# EDUCATION AND THE AIM OF HUMAN LIFE

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**Education and the Aim of Human Life**

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Two Cardinal Points of Education

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by

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Publisher's Note

This book is a study of the educational ideal of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and of the educational method being developed at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Its author, Pavitra, was the first director of the Centre of Education. In the first section of the book he affirms the need of an "integral" education - one aimed at developing all the faculties of the human being, including the soul and spirit - and outlines the character of such an education. In the second section he explains the new system being attempted at the Centre of Education. In the third he summarises the educational theory and method of the Centre of Education.

Pavitra (so named by Sri Aurobindo) was one of the early disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Born Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire in Paris in 1894, he graduated from the Ecole Polytechnique with a degree in engineering. After serving in the army in the first World War and working briefly as a junior engineer in Paris, he set out on a spiritual quest that led him to Japan, China, Mongolia, and finally India. There in Pondicherry in 1925 he met Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and remained with them for the rest of his life. In 1951 the Mother appointed him director of the newly-founded Sri Aurobindo International University Centre (later renamed Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education). He served in this position for eighteen years, until his passing in 1969 at the age of seventy-five.

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. . . they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit.

SRI AUROBINDO

Introduction

For the last few decades a growing need of reforming the old system of education has been felt. Insufficiencies in the intellectual alertness and in the character of the students, the spread of dissatisfaction and indiscipline, defects of a method of selection almost exclusively based on examinations, have become apparent and imposed a reappraisal of the whole system.
Theoretical criticism and experimental research in new methods of teaching have been carried out in several countries with interesting but hitherto inconclusive results. This partial failure is probably due to the fact that the search has not touched the root of the problem.

The object of this essay is

1. to show that the purpose of education at a given time is closely connected with the general conception of the aim of human life prevalent at that time;
2. to analyse the conception of progress as the main drive of the modern world, and to show that, as it is generally understood, it does not satisfy all the aspirations of the human being and that this insufficiency is at the root of the present cultural crisis and the shortcomings of education;
3. to show that it is possible to arrive at an understanding of the present crisis, not primarily as convulsions of a dying age of civilization, but rather as birth pangs of a new age, thus placing before man a fresh source of inspiration and a conception of progress more comprehensive and more satisfying;
4. to outline the views of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on an integral education and to show their relation to this new outlook.

## I

### The Purpose of Education

The aim of education is always twofold: there is a collective aspect and there is an individual aspect.

From the collectivity point of view, education is expected to turn the individual into a good citizen, *i.e.*, into a person who has harmonious relations with the other members of the community, who is useful to the society and who fulfils with zeal his obligations as a citizen.

On the other hand, it may be expected that education will give to the individual a strong and healthy body, help him in building up his character and attaining self-mastery, and supply him with good opportunities of discovering and developing harmoniously his natural abilities.

It is evident that both expectations are justified and we should take them into account while aiming at their reconciliation. We can achieve this only by a correct understanding of the relation between the individual and the society. We shall see later that the individual and the society can grow together and help each other in their growth. Sri Aurobindo has indeed shown how such a harmonization is possible, although it has
never yet been really achieved - and it may be very long before the human race can attain
to it.

In its imperfect vision of things, the human mind tends always to emphasize one
aspect to the detriment of the others. Thus, the recent trend in social thought is to give
more importance to the society and to regard the individual as a subordinate unit. Some
doctrines go so far as to deny to
the individual any legitimate right and aspiration except what the collectivity sees and
decides. Even when such an extreme position is rejected, it is certain that nowadays the
collective aim in education has overshadowed the individual, so that the problem of
education becomes almost exclusively: how to fit the individual to the need of society?

This is evidenced by the change we witness in the education programmes in answer
to the growing demand for scientists, engineers and technicians, and by the numerous
new institutions that are created to satisfy this demand. It is also clear from the scanty
attention that is paid to the individual development along the lines which are not
officially encouraged, with the result that there is an overspecialization, while a balanced
all-round development would be more beneficial for the individual.

By the need of society is meant what society thinks it requires. Temporary necessities
may arise (war, new discoveries, geographical or political changes) which may for some
time reflect themselves on education. But it is clear that the formulated requirements of
any society, as far as education is concerned, depend on the aim of human life as it is
conceived largely by the ruling class at the time. It may be general culture and adornment
of life - artists of all sorts will be encouraged and become the favourites of the princes. It
may be military aggrandizement and adventure - then soldiers and sailors will be needed.
It may be industrialization as a means towards material well-being - the need will be for
engineers and technicians.

There are other ways, less direct but equally powerful, in which the social outlook
influences education. For instance, our society is still a competitive one and, in so far as
the students are concerned, they are simply thrown into life after completion of their
studies, and have, with whatever help they can muster from family and friends, to find a
job and elbow for their place in society. Many find themselves in great difficulty, like a
person who hardly knowing how to swim is thrown abruptly into a river. This state of
things is partly an outcome of the disappearance of the old system of hereditary
occupation. Children are not expected nowadays to follow the trade of their parents.
More freedom and scope are given to the individual than in the past, but with a feeling of
insecurity as counterpart, and consequent mental tension. One may say that the future is open, but, when unemployment is rampant, for many the future is ominous and fraught with worry, depression and frustration.

It may be maintained that competition has a stimulating and invigorating effect, that it helps the strong and brilliant, and gives them access to key positions where they will be most useful, and that after all, it is an aspect of the struggle for life, whereby the strong survive and the weak are eliminated.

The trouble is that the weak are not eliminated from society. They are simply demoralized and sometimes broken down, filled with despair or rancour. The minor but useful contribution that they could have brought to society is certainly not enhanced by sense of frustration that will accompany them all through life. And society will have to accommodate them in spite of their increased deficiency.

We must combine this with the part played by money in modern society. Money is not a convenient means of exchange, whose function is to ensure the transfer of goods and services from the producer to the consumer; it is also the means bringing scientific discovery to translate itself into technological progress and increased productivity, by investment. Money is therefore in great demand and, becoming scarce, is in a position to dictate its terms and to exact an interest in return for its loan. Thus money has become the indispensable condition for material achievement and the gauge of success, with the result that everything is evaluated in terms of money. Even the few who are most ready to work disinterestedly for a good cause are in practice obliged. If not for themselves at least for their wives children, to reckon with money and the salary they will receive.

Moreover, money has become a corrupting agent. It is not the honest and capable who get it most, but often enough the clever or crafty. it is well-known that great financial wizards go walking on a tight rope with the risk of downfall at almost every step.

The result of this combination is obvious. For the students it is a race for diplomas, with its well-known bad effects on education itself: cramming and cheating. And afterwards, in life, it is the continued elbowing for jobs, and the widespread use of immoral means, leading to nepotism and corruption.

The pros and cons of examinations and diplomas have long been debated. The cons are generally felt as outweighing
the pros, but nobody has yet found out how to do without the current system. It seems unavoidable until the spirit of competition is replaced by the spirit of co-operation. There is an awakening to this need, but true co-operation is a superhuman task.

Every society has its bright and its black spots. There are times when the sores become apparent. It is a sign that a change is necessary or imminent. If the defects of education have recently come so much into the limelight, it is because our society itself is in a state of transition, because it has been thrust into an accelerated process of change and has lost its old moorings.

Such a picture, with variations of course depending on the social environment, will present itself to the young people when they try to conjecture the kind of life that is awaiting them in society. For a few the prospect is bright; many will have to accommodate themselves to a life far different from their cherished dreams; almost all are anxiously looking for a principle of action that would at the same time satisfy their conscience and ensure the security of their life.

It is often said that, as education is the building up of the thinking elite of the nation, much of the nation's future depends on its system of education. This is true to some extent. But conversely the general outlook of society has also a strong bearing on education itself so that education can only be reformed when a corresponding change has already begun in society, or at least when the necessity for such a change is being felt. This is the case especially in a period of crisis, when the established order of things is crumbling, when the ancient ideals have lost their hold, and youth is desperately in need of a guiding light, an ideal that can sustain its enthusiasm and carry it through the strenuous tasks of life. At such a time, when a reassessment of the fundamental values is essential, the importance of education is ten times greater - it may be decisive if the educational body is able to discern the evolutionary trend and perceive the ideal of the new age.

