students of the Centre of Education?”

The Mother’s Answer:

“...mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more... it is what we may call ‘utilitarianism’. People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful—useful to whom, to what, for what?

For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract,

procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money.

Children who are infected with this disease are out of place at the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And

it is to make this quite clear to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination or competition and do not give them any diplomas or titles which they can use in the outside world.

We want here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true.

There is plenty of room in the world for all the others.”
(CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 353-54)

So this was the deeper and essential reason, and not any arbitrary whim, which was at the basis of the decision why Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education decided at first to refuse giving any degrees, diplomas or certificates. But things took a different turn after some years. The story or history behind was quite interesting.

In the sixties of the last century there grew among the Indians a sudden interest in the philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and along with that a vivid curiosity about Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. People started visiting the Ashram in great numbers and in a regular and steady stream. Many of them became devotees and disciples of the dual Gurus of the Integral Yoga and practising sadhakas and sadhikas.

Now, quite a few of these devotees felt an urge to send their children to Pondicherry to be educated in the Ashram's "Centre of Education"; for they sincerely felt that there could not be a better place elsewhere in India where their wards could be given a better man-making education than in

Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It so happened that the Mother graciously admitted many children, in every academic session to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. And this process continued year after year. These children grew up in the Ashram atmosphere under the Mother's direct guidance and blossomed into a new type of human beings in many aspects of their education, personality and character. But there was a small snag here.

Among the earlier groups of students of the "Centre of Education" quite a few used to stay back in the Ashram after their study period was over, sometimes because their parents were residing in the Ashram as its sadhaka inmates. But for these new groups of children the case was different. Their parents were indeed devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but they lived the life of householders elsewhere in other parts of India. They had sent their children to the Ashram, only to be educated in the Ashram School, and there the matter ended. A number of these parents wanted to withdraw their children to their own places after their schooling was over; and most of these children too thought in the same way. And that created a ticklish problem for both the students and their parents. For them, a proper education meant the acquisition of degrees, diplomas and certificates. Especially for securing a good job in a Government Department or even in the Private Sector, a good degree was considered essential. But according to the norm of SAICE, these students who were educated in the Ashram School could not have any degrees or certificates. In the job market outside they were considered ineligible. It could be said that their parents felt that their Ashram-educated children were

very much handicapped in one very important respect: they lacked the basic means of procuring a lucrative livelihood. Of course, there was no problem for those few children who decided to join the Ashram as sadhakas and sadhikas after their education period was over. But what about the rest who constituted the preponderant majority?

It so happened that many of these perplexed parents brought the nature of their acute problem to the notice of SAICE authorities and even prayed to the Mother for an appropriate solution. Then, of course with the tacit assent of the Mother, the Education Department of the Government of India was approached to help in some way the resolution of this practical problem.

The Government of India sent three different Commissions to SAICE on three different occasions, interacted with the teachers there, and intimately mingled with the students of the Ashram Centre of Education. They carefully assessed the quality of education imparted in this Centre of learning. The members of the Commissions apprised themselves at the same time of the great value of the various novel aspects in which the Ashram students were being brought up.

The Commissions were highly satisfied with all that they saw and assessed in this unique centre of learning and recommended accordingly to the Government of India in New Delhi for necessary steps.

In due course the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India issued a gazetted notification in 1962 which solved the problem in a great way. The Government notification officially recognised "the successful completion by 'full students' of the Higher Course of Sri Aurobindo Inter-

national Centre of Education, Pondicherry, as equivalent to the First Degree of a recognised Indian University (i.e. B.A. or B.Sc.) for purposes of appointment to services and posts under the Central Government." SAICE would thus have its own autonomy as regards the courses of study and its own specific way of assessment of the academic worth of its students when they completed their studies there. It would not be affiliated to any other Centre of Learning and would not be bound by the rules and regulations of any other institution. The only thing that it would have to do in order to help its outgoing students procure employment would be to issue to them a paper indicating therein that they had "*successfully*" completed the study as per the norms of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and subscribed to the evaluation procedure of the authorities there. Now, it is this simple paper which popularly has acquired in the mind the name of a "certificate". It has nothing to do with the "Certificate" as issued by other recognised Centres of Learning. Confusion has been unnecessarily created in the minds of people because of the similarity in appellations.