We may therefore in this connexion consider the nature and import of the conception of Progress, which has gradually spread over the whole world and is presented as the guiding principle of modern humanity.
There was a time when society was almost static in its vision. Children followed the
occupation of their parents and transmitted their knowledge and skill to their own
children. There was little change from one generation to another. Civilizations and
empires grew, bloomed and decayed, without affecting the ways of living and the outlook
of the masses. What men perceived in the contemporary events which they witnessed was
their intensity, their violence, not their evolutionary trend, which was invisible to them.

One can really say that the life horizons of the majority of men in fifteenth-century
Europe were almost unchanged from what they had been in Greece in the fifth century
B.C. It cannot be denied that the Indian peasant of the beginning of this century was
working under the same immediate aims of life, almost the same environment, as his
ancestors three thousand years ago.

The hard facts of nature, the pressing necessities of human life were accepted as
they were and the idea that a concerted effort and will could bring about a gradual
improvement of economic and social conditions was almost inexistent. Refuge was taken
in the hope of a distant heaven after death, or of a future rebirth upon earth or of a final
liberation from this apparently aimless chain of lives.

There is no doubt however that the ancient civilizations of India, China, Egypt,
Greece, Rome, still shining in the memories of men, produced people of the highest
character and ability. In the field of pure reasoning, the works of Greek mathematicians
indicate a level not below that of the modern mind. Also the monuments of the past bear
witness to the ingenuity and skill of the craftsmen, as for instance in stone-cutting,
carpentry, smelting, spinning and weaving, dyeing. Some achievements in architecture
and engineering

are of the first order and have withstood the ravages of time.

Kings, princes and ministers tried no doubt at times to improve the conditions of
their peoples, but these efforts were sporadic and localized in space and time; they never
formed a common heritage which could be used for the betterment of the lot of the
ordinary man. In fact, one is surprised to note what little attention was given to
alleviating the conditions of life and work of the toiler of the soil and the common
labourer. The plough and the means a carrying loads are, in the country-side of most of
the under developed nations, still much the same as they were in Egypt at the time of the
Pyramids.

As a result of this stagnancy the productivity of the labourer remained almost
constant for hundreds and even thousands of years. The only source of wealth was human
labour and accumulation of riches could only be achieved by plundering, squeezing or exploiting others. It is then easy to understand that a general enrichment could not be visualized. What was missing was the application of the mind to the mastery of physical nature and the deliberate an concerted effort to apply knowledge to the economic and social uplift of the whole society.

It is with the seventeenth century that the notion of progress dawned upon the human mind, and within two centuries Europe had become the scene of a great intellectual activity in the cause of general education and culture in an effort at emancipation from tradition, convention and prejudice, and with a keen interest in the theoretical an applied sciences.

This was the period of the "Enlightenment". An immense optimism swept over Europe. Says Condorcet (1743-1794) the French mathematician-philosopher:

There is no limit set to the perfecting of the powers of man. The progress of this perfectibility, henceforth independent of any power that might wish to stop it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us.

Then, with the effervescence of the Age of Reason, and through the upheavals of the English and next of the American and French revolutions, the notion of political equality was brought to the future with anew hopefulness.

At the same time, accelerated by the wars of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars, there began and spread what is known as the Industrial Revolution.

What gave it a truly revolutionary character, says Heilbroner, ... was not alone the fecundity of ideas and the newness of the machinery it produced, but their large-scale economic applicability. Inventions such as the power loom and the steam engine could no longer be said merely to decorate the surface of life, they penetrated to a hitherto ignored substratum of existence -its foundation of common labour. For the first time in history, the productivity of common toil was itself made the focus of systematic investigation. The consequences, in terms of man's conception of his environment, were of incalculable magnitude. Nature, which had hitherto been the master of man, now became his great slave.

We find from the pen of Marx and Engels the following appreciation of this great transformation:
The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjugation of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground - what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?

But mankind had to pay a heavy price for these achievements. What made them possible was the power of money - its accumulation by the bourgeoisie and its investment in machinery and equipment, what is known as capitalism - and this money was literally squeezed out of the labouring class. The nineteenth century was a terrible age for the industrial countries of the West, beginning with England and followed by the Continent and America. The conditions in the factories were dreadful, no consideration was given to the most elementary needs of a human being. Cheap labour had to be got, and cheap labour was got.

This exploitation of man was a first cause of disillusionment. The relations between workmen and employers were marked by bitterness and hostility; revolt - veiled or open - grew in the hearts of the industrial slaves. The workmen united and sought to fight capitalism and its tyranny by association. Here we find the origin of syndicalism, and a fertile ground for class hatred whose seeds have been deliberately sown by Marxism and so actively propagated by modern Communism.

This first disillusion was to be followed by others. The philosophers who initiated the Age of Reason claimed that science had as object the pursuit of truth and that progress towards truth would by itself ensure moral progress. Men, knowing more, would become more wise and, wiser, they would be better, more impartial and just. Well, this has certainly been belied by the subsequent course of events.

The great catchwords of the French Revolution - Liberty, Equality, Fraternity - which had aroused so much enthusiasm, have lost most of their content and become mere shadows of themselves. The democratic institutions, for whose establishment men fought and gave their lives, seem now so imperfect and so void, especially in time of emergency, that many nations have turned to more authoritarian forms of government. Political equality has been reduced to the right to vote, and voting has been deprived of much significance by demagogy and propaganda. We have seen
the most blatant autocracies acclaimed by the very people whom they were to ruin.

Moreover, science has abandoned its ideal of "truth". Limiting itself to the knowledge reached through the senses, and consistently refusing to admit any higher source of knowledge, science has found that it can truly know nothing. It declared henceforth truth unknowable and decided to confine itself to efficiency and convenience, \textit{i.e.}, it has taken utility and not truth as its criterion. No scientist would today claim that his theory is true, but only that it is compatible with the facts and permits prediction.

This stand was probably unavoidable, given the necessity of ridding the human mind of superstitions and idle accretions. Nevertheless by this fall from its \textit{dharma}, science has lost the power to help man to discover and fulfil the aim of his life.

True, progress has been tremendous in the scientific and technological fields, resulting in a marked advance in the economic sphere and a raising of the standard of living. With the improvement in the conditions of life and labour, there was no doubt an amelioration in the social relations. But human nature has not changed to any appreciable extent. What has happened in the world in the last fifty years is sufficient proof of this obduracy.

It is this apparent unchangeableness of human nature which is the radical obstacle to a wholesome and harmonious progress. Egoism and greed have always tried to divert any new discovery or improvement for the benefit of a few individuals or for a group - class or nation. Even the goodwill of men and their spirit of sacrifice have been exploited in this way.

No doubt there is something to write on the credit side: suppression of slavery and child-labour, improvements in the working conditions and the social status of labourers, general education, emancipation of women, improvement in health, elimination of famines, increase in longevity, etc. These are definite gains and I have no intention to minimize them. But one must underline the vast gap between the hopes and the realization - the dreams, one might say, and the reality.

The economists of the last century (Adam Smith, Riccardo, Malthus, Marx) were all very pessimistic about the improvement of social conditions. For them there was no betterment in prospect. The situation at the end of the century seemed to confirm this outlook. This had led some thinkers to question the notion of an all-embracing progress
of society. It was in Western Europe, at the beginning of our century, that strong criticism began to be levelled at modern civilization, taken as a whole. Books like Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses* brought this pessimism more visibly in front. They tried to prove either that civilization had reached its peak and was thence-forth on the downgrade or that it had missed the mark and betrayed its high ideals. They denied that the private morality, the level of social ethics and the general nobility of public ideals were now in any sense superior to those of the best of ancient civilizations. In fact, all the benefits of the material advance seemed to have been captured by the bourgeoisie, and the labourer was left to his misery. There was no sign that people in our age were really "happier" than in the past.

Although these pessimistic views were signs of uneasiness and misgiving, they were too contrary to the inner faith of man in himself to affect in any way the trend of evolution. Visible improvements in the social conditions soon became sufficient to warrant the belief that this betterment could be carried further and further till the differences between the classes of society were reduced or abolished. One had only to prevent the advantages of the technological progress from being monopolized by the ruling or propertied classes. These ideas are the foundations of the socialistic pattern of society with the realization of a welfare society as an ideal. We may observe that no definite mention is made of a moral or spiritual progress, but the hope is expressed that co-operation will willy-nilly replace competition in the relations between man and man.

With the passing years and the tremendous impetus given to scientific and technological progress by the two world wars, the fruits of patient investment began to manifest, the material and social improvements in the industrially developed nations could no longer be denied. The disparity between the common labourers and the white-collared staff and management has considerably diminished and a classless society is almost near at hand - although achieved by different methods in the capitalist U.S.A. and in the socialist U.S.S.R.

A new conception of wealth has thus emerged. As it has by now gained an implicit and general acceptance, it is difficult for us to realize its truly revolutionary character. It would certainly have startled the ancient philosophers and historians. As Bertrand de Jouvenel puts it:

The great modern idea is that it is possible to enrich collectively and individually all members of a society through
continuous progress in the organization of work, in its processes and instruments, that this enrichment provides by itself the means of its further development, and that this development can be rapid and indefinite.

But new questions arise. Technological progress has many social and political implications, pleasant and unpleasant. Great dangers are looming in the future, and doubts are rising whether humanity will have the foresight, the wisdom and the strength to avoid them. The vision of the future that emerges is depicted in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* and by many minor writers in fiction. The whole picture is frightful; it is a nightmare. In the same line of thought, we may mention the appearance of philosophies which dwell almost with pleasure on the absurdity of life. And truly, if this is what the future has in store for us, life is an absurdity. We should not forget that this trend of thinking appears when the material advance in Western Europe has exceeded all past performance.

In the U.S.A., where capitalism found its most favourable conditions owing to political, geographical and psychological conditions - abundance of material resources, paucity of population, the adventurousness of the emigrant settlers - the general outlook has been for long more favourable. The American people are optimistic and self-reliant. They have confidence in themselves and in the social order they are creating. They also believe that historic and other forces (including God) are on their side. They have achieved the highest material well-being hitherto attained upon earth, what may justly be called a civilization of plenty, with an abundance of consumer goods of all descriptions, food, houses, motor cars and aeroplanes, gadgets of all kinds. But they are somewhat disconcerted by the fact that the social order does not follow the same ascending movement. Criminality is rather on the increase, especially juvenile delinquency; the same is true of mental cases and the use of narcotics is spreading.

America would probably have already what is needed for a beautiful, rich and harmonious life for all, if the competitive system of its industrial organization were not mortally afraid of a decline in the rate of production. Some economists have maintained that a very serious obstacle to total disarmament is the fear that an extensive cut-down in military production would cause an industrial recession of unprecedented magnitude. This is debatable: a planned reconversion of industry was achieved immediately after World War II and seems equally feasible today. But one thing is certain, that modern economy is based on an increased production and, with a view to increase the industrial
output, an artificial stimulation of the needs is resorted to by publicity on a vast scale. A considerable amount of expenditure is directed to the acquisition of superfluities, to such an extent that the expansion of well-being has been perverted into a civilization of gadgets. And with the gradual reduction in working hours and the prospect of a civilization of leisure, people are beginning to feel uneasy, as if they were baffled by the very abundance that is bestowed upon them.7

As an illustration, I shall quote an American writer in one of the recent issues of Life:

Many thoughtful Americans are disturbed because as a nation we seem bereft of a sense of purpose. We have the mood and stance of a people who have 'arrived' and have nowhere else to go. We have tried to fill ourselves with science and education, with better living and pleasure, with the many other things we thought we wanted, but we are still empty and bored. We are confused by the prejudice, hatred, greed and lust that are within us. We seem to be caught helpless in quicksand: we want out of our human dilemma but are powerless. The American genius has enabled us to change virtually everything but ourselves. It is absolutely impossible to change society and reverse the moral trend unless we ourselves are changed from the inside out.8

The ideal of a welfare society, which has taken possession of the mind and heart of man, was indeed a great historic force in shaping the modern world.9 But as it is drawing close to its realization, it is losing its inspiring power. It is no longer generating the old enthusiasm, as is evidenced by the decline of the socialist parties in Western Europe. This ideal has to give way to a higher or deeper ideal. Otherwise a dangerous vacuum may be created leading to disruption and chaos.

From all this, two facts emerge almost with a certitude:

1. Humanity has definitely turned its face towards the future. Man knows that he can change his lot. He knows that more and more he will have the power to influence his destiny. An elimination of poverty and disease, a life of abundance and leisure are almost within the reach of the most advanced nations. The latest discoveries of science have put in our hands an immense, almost limitless power which can be turned for the ultimate material liberation of man from the curse of labour" or for his own destruction. 2. But we know also that all the material achievements, however needed, will not satisfy us in the end, if they come alone. They will leave us weary and empty.

What then is missing?
There is in man an aspiration to master his own nature, to outgrow and surpass himself, to give himself, to create beauty, to know more, to love more. The Spirit, the Divine within, presses for emergence and mastery. When the spiritual element in man comes forward and gains ground, even a little, then true joy reveals itself. Here only can we find plenitude and happiness, a satisfaction which does not leave any bitter taste.

There is in man the search for the Absolute.

In former times, man turned to religion to satisfy aspirations which seemed to be denied by his surroundings. But religion is gradually losing its hold, and the young especially are turning away from it.

One reason is that all religions take their inspiration from the past. Their founders or heroes were mighty figures who lived centuries ago, in a world far different from the one we know. The problems they had to solve have little in common with the situations in which we now move. We may admire their fortitude, their unflinching devotion, their sovereign detachment, but it is difficult for our young people to believe that their example is applicable to the present-day life.

Another reason is that religions have always laid emphasis on a world beyond, giving to this one only a passing importance. For some religions this world is an illusion from which we have to awaken. For some it is a cosmic snare from which man has painfully to disentangle himself. For others it is a place of trial, in which a divine decree has placed us so that we may gain immortal life elsewhere when our term is finished. All religions have more or less shunned the world and life, and declared them impure, debased and incapable of regeneration. What our young men and women are truly looking for is to know the aims of their life - of human life in general, of their own life in particular - to find an ideal that can give a meaning to their daily work, to their joys and sorrows, to life in the society in which they are going to enter, and at the same time help them in growing towards the mastery and perfection which vaguely but intimately they feel waiting in the depths of themselves.

In short they aspire to Heaven, but they cannot repudiate the Earth.

The advent of Progress has really cut the course of history in two: one epoch in which men were looking to the Past, another in which they turn their look to the Future. As Heilbronner notes:

Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, the past Asiatic civilizations, even the Renaissance, did not look ahead for the ideals and inspirations of their existence, but sought them in their origins, in their ancient glories, their fabled heroes, their pristine virtues real or
fancied. Unlike modern man, who dreams of the world he will make, pre-modern man dreamed of the world he had left.

This is a remark of profound significance for the understanding of the modern crisis.

It is the urge of the Spirit towards mastery and perfection that is the motive power behind the modern conception of Progress. Perfection was certainly a living ideal in many religions and self-mastery an aim of all spiritual disciplines, but their ultimate end was self-transcendence and they were also almost exclusively concerned with the individuals. They had little bearing on the social and physical life of the collectivity. *The world was not an object of interest for the yogins and spiritual seekers of old.*

There has now been an awakening to the possibility of an advance, through a concerted effort of mankind, towards some perfection and mastery in the material and social life. This very possibility has inspired the mind and inflamed the heart of man with a stupendous fervour and energy.

When we see to what sacrifices people have been moved by this ideal of a New World to come, what sufferings - humiliation, exile, torture, prison, death - have been endured by rebels and revolutionaries so that future generations may see "The Day", we realize how powerful the appeal is.

It is from this ideal that the communist faith has drawn its motive force. But, as the communists visualize only an economic and social progress, not a spiritual change for which they have at present no place, they are bound to meet with the same disillusionment as the capitalist system. The disillusionment can be avoided only if, having satisfied the immediate material needs of the masses and being confronted with a growing uneasiness and sense of emptiness in the lives of people, they awaken to the necessity of a deeper life and give to Progress a wider meaning.

The so-called under-developed countries will follow the same path. They have to catch up in material development - that is, in the scientific, technological and economic fields - and for that there is only one process: industrialization. The forces that work for the unification of the world demand it, and they are too strong to be resisted. No country can for long remain isolated, culturally and economically. The means of transportation and communication have made our planet so small that what is happening in a country has immediate and widespread repercussions the world over. Nations have become interdependent. The need of catching up on the economically rich is being felt by all the
economically poor; and if they did not feel it themselves, the facts of geography and history would sooner or later impose it.