Be it noted that the initial Central Governmental notification authorised the employment of SAICE students only in jobs under the Government of India. But the intrinsic worth and competence, smartness and all-round development of these students drew the attention of other institutions and organisations as well very soon and in course of time the initial trickle of employment turned into a voluminous flood. We mean to say that various State Governments and Private Sector undertakings too opened their doors of employment to our "*successful*" students. Not only that; this opening widened in

course of time from the employment sector to the fields of higher education; various Universities and other institutes of higher specialised learning allowed access to our students for further studies. Such indeed was the worth and acumen shown by SAICE students in actual practice. There were many initial hurdles but they were very soon successfully crossed. Parents residing outside and their children were both very happy with this development; for the problem they had faced in the beginning was now adequately solved. But a hitch arose from another quarter, from some of the teachers of SAICE, — and many of them were quite senior. They sincerely felt that this development was not compatible with the basic principle of this Centre. Did not the Mother herself declare at one time that this Centre of Education would not prepare students for any official examination or competition and would not give them any diplomas or titles which they could use in the outside world? These teachers felt that although no degrees or titles were even now given to our students, some “paper of recognition” of their worth was being issued to them in the new dispensation. Was it not going against the Mother’s open declaration? They had a lurking suspicion that the whole development might have been due to the good-willed but nonetheless ill-conceived idea of the top functionaries of the Centre of Education. So, why not ask the Mother herself what her own personal opinion was about this “certificate” affair. And one of them actually formulated the question and placed it before the Mother.

And the Mother gave a most illuminating reply which threw light not only on this specific question but on many other serious issues of life and sadhana. We quote below

that sufficiently long reply of the Mother which was dated 29.7.61. There was a short introductory note which too we are reproducing below for everybody's knowledge.

("This message of the Mother has been written in answer to a question relating to certificates which one of the teachers had placed before her.")

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

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

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

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

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

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

what is needful.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 322-23)

N.B. — This message of the Mother was originally written in French.

So, the question of the so-called certificate was settled for the time being after the Mother made her position clear. And the “successful” students, — successful according to the norms set by SAICE, — continued to receive the requisite “paper”. Of course, there were some ups and downs in between. We need not go into the history thereof, for that will serve no useful purpose here. Let us only mention that when the question came up again after the Mother’s passing in 1973, a few senior teachers of SAICE wanted to revert back to the original position and stop altogether the by-then-established tradition of giving some “paper” to the successful students. Nolini-da, the seniormost and most respected disciple of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and André-da, Mother’s son and the de-facto Director of the Centre of Education decided in favour of continuing the system with, of course, the proviso that the so-called certificate could be issued only to the really deserving students. And the procedure continues till this day.

This short paper in this section of this book will, we hope, clear all doubts in many people’s mind.

XI

On Discipline

A student who has been properly trained in the art of employing in the right way the principle of "Free Progress" cannot but be automatically disciplined. And what is pleasing is that this discipline will come from within himself, a happy and highly beneficial self-discipline, and not something imposed upon him from outside by an alien authority, be he a teacher, a parent or a guardian. This imposed discipline cannot but stunt the free growth of a child and hamper the spontaneous flowering of his inborn personality.

Especially, if a particular student is trained to appreciate genuine beauty, — and by beauty we do not mean at all conventional physical beauty with all its cosmetic appendages, but the beauty of thoughts and feelings and sensations and behaviour, — ninety per cent of the task of disciplining him is already achieved. For he has not to be guided any more from outside with a stern set of "dos and don'ts", the default of which will carry its own requisite punishment; but the healthy sense of an inner beauty and harmony of the student will automatically dissuade him from indulging in any unbeauteous action or reaction. And that is one of the desirable side-effects of the "Free Progress" System of education.

However, all the students may not be at once up to the mark of the teachers' expectation. For them, here are some words, words of admonition and warning:

It seems necessary to draw once again the attention of

the students to the capital role that discipline should play in our "Free Progress" system of education. One has the right to be 'free' or even the possibility of becoming truly 'free' only if one is perfectly disciplined. Without genuine discipline, even the slightest self-control becomes impossible and one becomes all the time a mean slave of one's impulses and fantasies. But with discipline, you students have here all the opportunity for becoming constantly progressive.

Never forget that we want here, in our Centre of Education which bears the name of our Master, Sri Aurobindo, only those students who aspire after a truly higher and better life, who have thirst for knowledge and perfection, and ardently look towards a glorious future of truth.

We remind you once again that students here have the great possibility of making a genuine progress, internally as well as externally. But it is evident that if the general attitude and behaviour of a particular student leaves much to be desired, this will prove that he does not deserve to participate in the framework of "Free Progress", or still more, he does not deserve to be here.

Here are some words of the Mother:

"Discipline is indispensable to physical life....