Industrialization has several aspects, the most important of which are the formation of technicians and the industrial equipment of a country. The building up of power stations, irrigation projects, heavy industry plants requires an enormous amount of capital investment, which has to be poured into the country within a short time. Outside financial contribution, even if it is forthcoming on a large scale, can only minimize the difficulty, it cannot eliminate it. What is certain is that any country undergoing the process of industrialization must find at home most of the needed capital through the mobilization of savings and taxation. Production and import of consumer goods will be restricted so that all available resources will be directed to the production and import of equipment goods. One of the effects will be to keep at a low level the purchasing power, and this will impede the rise of the standard of living in the country. A great sacrifice will be demanded from the people, and from all classes of society.

It means that for a considerable length of time, several decades at least, and in spite of very hard work, the standard of life will rise very slowly, if at all. Such is the price to be paid for industrialization.

The process can be achieved only if there is a great unity of purpose in the country. This unity of purpose may be created in two ways, by persuasion or by compulsion - in a democratic or in a totalitarian way. Persuasion is a difficult task - habits, prejudices, vested interests, misunderstandings - stand in the way. Compulsion may appear the easier way, but it is a painful one as it proceeds by elimination of the dissenting voices and by intense propaganda. Many of the things highly valued in democracies will be encroached upon, at least for a time: individual freedom, private property, freedom of the press, etc. Compulsion may achieve quick results, which for many will justify the price. The persuasion methods will probably be slower, as the pace of investment cannot be set so high. If the standard of life is not allowed to rise at all, the situation will become intolerable. An increase there must be, but even then the progress will appear so slow that people may get tired, disgruntled and impatient. They will criticize what will appear to be the incapacity of the government and some elements of the population will agitate for quicker, or slower, methods. Indeed, for persuasion to succeed, there must be a strong and living ideal which has to be created if it does not already exist. It will be the aim of the next chapter to present such an ideal appropriate to our time.
Up to now we have not spoken of the quantitative aspect of the material progress. Statisticians have found that the economic growth - industrial output, yearly income, etc. - evidences an increasing rate of advance. It means that economic progress is accelerated. The graph which the economists draw to represent it is not a straight line, however steep, but a curve much more rapidly ascending, an exponential curve. And many come to the conclusion that the gap between the highly developed and the under-developed countries is bound to increase and not decrease, unless some unforeseen event changes the course of history. But this is a controversial question and we need not enter into it.

However one thing is certain. Those of us who are 60 or 70 years old have witnessed many changes since childhood, and we know that the changes are pressing on more and more, whether in science, technology, social evolution, political affairs at home or abroad. The whole world seems to be moving faster and faster. It is likely that this tempo will still accelerate, so that it will become increasingly difficult to keep abreast of the time. Already signs of stress are visible in many domains of human life.

Serious thinking about the future of mankind can now be found outside the field of social philosophers and historians. A very interesting example is the "Prospective" movement, about which I shall give a few indications as it is only of a few years’ existence and is still little known outside France, its country of origin.

A number of men in positions of authority, mostly in industry, finance and education, accustomed to decision and planning, decided to form an association with the aim of studying and defining the attitude we should have towards the future. Several symposia were held under the auspices of that association and the results of the exchange of views were published in a magazine with the title \textit{Prospective}.

Owing to the accelerated rate of change of the modern world, planning in the public as well as the private sector has become imperative. But planning requires some knowledge of the future. Not only do we know little about the future, but we know hardly anything about the conditions that would facilitate an access to the future. Up to now the future has generally been considered as a "continuation of the past", because, it was thought, the future is created by the very forces which created the past. Well, this is an entirely unfounded assumption. It supposes that the same forces will continue to act and that no new force will intervene. This may have been approximately true when society was static and change small. But nowadays it does not hold at all. The future will depend, not only on the forces which created the past, but on our action.
Tomorrow's problems do not exist today. Some of them will rise out of fortuitous occurrences, but the larger part will spring up from our own action, by which the present structure and balance of forces will be changed. It is therefore wrong to try to understand the future by simply studying the past. Paul Valéry had already written vividly: "We are entering the future moving backwards", i.e., the eyes fixed on the past.

Future is not [only] what comes 'after' the present, but what is different from it and especially what is 'open'. Future is not 'closed', it is 'open'.

Moreover, a correct understanding of the present requires a certain insight into the future; knowledge of the past is insufficient. Would one grasp the meaning of the chrysalis from the knowledge of the caterpillar alone? But the meaning becomes clear when the butterfly is known.

Again, we are living not in an old world, tired and exhausted, but in a world in constant rejuvenation, as it displays more and more new possibilities. There is everywhere a strong urge to try for new solutions for both old and new problems.

It has become imperative to penetrate into the innumerable possibilities that the future contains, and analyze them. The reasoning mind alone is not a suitable instrument for the purpose; it must be supported by imagination - not an imagination which is a loose play of images, but ...

...a disponibility [i.e., openness] of the mind, which refuses to be imprisoned within rigid frames, and for which nothing is ever decisively settled and everything may at any time come back into question (J. de Bourbon-Busset).

The disposition of the mind which tries to seize the newness of a situation, what makes it different from the past, has been called the "prospective" attitude.

One is therefore led to distinguish two kinds of prevision: one which considers what will be as a prolongation of what has been, a simple projection of the past, the other which explores the future as an unknown land. To these two extremes of prevision, it is proposed to give the names respectively, "projection" and "prospective".

The characteristics of prospective, as distinguished from projection (or ordinary prevision), have been defined; to give an instance:

... prospective is not interested in events, but in situations; it does not supply dates, or in case it gives dates, it is with a wide approximation. It can thus reach a high degree of certitude, for previsions are more likely to be correct when they cover a long period than a short one.
Place, does not allow me to say more about the "Prospective" movement. I shall only give some of its first conclusions about our future itself:

During prehistoric times, species underwent sometimes slow evolutions, sometimes swift mutations. But they were un-conscious of either. Mankind today has the privilege - and the responsibility - to transform itself knowingly. It rests with man to choose his destiny (Gaston Berger).

It seems certain that man cannot proceed for long while keeping the same ways of thinking, the same discrepancy between thought and life. Adaptation to changing conditions will become increasingly difficult. Shall we find a way of becoming more adaptable? This new adaptability would not be the taking of new forms or a new attitude, more adequate than the old ones; it would mean

... not to set in any attitude, but to become open, plastic, flexible, to remain quiet in the midst of agitation and to learn how to be happy in mobility (Gaston Berger).

To show how much the question of adaptation to a moving world is among the pressing preoccupations of responsible leaders, I may quote the words of Prime Minister Nehru when leaving Palam Airport for New York on the 26th September 1960 to attend the United Nations session. Asked if the handling of the situation in the Congo was one of the causes of the present world crisis, Mr. Nehru said:

The reason is basically that the normal human mind is lagging behind the great technological achievement of the age and it is functioning in an almost pre-technological age, trying to catch up with it. World movements and world problems are also governed by the technological changes, but the human mind which produces the technological changes still sticks to the old ruts. So there is a gap. What value has a national frontier when one flies in a jet plane? That brings or ought to bring in a new sense of responsibility on human beings, including the moral responsibility of adapting themselves to it. The average human being is constantly finding it difficult to adapt himself to it. Most of us live in the past age, mentally and physically.

This remark has not lost its actual interest, as can be seen from a recent statement by U Thant at the United Nations, which has been reported under the caption:

_U Thant Thinks It Is High Time to Change Human Nature_

Unity Nations, 10.4.67 - The fact that a fraction of the money the world is going to spend for armaments in 1967 could suffice to finance in a hitherto unimaginable measure economic and social programmes, both national and international, is a notion well within the grasp of the man in the street.
Now men are henceforth in a position, if united, to foresee and to a certain extent determine the future of human development. This is however possible only if we stop being afraid of one another, harrying one another and if, together, we accept, welcome and prepare the changes that have inevitably to take place.

If that means a change of human nature, well, it is high time to work at it; what has certainly to change is certain political attitudes and habits of man.19

According to some writers of the "Prospective" movement,20 there is bound to come a "kind of mutation of the ideas which govern the world" (Jacques Havet). Others foresee a more profound transformation: .