Discipline is indispensable to progress. It is only when one imposes a rigorous and enlightened discipline on oneself that one can be free from the discipline of others."

(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 382)

Here is a question specifically placed before the Mother:

"Mother, what are the rules of conduct You consider indispensable in our community?"

The Mother's Answer:

“Patience, perseverance, generosity, broad-mindedness, insight, calm and understanding firmness, and control over the ego until it is completely mastered or even abolished.” (*Ibid.*, p. 375)

On Discipline
(Mother's Words to the Teachers)

The Mother spoke or wrote about the necessity of discipline much more to the teachers than to the young students. Because she did not like that the teachers themselves would not follow a discipline which they would like to impose upon their students, hoping all the time that mere admonition on their part would do the magic trick, when in fact the result would be exactly the reverse. We deem it proper to give below some of the significant words addressed by the Mother to the teachers of SAICE so that an all-round effort could be made towards discipline from both the sides, the side of the teachers as well as from that of the students.

(1) “Constraint is not the best or the most effective principle of education. The true education should open out and reveal what is already there in these developing beings. Just as flowers open out in the sun, children open out in joy. Obviously joy does not mean weakness, disorder and confusion, — but a luminous kindness that encourages what is good and does not severely emphasise what is bad. Grace is always closer to the truth than justice.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 193-94)

(2) "Generally speaking, above the age of twelve all children need discipline." (*Ibid.*, p. 194)

(3) *Question*: "Some teachers believe that you are opposed to discipline."

The Mother's Answer:

"For them, discipline is an arbitrary rule that they impose on the little ones, without conforming to it themselves. I am opposed to that kind of discipline." (*Ibid.*)

(4) *Question*: "So discipline is a rule which the child should impose on himself. How can he be led to recognise the need for it? How can he be helped to follow it?"

The Mother's Answer:

"Example is the most powerful instructor. Never demand from a child an effort of discipline that you do not make yourself. Calm, equanimity, order, method, absence of useless words, ought to be constantly practised by the teacher if he wants to instil them into his pupils." (*Ibid.*)

(5) "The teacher should always be punctual and come to the class a few minutes before it begins, always properly dressed. And above all, so that his students should never lie, he must never lie himself; so that his students should never lose their tempers, he should never lose his temper with them.... These are elementary and preliminary things which ought to be practised in all schools without exception." (*Ibid.*, pp. 194-95)

(6) "One can be in psychological control of the children only when one is in control of one's own nature." (*Ibid.*, p. 195)

(7) "Be very calm and very patient, never get angry; one must be master of oneself in order to be a master of others." (*Ibid.*)

(8) "If you cannot keep discipline amongst the children, don't beat or shout or get agitated — that is not permissible. Bring down calm and peace from above and under their pressure things will improve." (*Ibid.*)

(9) "You are a good teacher but it is your way of dealing with the children that is objectionable.

The children must be educated in an atmosphere of love and gentleness.

No violence, never.

No scolding, never.

Always a gentle kindness...." (*Ibid.*, p. 196)

(10) "...the teacher must be the *living example* of the virtues the child must acquire." (*Ibid.*)

(11) "The children must be *happy* to go to school, *happy* to learn, and the teacher must be their best friend who gives them the example of the qualities they must acquire.

And all that depends exclusively on the teacher. What he does and how he behaves." (*Ibid.*)

(12) "It is not with severity but with *self-mastery* that children are controlled." (*Ibid.*, p. 196)

(13) "I must tell you that if a teacher wants to be respected, he must be *respectable*." (*Ibid.*, pp. 196-97)

(14) "I have always thought that something in the teacher's character was responsible for the indiscipline of his students." (*Ibid.*, p. 197)

(15) "The most important is to master yourself and never lose your temper. If you don't have control over yourself, how can you expect to control others, above all, children, who feel it immediately when someone is not master of himself?" (*Ibid.*)

(16) "One rule which must be rigorously applied:

It is *absolutely forbidden* to hit the children — all blows are forbidden, even the slightest little slap or the so-called friendly punch. To give a blow to a child because he does not obey or does not understand or because he is disturbing the others indicates a lack of self-control, and it is harmful for both teacher and student." (*Ibid.*)

(17) "Disciplinary measures may be taken if necessary, but in complete calm and not because of a personal reaction." (*Ibid.*)

(18) *Question*: "How far do you consider it the duty of a teacher or an instructor to impose discipline on the students?"

The Mother's Answer:

"To prevent the students from being irregular, rude or negligent is obviously indispensable; unkind and harmful mischief cannot be tolerated.