Obviously, the principal method of 'prospective' is the extrapolation, the extension of observed curves, of trends and orientation, and their projection into the dimension of the future. This method would not of course admit of application without a great many precautions, correctives and reservations, on the one hand arising from the almost infinite number of factors liable to intervene, on the other hand because of the distortion of the very systems of reference.

Nevertheless, when we notice that a number of curves drawn from widely different fields of data and having therefore a certain amount of mutual independence, tend in the same direction, we may reasonably think that at their point of convergence there is 'something that occurs' that we may try to encompass. And this in the same way as the radio-telescopes signal to us the existence, somewhere in interstellar space, of 'something' that we cannot see but none-the-less try to specify.

We are inclined to think that the phenomena or the group of phenomena whose existence is heralded by such curves (of which instances can be multiplied) is of an amplitude that transcends the present capacities of our imagination, and that this is of the same order of magnitude as a biological mutation. We stand before an imminent explosion (in the biological sense) of humanity.

This foreseeable, may be calculable, phenomenon, seems to carry with it the appearance of a new human type. Undoubtedly, we have to abandon the old cradle-song of humanism, "the eternal common fund of man", shake up our routine-bound imaginations, put away in a drawer the antiquated pieces of the old chess-board, and get ready for something altogether different.

This something - one can, and one should, try to reckon its site, draw its obvious outline, prepare and promote its advent; for it is sprung from our line, and it is we who have its charge.21
India with her unique spiritual tradition has a problem of her own. She is at present torn by two tendencies. On one hand, she feels the need of eradicating material backward-
poverty. Facing resolutely the future, she has entered full-heartedly into a vast programme of industrialization. She had to; the unity of the world demands it and would impose it by force if necessary. Only it may be questioned whether India will have to follow the same long road that the industrial nations of the West have trodden, pass through the same experiences and the same disappointments. The defects and dangers of a conception of progress restricted to material well-being and to social adjustments are now sufficiently evident to urge us to aim farther and higher. One may reasonably doubt whether the ideal of a welfare society will carry India a long way through the economic, social and cultural crisis which she is now facing.

On the other hand India is still drawn powerfully by her past, a past in which she had lived until very recently and in which are found the sources of her spiritual tradition.

There lies a painful dilemma. A price will have to be paid for this industrialization, and not a light price either. Investment has to be resorted to on a large scale and, as we have explained, this means that the standard of life cannot be allowed to rise as hopefully expected. The endurance of the nation will be taxed to the utmost. The severity of the effort will be difficult to bear. And this at a time when the old ideals are collapsing. The moral standards are deteriorating, the elite is baffled and submits to the new gospel coming from the West, youth is searching for its way in the darkness and does not find it. It appears that the price India will have to pay for catching up with the technologically advanced countries is the loss of her spiritual greatness.

And still there is a hope. For there is nothing which prevents India from looking into the future for her fulfilment. Hinduism is not a "closed" religion, i.e., a religion which is centred exclusively on a single great personality of the past, its founder. Great sages have throughout the ages rewritten the Eternal Dharma to fit the need of the age. This is a point of immeasurable importance which makes India's position unique.

As late as yesterday it was Sri Ramakrishna who came to enrich the spiritual inheritance of India by including in it all religions, showing by his experience that God - the same God - can be found and reached through all religions. The unity of all religions is truly the message that Sri Ramakrishna brought to India and to the world.

It was left to another son of India, Sri Aurobindo, to show that India has in her soul the power to link in one great movement the past and the future. He shows us that the
highest aspirations of the race can and will be fulfilled here upon earth, that we are at the
dawning of a new Age, and that an unimaginably wonderful future lies ahead of humanity.

With Sri Aurobindo, the past is luminously linked with the future.

If we can understand and accept this ideal and make it a living and dynamic reality, it will give us the meaning of the present world crisis, and illumine our way. To youth it will give a purpose in life and the strength to achieve this great destiny.

III

The Dawning of a New Age

The synthetic vision of the Vedas and the Upanishads forcefully restated by the Bhagavad-Gita, was later broken up into opposing philosophic systems, although attempt were made from time to time to recombine them into some image of the original intuitive unity. One of these attempts is the large synthesis of the Tantras.

Sri Aurobindo has taken up again this unifying endeavour and reconciled opposing views of the three great Acharyas. He has shown that the main Vedantic conceptions of existence are not mutually exclusive, but rather represent aspects of the total truth. According to him, each of these views is valid and none completely true without the others. Without pretending to sum up his thought in a few words, I shall try to make clear its general trend.

Each religion, each system has seized one aspect of the Absolute and set it up as the sole truth. But every aspect is true, relatively and partially, and is false when it puts itself in opposition to the others. It is a great tragedy that the understanding of man cannot seize any particular truth without at once opposing it to its complementary truth which is as valid as itself.

The Supreme is at once the One and the Many; He is simultaneously immanent and transcendent; He is at once personal and impersonal; and yet He is beyond all the formulations. The Jivatma, the individual self, is a reality the same time distinct from, related to and one with the Supreme.

Nothing exists but the Supreme. If He is all. He is all the contraries, all the opposites, even while He remains the Absolute and is beyond everything. All that exists has come out of Him, remains in Him, remains Himself. The separation is only an appearance. It is He who lives, feels and thinks behind a limited consciousness in all beings. The
manifestation of this world out of the Supreme is accomplished through a double movement of descent and ascent. The descent is an *involution*, a veiling, a limitation of consciousness by successive steps. Thus the various worlds or planes of existence were brought into existence with physical matter as the ultimate densification. The ascent is an *evolution*, that is an emergence from matter and a development of the powers of consciousness concealed in matter. The limitation of the supreme Consciousness, its burial in matter in order to evolve a complex universe by a progressive emergence of the powers of this consciousness, is the key to the universe. Matter is the same in essence as consciousness; it is consciousness veiling itself to itself. In a way, matter is spirit condensed; there is no essential difference between the two, all the powers of the spirit are buried, asleep in matter. The aim of evolution is to reveal them, to manifest them.

If that is so, the world is not the contrary of God, it is not a place from which the Divine is absent. He is here, present everywhere. It is He that lives, feels and suffers in every one of us and who, in us and through us, reveals progressively His attributes: beauty, knowledge, power and love. The world is not a creation out of nothing, outside of God; it is not an illusion destitute of reality (even though the view that we have of it be necessarily limited and false); no more is it a place of trial wherein created beings have been placed in order to expiate a fault that they have never in their own persons committed. It is rather a field of experiment where one of the innumerable possibilities that exist in the Infinite is actualizing itself on a gigantic scale. No doubt other worlds exist, have existed or will exist, which will unfold other possibilities.

Our universe bears the stamp of separatism. This initial cleavage in the consciousness has permitted the multiplicity to lose the underlying unity. Thus has come about ignorance by the loss of global knowledge and a lack of comprehensive vision. Hence also separateness, *i.e.*, the illusion the individual has of being separate from all and of having the power to oppose all - what man calls his liberty and takes pride in. Ignorance and apparent liberty imply the possibility of self-deception, and consequently error, weakness, opposition, disharmony - in a word, evil. Evil is the price paid for apparent liberty. This illusion of separateness and liberty is, no doubt, necessary for a time; it marks a stage in the development of self-consciousness. By it, the, cosmic realization will attain a depth, a
richness, a power which would not otherwise have existed. The fall into the abyss will have permitted the conquest of the highest summits.

As each movement of consciousness has inevitably to develop all its consequences and to bear its fruits, separative ignorance has reaped an ample harvest, - falsehood, hatred, sorrow, death.... But these attributes have not an inevitable character. They are consequences - but not ineluctable consequences - of the veiling of consciousness that we call involution. The birth of consciousness in what is apparently inconscient matter and the subsequent evolution will redeem matter and reunite it with spirit. Harmony it possible here in the material world; matter is capable of containing and manifesting the glorious perfection of the spirit in a play of ever-increasing joy.