But as a general and absolute rule, the teachers and especially the physical education instructors must be a constant living example of the qualities demanded from the students; discipline, regularity, good manners, courage, endurance, patience in effort, are taught much more by example than by words. And as an absolute rule: never to do in front of a child what you forbid him to do." (*Ibid.*, pp. 363-64)

(19) "For the rest, each case implies its own solution, and one must act with tact and discernment.

That is why to be a teacher or an instructor is the best of all disciplines, if one knows how to comply with it." (*Ibid.*, p. 364)

(20) "Naturally, as the consciousness and intelligence develop in the children, it is more and more through them that we can deal with the children." (*Ibid.*, p. 379)

(21) "A child ought to stop being naughty because he learns to be ashamed of being naughty, not because he is afraid of punishment.

In the first case, he makes true progress.

In the second, he falls one step down in human consciousness, for fear is a degradation of consciousness." (*Ibid.*, p. 364)

The last two sayings of the Mother sum up everything essential in the matter and let us close this section at this point.

XII

Two Potent Sources of Dilution

More than sixty years have passed since the Mother established the Ashram School with a very high goal in view — the goal of building up a new type of humanity and preparing the children for a glorious future. At first, she herself held the reins. The students and the teachers, the parents and the guardians, all understood sufficiently well the aims and the mission of this unique Centre of Education. But after the Mother's physical withdrawal from the scene, a distinct change has come in on all fronts, slowly and imperceptibly at first but markedly and quite fast in recent years. Let us try to understand how this state of affairs has come about.

In the earlier phase of SAICE, most of the parents who sent their children here for their education left them to the Mother's care. As a result the overall influence on their young and sensitive children was very wholesome. These young students imbibed the ideals of the place quite smoothly. But in recent times things have been somewhat different. We are constrained to state that many parents and guardians today do not much care to understand fully the implication of the "Students' Prayer" and of the "Declaration" given by the Mother to the students of her Centre of Education. For the benefit of the readers we are quoting here those two documents of supreme importance:

Students' Prayer

“Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.”

6 January 1952

Declaration

(The Mother indicated that repetition of the statement below, a hundred or a thousand times each day, until it becomes a living vibration, would help the student to instil in himself the right will and motive for studying.)

“To be repeated each day by all the students:

It is not for our family, it is not to secure a good position, it is not to earn money, it is not to obtain a diploma, that we study.

We study to learn, to know, to understand the world, and for the sake of the joy that it gives us.”

(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 202)

Well, these two documents of the Mother have not been fully taken to heart by many of us, especially the students. These words have not yet become a living part of our vision and consciousness. They are a far, almost inaudible, sound to the ears and heart and consciousness of the majority of present-day students of SAICE.

This is about our students. But what about the parents and guardians? We are sorry to say so but it is a fact that many of the parents are sending their children to SAICE with other motives than what the Mother had envisaged. They are eager to send their children here because they know that the education is ludicrously inexpensive, not taxing their budget at all and that to come out of SAICE with a so-called "Certificate" is a passport for their children to secure good jobs. How can we then expect that these students with their dreams of money and job and social position will co-operate in the fulfilment of the Mother's ideal of building up successful hero warriors of the future.

This is the first source of dilution corrupting our present-day students—surely not all of them but a large number without doubt—and this has its origin in the undesirable influences transmitted to them in a steady stream from their parents and guardians.

Now about the second potent source of dilution: this comes from the apparently innocuous factor of the Annual Vacation in SAICE. Let us elucidate.

As distinguished from other centres of learning, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education does not believe in giving periodic long vacations to its students. Study, according to its principle, should be the main occupation and preoccupation of the students and it should be a continuous and uninterrupted one. We have no Puja vacation, no summer vacation, no Christmas vacation or any other long vacation of the same genre. We have no occasional holidays either to celebrate religious or national festivals. Except for the Sundays and the first day of every month (called the "Prosperity

Day” when the inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram collect their monthly requirements), and, of course, the “Darshan Days”, SAICE has no holidays earmarked for its students. Classes continue throughout the year in two sessions every day (first, from 7-45 a.m. to 11-30 a.m., and next, from 1-50 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.). And in the absence of any other holidays and vacations, they have sufficient time at their disposal to make a thorough and sustained study of their self-chosen subjects. The proficiency they acquire is naturally of a very high order. Also, what is more important, their exposure to the Ashram atmosphere and to the basic values of SAICE as formulated by the Mother, becomes thorough and continuous. But there is a single exception.

There is one long annual recess—from November 1 to December 15. This long period was originally arranged with a particular purpose in view. The students used to prepare themselves collectively for a many-sided cultural programme on the 1st December and a demonstration of physical education activities the very next day, on the 2nd. Almost all the students stayed back in the Ashram during this period and there was no interruption in their life-style.

And then things began to change, slowly and almost imperceptibly at first, but in later years more clearly. We mean to say that by and by the students of SAICE stopped participating in the Annual Day programmes in the Ashram; instead, they felt it more desirable to go to their parents’ or relatives’ places elsewhere and come back only before the actual re-opening, for the next academic session beginning on the 16th of December. In recent times, many more have taken to this habit. And in this they are encouraged by their

parents and guardians. And the adverse psychological consequence of this long absence on the consciousness of the students is easily imaginable. Outside, in their respective places of temporary sojourn, these students are exposed to many undesirable influences and they actively imbibe other value-systems which are current in ordinary worldly life but poles apart from the values which the Mother's vision of a new education wanted to instil in their growing consciousness. When they come back to the Ashram after this long break to resume their studies in Mother's School, they almost feel like fish out of water and, what is still more ruinous, they potently disturb the atmosphere of SAICE and knowingly or unknowingly corrupt the other students.

Now, how to neutralise the bad effects of these two sources of dilution: the negative influences of a particular category of parents and guardians, and the adverse exposure to submerging outside values the students imbibe during their long sojourn in an alien milieu? We have no answer to offer here. We can only refer our sympathetic readers to some of the passages from the Mother's writings concerning this twin problem.

THE MOTHER ON PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

(1) *Question: "What is the role of parents or guardians in the Ashram? How should they contribute to a better education of their children?"*

The Mother's Answer:

"Here, the first duty of the parents or guardians is not to

contradict either by word or example the education that is given to their children.

In a positive way, the best thing they can do is to encourage the children to be docile and disciplined.” (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 367)

(2) *Question:* “There are several children here who are sent by their parents just for their education. The idea that they are only students and that they will go away from here after their studies, is already firmly fixed in their minds.

Once we know that these children have a clear idea of what they want to do, is it not better to advise them officially to go and study elsewhere? Or, because they have already been accepted, should we allow them to continue their studies and finish them here?”

The Mother’s Answer:

“Unfortunately, there are many parents who send their children here not because they think that they will have a special education here but because the Ashram does not ask money for their studies; and consequently parents need to spend much less money here than elsewhere.

But the poor children are not responsible for this transaction, and we must give them a chance to develop fully if they are capable of it. Therefore, we accept them if we see a possibility in them. And it is only when they clearly show that they are incapable of benefiting from their education here that we are ready to let them go if they want to.” (*Ibid.*, p. 362)

(3) "But there is one thing, one thing which is the main difficulty: it is the parents. When the children live with their parents I consider that it is hopeless, because the parents want their child to be educated as they were themselves, and they want them to get good jobs, to earn money — all the things that are contrary to our aspiration....

The parents have such a great influence on them that in the end they ask to go away to a school somewhere else.

And that, of all the difficulties — *all* of them — that is the greatest: the influence of the parents. And if we try to counteract that influence the parents will begin to detest us and it will be even worse than before, because they will say unpleasant things about us.

That is my experience. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the children have taken a bad turn because of the parents." (*Ibid.*, p. 434)

(4) "This seems indispensable to me. We should write a circular letter saying: 'Parents who want their children to be educated in the ordinary way and learn in order to get a good job, to earn their living and have brilliant careers, should not send them here.'

We should... And that is very important." (*Ibid.*)

(5) "...there are many, many parents who send their children here because it is less expensive than anywhere else. And that is worse than anything, worse than anything. We should... we should... we must absolutely tell them: 'If you want your children to be educated in order

to have a brilliant career, to earn money, do not send them here.’” (*Ibid.*)

(6) “There were some children who were doing very well and were very happy. They went to their parents for the holidays and came back completely changed and spoiled. And then if we tell them that, it will be even worse because their parents will tell them, ‘Oh, these people are bad, they are turning you against us.’ So... the parents must know that before they send them [their children].” (*Ibid.*, p. 435)

(7) “The danger is not the children, it is not laziness, it is not even that the children are rebellious: the danger, the great danger is the parents.” (*Ibid.*)

(8) “Those who send their children here should do it knowingly, they should do it because it is unlike anywhere else. And there are many who won’t come.... And those who come only because it is less expensive, well, they will stop sending them [their children]...”