Thus understood, the present imperfection of our world receives a satisfactory explanation. It is in reality transitory, tied to only a phase of cosmic development. The universe is not static, it is essentially dynamic, in constant evolution, not only from the physical point of view, but also from the subler viewpoint of consciousness. And this evolution has a direction; it aims towards a progressive manifestation of the powers of consciousness. Matter, on the physical plane, pressed by the forces of the vital and mental planes, of those worlds of life and thought which along with the world of matter constitute our universe, has organized itself and produced life. Animate forms have developed progressively in the vegetable and animal kingdoms throughout prehistoric times. In the animal, the forces of the mental plane have successfully fashioned an instrument permitting them to establish contact with matter: thought is born in the physical world. Consciousness buried in the substance of the mineral kingdom has thus traversed by a slow and multiform ascent the stages of the two other kingdoms in order to arrive at man: Homo sapiens. Intelligence is in full bloom. Man is the brightest product of our universe.

But has he the character of a work finished and final? Vain indeed is he who would dare to affirm such a thing. Man is simply the present term of this evolution; he is not the ultimate term. In truth, there is no reason, except to probably in man's conceit, why evolution should cease with him and not produce a subsequent type, which will differ from him as much as he differs from the animal, or the animal from the plant.

This next step in the ascent of embodied consciousness will be taken under the pressure of forces of a realm higher than the mental. Sri Aurobindo calls it simply the Supermind.¹
We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but
evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there
seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of
living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in
Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form
of veiled Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in
the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a
veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the unconquerable impulse of
man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in
the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond
Mind, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she
has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse
towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms Life.... The animal is a living
laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be
thinking and living laboratory in whom and with who conscious co-operation she wills to
work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?

For some time it was held that the evolution of living species proceeded by a slow
and gradual progression of one species out of another, without any sudden jump. But
modern biology has a different explanation. The transition from one variety to another
occurs by an abrupt leap, a genetic mutation, and this may at times be the case also for
the species, even though the fact has never been actually witnessed. There is probably a
period of secret preparation when the various factors arrange themselves in order allow
the mutation or the sequence of mutations, as well as a period of adaptation and flowering
out that follows the mutation

Sri Aurobindo asserts that we have arrived at a great crucial moment in human
evolution, where the descent of new powers of consciousness and their establishment on
the earth have begun to occur. The present world crisis is nothing but the break-up of the
past indispensable to the forward movement. On the crest of an evolutionary wave man
has to yield place to a new type of being.

Can one form an idea of what the new being is going to be? It is no doubt a difficult
task. Man is probably incapable of forming a true picture of what his successor will be.
He would be prone to imagine him as a glorified man, a being in whom the characteristic
human faculties (intelligence, will, memory, etc.) will reach their zenith: a superman, in
the Nietzschean sense. But this would be contrary to the facts of evolution. We may
therefore be certain that the new being will be nothing of the sort. His characteristics will be a new quality of consciousness, new powers of the spirit, and not development, not even a greater perfection of the existing faculties. These will not disappear; but the first place will belong to the highest.

In any case, the word "progress" has a meaning, even though it be not the simple and childish one given to it by the Positivists of the nineteenth century, and even though it be not simply a state of technological development and increase of material well-being, as it is still generally understood. The faith in man's unlimited perfectibility, the fundamental optimism of man's heart and mind are completely justified.

Terrestrial evolution has so far proceeded under the pressure of nature, without any participation of the beings drawn along this evolution. But man has now attained a position of full spiritual responsibility and is aware that he has the power to influence, for good or for evil, his own destiny. The next step should be conscious and deliberate. In this Sri Aurobindo sees an indication that the new being will be evolved in man, rather than out of man. A confirmation may be found in the fact that, of all the earthly creatures, only man is a dissatisfied being; there is in him a divine urge to aim higher, to surpass himself.

The recognition is now fairly widespread that the old remedies are of no avail, that the lights that have guided man so far are failing him. A change in the form of government or even in the social system will not help him in any way. The upheaval that is required is of a deeper kind: it is the appearance of a new consciousness that is called for, and the subsequent transformation of human nature. There must grow in a few individuals at first, then in an increasing number of people, the urge to overpass the old limits, to find in themselves or above themselves a new light, a new consciousness, a new guiding principle of knowledge and action, and a decision to abide by it, to let this new consciousness transform their life and nature. Then only can be removed the obstacles that block the way and humanity enter into a new creative age of civilization. No material prosperity, no advance of physical science, no religious revival, no social revolution can replace the necessary and inevitable spiritual transformation.

In his major works, *The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo has studied at length the nature of
the Supermind and the various aspects and stages of the transformation he foresees for humanity. I have to limit myself to quoting and summarizing the passages in which he describes his vision of the ideal society. They are taken from the last chapters of *The Human Cycle*. The stage described is not too far ahead as to be inconceivable for us. Indeed we may take it as the ideal which Sri Aurobindo places before us, the next step we have to take in the long ascending series of steps leading to a Divine Life upon earth. It may inspire us in our endeavour to find an issue to the present crisis and give us the strength so that we may not falter.4

Analyzing the growth and decay of societies, Sri Aurobindo points out that the radical defect of all civilization has been the neglect of the spiritual element, the soul which is man’s true being.

Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field for their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance; afterwards he flags and tires for want of a real self-finding, a satisfying aim for his action and progress. These three things do not make the sum of a complete manhood; they are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an aim in themselves. Add a rich emotional life governed by a well-ordered ethical standard, and still there is the savour of something left out, some supreme good which these things mean, but do not in themselves arrive at, do not discover till they go beyond themselves. Add a religious system and a widespread spirit of belief and piety, and still you have not found the means of social salvation. All these things human society has developed, but none of them has saved it from disillusionment, weariness and decay. The ancient intellectual cultures of Europe ended in disruptive doubt and sceptical impotence, the pieties of Asia in stagnation and decline. Modern society has discovered a new principle of survival, progress, but the aim of that progress it has never discovered, - unless the aim is always more knowledge, more equipment, convenience and comfort, more enjoyment, a greater and still greater complexity of the social economy, a more and more cumbrously opulent life. But these things must lead in the end where the old led, for they are only the same thing on a larger scale; they lead in a circle, that is to say, nowhere: they do not escape from the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, they do not really find the secret of self-prolongation by constant self-renewal which is the principle of immortality, but only seem for a moment to find it by the illusion of a series of experiments each of which ends in disappointment. That so far has been the nature of modern progress. Only in its new turn inwards, towards a greater subjectivity now only
beginning, is there a better hope; for by that turning it may discover that the real truth of man is to be found in his soul... 

It will be said that this is an old discovery and that it governed the old societies in the name of religion. But that is only an appearance. The discovery was there, but it was made for the life of the individual only, and even for him it looked beyond the earth for its fulfilment and at earth only as the place of his preparation for a solitary salvation or release from the burden of life. Human society itself never seized on the discovery of the soul as a means for the discovery of the law of its own being or on a knowledge of the soul's true nature and need and its fulfilment as the right way of terrestrial perfection. 

Therefore a complete change of outlook is necessary so that the whole society be constructed around the human soul and the soul's needs:

The true and full spiritual aim in society will regard man not as a mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfilment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond which after all it need not have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature. It will therefore regard the life, mind and body neither as ends in themselves, sufficient for their own satisfaction, nor as mortal members full of disease which have only to be dropped off for the rescued spirit to the away into its own pure regions, but as first instruments of the soul, the yet imperfect instruments of an unseized divine purpose.

It is Sri Aurobindo's contention that if we accept the truth of man's soul as a thing entirely divine in its essence, we have to accept also the possibility of his whole being becoming divine, and this in spite of Nature's first patent contradictions of this possibility, her dark denials of this ultimate certitude, and even with these as the necessary earthly starting-point.

The possible godhead of man because he is inwardly of one being with God will be our one solitary creed and dogma.

And as we regard man the individual, we shall regard to man the collectivity. 

... as a soul-form of the Infinite, a collective soul myriadly embodied upon earth for a divine fulfilment in its manifold relations and its multitudinous activities.

We shall regard every human society, nation, people or other organic aggregate from the same standpoint, as subsouls, means of a complex manifestation and self-fulfilment of the Spirit, the divine Reality, the conscious Infinite in man upon earth.

Thus all parts of human life, all his physical, vital,
dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, psychic activities will also discover the road to their own accomplishment and become instruments for a richer, fuller and happier life, and finally for a divine living.

Education will embrace all knowledge in its scope, but will make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but self-developing and self-finding. It will pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know through and in and under and over all things the Divine in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them.

The aim of art will not be merely to present images of the subjective and objective worlds, but to see these images with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which things visible to us and invisible are the forms, the masks or the symbols and significant figures.

The aim of ethics will not be to establish a rule of action whether supplementary to the social law or partially corrective to it, the social law that is after all only the rule often clumsy and ignorant, of the human herd, but to develop the divine nature in the human being.

In our sociology we shall treat the individual

...... from the saint to the criminal, not as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed of it, but as souls suffering and entangled in a net and to be rescued, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, p souls grown and from whom help and power can be drawn by the lesser spirits who are not yet adult.10

And this growth is a free and spontaneous emergence of consciousness from within. It cannot proceed under repression, suppression and compulsion. Nothing will be acceptable,

to the individual and the society, that seeks to imprison, to wall in, to repress, to impoverish. The aim always will be to let in the widest air and the highest light.
A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of
the growth of human society towards the possibility of true spiritualisation."

The aim of economics will not be ..
.. to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative
kind, but to give to men - not only to some but to all men each in his highest possible
measure - the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow
inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all.12

In politics, our spiritualized society will not
... regard the nations within the scope of their own internal life as enormous State
machines regulated and armoured with man living for the sake of the machine and
worshipping it as his God and his larger self, content at the first call to kill others upon its
altar and to bleed there himself so that the machine may remain intact and powerful and
be made ever larger, more complex, more cumbrous, more mechanically efficient and
entire ... -13

Men and nations will be regarded as souls and group souls, the Divinity concealed
and to be self-discovered in its human individuals and collectivities, group-souls meant
like the individuals to grow according to their own nature and by that growth to help each
other, to help the whole race in the common work of humanity. And that work is to find
the divine Self in the individual and the collectivity and to realize spiritually, mentally,
vitally, materially its greatest largest, richest and deepest possibilities in the inner life of
all and their outer action and nature,

The spiritual life is the flower not of a featureless but a conscious and diversified
oneness. Each man has to grow into the Divine within himself through his own individual
being, therefore is a certain growing measure of freedom a necessity of the being as it
develops and perfect freedom the sign and the condition of the perfect life. But also, the
Divine whom he thus sees in himself, he sees equally in all others and as the same Spirit
in all. Therefore too is a growing inner unity with others a necessity of his being and
perfect unity the sign and condition of the perfect life. Not only to see and find the Divine
in oneself, but to see and find the Divine in all, not only to seek one's own individual
liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others is the complete
law of the spiritual being... He who sees God in all, will serve freely God in all with the
service of love. He will, that is to say, seek not only his own freedom, but the freedom of
all, not only his own perfection, but the perfection of all. He will not feel his individuality
perfect except in the largest universality, nor his own life to be full life except as it is one
with the universal life. He will not live either for himself or for the State and society, for the individual ego or the collective ego, but for something much greater, for God in himself and for the Divine in the universe.\textsuperscript{14}

It can be said that such a spiritualized society will be a true inner theocracy,

...not the false theocracy of a dominant Church or priest-hood, but that of the inner Priest, Prophet and King. It will reveal to man the divinity in himself as the Light, Strength, Beauty, Good, Delight, Immortality that dwells within and build up in his outer life also the kingdom of God which is first discovered within us. It will show man the way to seek for the Divine in every way of his being, \textit{svadhyāna},\textsuperscript{15} and so find it and live in it, that however - even in all kinds of ways - he lives and acts, he shall live and act in that,\textsuperscript{16} in the Divine, in the Spirit, in the eternal Reality of his being.\textsuperscript{17}

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to develop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.\textsuperscript{18}

Is this to place our ideal too high? Listen again to Sri Aurobindo:

To follow after the highest in us may seem to be to live dangerously, to use again one of Nietzsche's inspired expressions, but by that danger comes victory and security. To rest in or follow after an inferior potentiality may seem safe rational, comfortable, easy, but it ends badly, in some futility or in a mere circling, down the abyss or in a stagnant morass. Our right and natural road is towards the summits, \textsuperscript{19}

I maintain that the nation which will accept this vision of the future, and make it a living ideal in its national and international life will be the leader of the New Age.
Dissatisfaction with the conventional education of the time may be traced back to Jean Jacques Rousseau; it was expressed forcefully later by Tolstoy. But a clear awareness of the true needs of education dawned really with this century.

In the U.S.A., Dewey wrote:

The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the growth of the child all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth. Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realisation, is the goal. To possess all the world of knowledge and lose one's own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion. Moreover, subject-matter never can be got into the child from without. Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within. Literally, we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. It is he and not the subject-matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning.¹

In India, the foundation of Shantiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore, dates back to 1901.

The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly when life was simple all the different elements of of man were in complete harmony. But when there came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the physical, the school education put entire emphasis on the intellect and the physical side of man. We devote our sole attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life.

I believe in a spiritual world - not as anything separate from this world - but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth, that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance, drifting on the current of matter
towards an eternal nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who
has no awakening in all time. We have a personality to which matter and force are
unmeaning unless related to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have
discovered, in some measure, in human love, in the greatness of the good, in the
martyrdom of heroic souls, in the ineffable beauty of nature, which can never be a mere
physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality......

In ancient India the school was where was the life itself. There the students
were brought up, not in the academic atmosphere of scholarship and learning, or in the
maimed life of monastic seclusion, but in the atmosphere of living aspiration. They took
the cattle to pasture, collected firewood, gathered fruit, cultivated kindness to all
creatures and grew in spirit with their own teachers’ spiritual growth. This was possible
because the primary object of these place not teaching but giving shelter to those who
lived their life in God....

This ideal of education through sharing a life of high aspiration with one's master
took possession of my mind....Only let us have access of the life that goes beyond death
and rises above all circumstances, let us find our God, let us live for that ultimate truth
which emancipates us from bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but
of inner light, not of power but of love. Such emancipation of soul we have witnessed in
our country among men devoid of book-learning and living in absolute poverty.
In India we have the inheritance of this treasure of spiritual wisdom. Let the object of our
education be to open it before us and to give us the power to make the true use of it in our
life. and

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offer it to the rest of the world when the time comes, as our contribution to its
eternal welfare.2

Since then and with an accelerated tempo, a considerable amount of theoretical and
experimental research work on education has been carried out, mostly in Western
countries.3

Following this pioneering work, an entirely new conception of education has
gradually emerged. This is how R. Cousinet defines the new outlook:
New education ... is really a new attitude towards the child. An attitude of understanding
and love, and above all an attitude of respect. An attitude of expectation, of patience; the
restraint of a delicate hand that dare not open a flower bud nor disturb a baby in the midst
of his first experiments, a student in the course of his early work. An acceptance of
childhood as such, acknowledging its value as a necessary period in man's development.
A leniency, more than leniency, an acceptance of the child's mistakes, of his stumblings, his hesitations, his slowness. A desire, often passionate, to satisfy the child's needs, even if society has to wait some time for the satisfaction of its own needs. A conviction that the more a child remains fully and leisurely a child, the more and better he will grow into a good adult. A conviction that a child must be happy and that the educator's first task is to make sure that he is happy, even if it is at the cost of the educational ends that the teacher has in view; that we adults have everything to gain by leaving a child as long as possible in this age of primal innocence and for us to bathe in the well-spring of this innocence, instead of trying to shape him at any cost into our own image, which is not worthy to be taken as a model. A conviction that the child has within himself everything that allows a true education, and particularly a ceaseless activity, incessantly revived, in which he is totally engrossed, the activity of a growing being who is continuously developing and to whom for that very reason, our help may be useful, but our direction is not necessary.

When we compare this conception with the old view of the child as a shapeless and plastic mass which the teacher has to press into a desired shape as expeditiously as possible, we measure the tremendous, the really revolutionary change.

The practical results of the new methods are truly interesting, but they are partial and not as yet sufficiently significant to command the wide acceptance of the methods. They may be considered as indications, rather than decisive proofs.

Their insufficiency may be traced to two main causes:

1. The opposition between the individual and the society is not solved, because the new conception is still lacking the unifying and harmonizing vision of both child and society as evolving soul-entities moving towards a fuller manifestation of the Divine in this world. Moreover each of the new systems has taken an idea - fact of experience or intuitive perception - as its guiding principle; none has tackled the problem of education in its integrality.