I would like the attitude of our school to be made known to people before they send their children, because it is a pity when the children are happy and the parents are not; and that creates situations that are ridiculous and sometimes dangerous.” (*Ibid.*)

THE MOTHER ON HOLIDAYS

(1) *Question:* "Mother, every year we give a special prize to the best students of groups of A1 and A2. This year there is a boy who has worked very well throughout the year, but now he has gone home for the holidays and hasn't taken part in the [Annual] Demonstration of December 2. Do you think he should still be given the prize for this year?"

The Mother's Answer:

"All depends on how he left: whether it was to obey his parents or whether he wanted to go himself. If he wanted to leave, whatever his outer merit, it would perhaps be better not to give him the prize, because that would mean that we attach no importance to the inner attitude and to the student's understanding of the aim we pursue, that is, to prepare the men of tomorrow for the new creation." (CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 365-66)

(2) *Question:* "Mother, why and how does one lose one's spiritual gain by going outside? One can make a conscious effort and your protection is always there, is it not?"

The Mother's Answer:

"To go to one's parents is to return to an influence generally stronger than any other: and few are the cases where parents help you in your spiritual progress, because they are generally more interested in a worldly

realisation.

Parents who are chiefly interested in spiritual realisation do not usually ask their children to go back to visit them." (*Ibid.*, p. 161)

(3) *Question*: "Some children ask me what is the best way of spending their holidays here [in the Ashram]."

The Mother's Answer:

"It is an excellent opportunity to do some interesting work, to learn something new or [work on] some weak points in their nature or their studies.

It is an excellent opportunity to choose some occupation freely and thus discover the true capacities of their being." (*Ibid.*, p. 358)

(4) *Question*: "Mother, do you approve of students going to spend their holidays at home or elsewhere?"

The Mother's Answer:

"Rather, one could say that what the children do during their holidays shows what they are and how far they are capable of profiting from their stay here. Thus, the case is different for each one and the quality of his reaction indicates the quality of his character.

Truly speaking, those who would rather stay here [in the Ashram] than do anything else, are ready to take full advantage of their education here and are capable of fully understanding the ideal they are taught."

(*Ibid.*, pp. 358-59)

Here ends the Section on "Two Potent Sources of Dilution."

XIII

SAICE: The Cradle of a New Humanity

The preceding chapter may have sounded a rather depressing note. But this is just a passing aberration. The dark clouds are bound to float away after some time. The true destiny of SAICE is great and glorious! It is fixed by divine dispensation and cannot be checkmated by any agency, human or occultly hostile. The real purpose of this unique educational Centre is to help in the building up of a new humanity. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the life-long Tapasya of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have for their central aim the transformation of ignorant, imperfect and all-suffering humanity into a race of divine men, and on a far lesser scale the goal set before SAICE, the Mother's dream institution, is to help its students to grow into a new type of humanity freed from many of the current flaws and weaknesses associated with the race everywhere on the globe. This vision is clearly and unambiguously encoded in the "Students' Prayer" given by the Mother to the students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. The Prayer is as follows:

"Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them."

Some words, expressions and phrases are quite significant in this particular prayer meant for our students. These are: hero warriors; to fight successfully; aspiration; enduring past; future; new things. All these expressions should make it quite clear to all our students why they are here in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, studying in SAICE, and what the Mother expects from them. It is not brilliant careers, prosperous lives, social renown, lucrative jobs, great scholarship and things of that sort which they are preparing themselves for here in this unique institution, but to be candidates for the new humanity that is sure to emerge in the future. This they should never forget. Mother is there to help them always in fulfilling this task. But they, on their part, have to make a constant and sincere effort to make Mother's Grace effective. We append below some passages from the Mother's writings which should act as beacon lights to our students and as sure guidelines. With this help, they have to shape their actions and reactions in course of their daily life if they would like to be true children of the Mother and be fit to belong to the new humanity which is the dream-vision of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo so far as the ultimate product of SAICE is concerned. But before that it is worth recalling here what the Mother said to some of our students when they recited before her the "Students' Prayer" on one particular occasion.

"I am very pleased to hear the ideas and sentiments you have expressed just now and I give you my blessings. Only I wish that your ideas did not remain as mere ideas, but became realities. That should be your vow,

to materialise the ideal in your life and character. I take this occasion, however, to tell you something that I have wanted to tell you for a long time. It is with regard to your studies. Naturally there are exceptions, but it is the exceptions that give force to the rule. For instance, you asked for leave today. I did not think you required more relaxation. Your life here is organised on a routine of almost constant relaxation. However, I agreed to your request. But the way in which you received the 'good news' pained me. Some of you even seemed to consider it a victory. But I ask, victory of what, against what? The victory of inconstancy against the joy of learning and knowing more and more? The victory of unruliness against order and rule? The victory of the ignorant and superficial will over the endeavour towards progress and self-conquest?

This is, you must know, the very ordinary movement of those who live in the ordinary condition of life and education. But as for you, if you wish to realise the great ideal that is our goal, you must not remain content with the ordinary and futile reactions of ordinary people who live in the blind and ignorant conditions of ordinary life.

It looks as if I were very conservative when I say so, still I must tell you that you should be very careful about outside influences and ordinary habits. You must not allow them to shape your feelings and ways of life. Whatever comes from an outside and foreign atmosphere should not be permitted to jump into you — all that is mediocre and ignorant. If you wish to belong to the family of the new man, do not imitate pitifully the

children of today and yesterday. Be firm and strong and full of faith; fight in order to win, as you say [in your prayer], the great victory. I have trust in you and I count upon you." (CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 153-54)

Students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, never forget these reassuring words of the Mother: "I have trust in you and I count upon you." Show your gratitude to her by sincerely trying to fulfil her expectation. Act and react, and behave, always and in all circumstances, as genuine students of the Mother's Dream Institution. Do not consider SAICE as a replica, may be a brilliant one, of other conventional centres of learning. Never forget the unique aims and purpose that led to its establishment and put all your effort for their realisation.

Now the passages from the Mother's writings which, we hope, will prevent you from being derailed from the right Path. Victory to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother!

The Mother Speaks:

- (1) "We want to show to the world what must be the new man of tomorrow. Is this the example that we will set before them?" (*Ibid.*, p. 154)
- (2) "I insist on the necessity of having good manners. I do not see anything grand in the manners of a gutter-snipe." (*Ibid.*, pp. 154-55)
- (3) "Do not mistake liberty for licence and freedom for

bad manners: the thoughts must be pure and the aspiration ardent.” (*Ibid.*, p. 155)

(4) *Question*: “Isn’t this immense freedom we are given [here] dangerous for those who are not yet awake, who are still unconscious? How can we account for this good fortune we have been given?”

The Mother’s Answer:

“Danger and risk form part of all forward movement. Without them, nothing would ever move; besides, they are indispensable in forming the character of those who want to progress.” (*Ibid.*)

(5) “Discipline is indispensable to be a man, without discipline one is nothing but an animal....

One begins to be a man only when one aspires to a higher and truer life and accepts a discipline of transformation.

For this one must begin by mastering one’s lower nature and one’s desires. (*Ibid.*, p. 156)

(6) “When a child wants to impress you by telling you stories of the wealth of his family, you must not keep quiet. You must explain to him that worldly wealth does not count here [in this Ashram], ...that you do not become big by living in big houses, travelling by first-class and spending money lavishly. You can increase in stature only by being truthful, sincere, obedient and grateful.” (*Ibid.*, p. 159)

(7) "Lord, we pray to Thee:

May we understand better why we are here,
May we do better what we have to do here,
May we be what we ought to become here,
So that Thy will may be fulfilled harmoniously."

(*Ibid.*, p. 126)

(8) "Let our effort of every day and all time be to know You better and to serve You better." (*Ibid.*)

(9) "You who are young, are the hope of the country. Prepare yourselves to be worthy of this expectation." (*Ibid.*, p. 122)

(10) "...*your future is in your hands*. You will become the man you *want to be* and the higher your ideal and your aspiration, the higher will be your realisation, but you must keep a firm resolution and never forget your true aim in life." (*Ibid.*)

(11) "If the growth of consciousness were considered as the principal goal of life, many difficulties would find their solution." (*Ibid.*, p. 123)

(12) "Only those years that are passed uselessly make you grow old.

A year spent uselessly is a year during which no progress has been accomplished, no growth in consciousness has been achieved, no further step has been taken towards perfection.

Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years." (*Ibid.*, p. 122)

(13) "It is not the number of years you have lived that makes you grow old. You become old when you stop progressing.

As soon as you feel you have done what you had to do, as soon as you think you know what you ought to know, as soon as you want to sit and enjoy the results of your effort, with the feeling you have worked enough in life, then at once you become old and begin to decline." (*Ibid.*, p. 123)

(14) "When, on the contrary, you are convinced that what you know is nothing compared to all which remains to be known, when you feel that what you have done is just the starting-point of what remains to be done, when you see the future like an attractive sun shining with the innumerable possibilities yet to be achieved, then you are young, however many are the years you have passed upon earth, young and rich with all the realisations of tomorrow." (*Ibid.*)

(15) "For a happy and effective life, the essentials are sincerity, humility, perseverance and an insatiable thirst for progress. Above all, one must be convinced of a limitless possibility of progress. Progress is youth; at a hundred years of age one can be young." (*Ibid.*)

(16) "To know how to be reborn into a new life at every moment is the secret of eternal youth." (*Ibid.*, p. 124)

(17) "The work we do is not done with the expectation of something in return, but simply to help the progress of humanity." (*Ibid.*, p. 363)

(18) "What a child should always remember:
The necessity of an absolute sincerity.
The certitude of Truth's final victory.
The possibility of constant progress with the will to achieve." (*Ibid.*, p. 150)

(19) (Adapted):

(i) An ideal child does not become angry when things seem to go against him. (ii) Whatever he does, he does it to the best of his capacity and keeps on doing in the face of almost certain failure. (iii) He always thinks straight and acts straight. (iv) He does not get disheartened if he has to wait a long time to see the results of his efforts. (v) He faces the inevitable difficulties and sufferings without grumbling. (vi) He never slackens his effort however long it has to last. (vii) He keeps equanimity in success as well as in failure. (viii) He always goes on fighting for the final victory though he may meet with many defeats. (ix) He knows how to smile and keep a happy heart in all circumstances. (x) He does not become conceited over his success, neither does he feel himself superior to his comrades. (xi) He appreciates the merits of others. (xii) He observes the discipline and is always honest.

(xiii) He has faith in the future which is rich with all the realisations that are to come, full of beauty and light.

(xiv) He is full of love for all those who are around him.

(xv) He is full of confidence in the Divine Grace.

(*Vide ibid.*, pp. 150-52)

(20) “The true wisdom is to be ready to learn from whatever source the knowledge can come.

We can learn things from a flower, an animal, a child, if we are eager to know always more, because there is only One Teacher in the world — the Supreme Lord, and He manifests through everything.”

(*Ibid.*, p. 129)

(21) “When you feel that you know nothing then you are ready to learn.” (*Ibid.*)

(22) “You see, my child, ... you are too busy with yourself. At your age I was exclusively occupied with my studies—informing myself, learning, understanding, knowing. That was my interest, even my passion....

My mother was perfectly right and I have always been very grateful to her for having taught me discipline and the necessity of self-forgetfulness in concentration on what one is doing.

I have told you this because the anxiety you speak of comes from the fact that you are far too busy with yourself. It would be far better for you to attend more to what you are doing..., to develop your mind which is still very uncultivated and to learn the elements of

knowledge which are indispensable to a man if he does not want to be ignorant and uncultured.” (*Ibid.*, p. 130)

(23) “I told you that to yield like that to the impulses of the vital was certainly not the way to control it.” (*Ibid.*, p. 132)

(24) “Force yourself to study and your depression will go away.” (*Ibid.*)

(25) “Studies strengthen the mind and turn its concentration away from the impulses and desires of the vital. Concentrating on study is one of the most powerful ways of controlling the mind and the vital; that is why it is so important to study.” (*Ibid.*, p. 133)

(26) *Question*: “...intellect is like a mediator between the true knowledge and its realisation down here. Does it not follow that intellectual culture is indispensable for rising above the mind to find there the true knowledge?”

The Mother's Answer:

“Intellectual culture is indispensable for preparing a good mental instrument, large, supple and rich, but its action stops there.

In rising above the mind, it is more often a hindrance than a help, for, in general, a refined and educated mind finds its satisfaction in itself and rarely seeks to silence itself so as to be surpassed.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 138-39)

(27) "All that you know, however fine it may be, is nothing in comparison with what you can know, if you are able to use other methods." (*Ibid.*, p. 139)

(28) "The best way to understand is always to rise high enough in the consciousness to be able to unite all contradictory ideas in a harmonious synthesis.

And for the correct attitude, to know how to pass flexibly from one position to another without ever losing sight even for a moment of the one goal of self-consecration to the Divine and identification with Him."

(*Ibid.*)

(29) "One must learn always not only intellectually but also psychologically, one must progress in regard to character, one must cultivate the qualities and correct the defects; everything should be made an occasion to cure ourselves of ignorance and incapacity; life becomes then tremendously interesting and worth the trouble of living it." (*Ibid.*, p. 124)

(30) "...become my ideal child aware of your soul and the true goal of your life." (*Ibid.*, p. 127)

Let us conclude this last paper on "SAICE: The Cradle of a New Humanity" with the following admonition of our Sweet Mother:

"Now, what the intellect has understood let the whole being realise. Mental knowledge must be replaced by the flaming power of progress." (*Ibid.*, p. 141)