2. Such a deep reform of education can only bear its fruit? if there is a corresponding change and newness in the ideal and aim of life of society itself. It is vain to expect a genuine recognition of a new system of this kind, not to speak of its general acceptance, if society keeps to the old ruts and presses upon the educator the same old demand of students made to a certain number of uniform patterns. In that case there is bound to be a mixture of the old and the new systems that will prevent the new venture
from showing its true results. Moreover the judgment will be passed from the old standards, and that will bar any valid conclusion.

We may therefore accept these new systems as steps in the right direction. They are valuable, but within a limited range: they will be useful in devising practical methods and in their application. But, if we want to discover the principles which the methods should elaborate, we need a deeper and more comprehensive understanding.

In education we have to consider the child, the teacher, and the link and relation between them, which in its
generality we shall call the teaching.

*The Child:* I shall speak of the "child" rather than the student" because education starts with the child. But it must be clear that the child is for us the man in the process of formation.

In the proceeding sections, we have seen that Sri Aurobindo does not consider the individual and the society's opposing entities, the existence and fulfilment of one being achieved by the subjection, subordination or rejection of the other. Both have a right to exist, to grow and to seek fulfilment, and it has been the constant preoccupation of Sri Aurobindo to show that each grows in and through the other.

This is in accordance with the ancient Indian tradition. For, as Sri Aurobindo puts it: India has seen always 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. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his paramārtha and highest purusārtha. And similarly India has not understood by the nation or people 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, - that is only the disguise of iron armour which masks and encumbers the national Purusha, - but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a Swabhāva and Swadhārma, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic,
ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal man testing in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim, - it must be the idea of, the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race.... 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. There is the principle on which we must build, that the central motive and the guiding ideal. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its Dharma and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.

In accordance with this view, the great purpose of education is to help the soul to come forward, to assert its mastery over its instruments, gain experience and grow, and eventually manifest the powers it has to set forth in life.

Even in a young child, it is the soul we have to meet a soul meeting a soul - giving to it due consideration and trust without forgetting however that the body is frail and the mind immature. We shall be surprised to see the response of the child to this attitude.

The Teaching: Let me quote from Sri Aurobindo an important passage which is the key to his conceptions:

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a 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. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a
conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.6

In other words, the idea that the teacher should impart his knowledge - what he knows about a subject - to the child is fundamentally wrong. He must show the child how to learn that subject by himself, help him in devising his own methods of learning and of organizing the knowledge which he gathers or discovers. And the teacher should remember that a child learns by doing, by discovering, and not by listening submissively to a display of factual knowledge. It is only in this active, creative process leading to discovery that the child finds interest and joy, and that concentration becomes spontaneous.

In the few lines I have quoted, Sri Aurobindo has in fact enunciated, in its broad generality and with a Platonic flavour, the principle which is at the basis of the modern methods of education.

The principle is of wide applicability. It is not limited to intellectual or mental knowledge. It applies also, as we shall see, to ethical knowledge, the discrimination between good

and evil, and aesthetic knowledge, the feeling and understanding of beauty

Sri Aurobindo says further:

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that the 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. Every one has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.7
Each part of the child's being has also its own dharma, its own law of growth, its own needs and its own accomplishment. It grows by experience; and to be true, its growth must be spontaneous, not twisted, impaired or deformed. The various parts are instruments, which must be appropriately developed and strengthened. And they must be trained to obey - not the teacher - but the central knowledge and will of the soul in evolution.

In fact, if the teacher can discover the true needs and interests (both go always together) of a child at every stage of his growth and offer him an activity in conformity with those needs, it will not be necessary to draw or compel the attention of the child. The child will be spontaneously captivated and work joyfully and silently, with concentration and without tiring. This gives a key to a natural and healthy education.

The Teacher: The teacher is therefore not one who knows and "gives knowledge" to the children. He is the guide, the helper, and above all the wise friend to whom the children come gladly and confidently in case of difficulty, when they do not see the way or when they need a bit of information or a clue. His rule is to present and to suggest, never to command or impose.

Quite naturally, a child will have respect and admiration for his teacher; unless quite unworthy the teacher will appear to the child as a demi-god whom he will seek to imitate as well as he can. But the teacher should refrain from thrusting himself forward for imitation. Truly, he must be an example, but not set himself up as such.

On the other hand, the teacher must be aware of the disastrous influence his defects, impulses, weaknesses would have on the children. The following advice given by The Mother to parents applies as well to teachers.

If you wish to be respected by your child, have respect for yourself and be at every moment worthy of respect. Never be arbitrary, despotic, impatient, ill-tempered.

When a child asks a question he should not be answered by a rebuke, a derogatory remark or a piece of stupidity, under the pretext that he cannot understand: You can always make yourself understood if you take sufficient pains for it, and in spite of the popular saying that it is not always good to tell the truth, I affirm that it is always good to tell the truth, only the art consists in telling it in such a way as to make it accessible to the brain of the hearer. In early life, till twelve to fourteen years, the child's mind is not accessible to abstract notions and general ideas. And yet you can train it to
understand these things by using concrete images or symbols or parables. Up to a sufficiently advanced age and for some who mentally remain always children, a narrative, a story, a tale well told teaches much more than a heap of theoretical explanations.9

Another fault to avoid:
Do not scold your child except with a definite purpose and only when quite indispensable. A child too often scolded gets hardened to rebuke and comes to attach little importance to words or severity of tone. Particularly, take care not to rebuke him for a fault which you yourself commit. Children are very keen and clear-sighted observers: the soon find out your weaknesses and note them without pity.10

In short, the teacher should surmount himself always and constantly if he wants to be equal to his task and truly fulfil his duty.

What Is an Integral Education?

An education which has accepted the goal outlined by Sri Aurobindo and which takes into account the entire complexity of man’s nature can rightly be termed an "integral education". For the purpose we have in view, we may adopt a five-fold classification of the human being.

Education to be complete, must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Usually, these phases of education succeed each other in a chronological order following the growth of the, individual. This, however, does not mean that one should replace another but that all must continue, completing each other, till the end of life.” 11

Each of these parts has its own law of growth and its fulfilment. Truly, the spirit remains unchanged as it is beyond space and time. But as we rise to our goal of perfection,

... we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the Truth will spontaneously
express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony.\textsuperscript{12}

We shall now see the most important specific points of these five aspects of education one by one and their reciprocal relations.

**The Physical Education**

Perfection is the true aim of all culture .... If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. \textit{Śarīram khalu dharmasādhanam}, says the old Sanskrit adage, — the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action.\textsuperscript{13}

In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change.\textsuperscript{14}

This contempt was a part of the general attitude towards matter as contrasted and opposed to spirit. Matter was looked upon as something gross, inert, unconscious, unchangeable, an insuperable impediment to spiritual realisation. We have seen that, according to Sri Aurobindo, this view does not represent the whole truth. The limitations the body are great and real, but they are not due to its essentially unredeemable nature. A self-exceeding is possible in this domain also, and such an exceeding is part of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future:

A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation ... The body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine. \textsuperscript{15}
This is an ideal whose realization may well belong to a distant future. But, even if we limit ourselves to the actualities, a relative perfection of the physical body must be the aim of an efficient physical education. Our stand is that, whatever type of body a man may have, he must accept as a starting-point and bring out, by a concentrated effort and an appropriate training, the possibilities it contains and make it into fit instrument for as perfect a life as possible.

The results that a wholesome and methodical program of physical education may be expected to bring about are:

1. A sound and healthy body: This is a vast subject on which a good amount of knowledge has already been accumulated. The means include the acquisition of good habits in food, sleep, hygiene, and the use of physical exercises to regulate the various functions of the body. Bodily defects and malformations can be reduced or even cured by appropriate methods of corrective gymnastics.

2. Strength and fitness: Not only muscular strength as the physical stamina, but the use and command of life energy any time it is required. We have only to think of the skill, dexterity, endurance which sports and games develop and which are an excellent preparation for many occupations such as those of soldiers, sailors, policemen, travellers and explorers. There is no reason why this advantage should be denied to ordinary labourers and peasants.

3. Training of the senses: A quick perception of the eye and ear and a quick response of all the parts of the body to any call made upon them, a wonderful coordination and mastery over the reflexes - as for instance in gymnastics and balancing.

4. Not only strength, but also grace, beauty and harmony. Beauty is not a superfluity but the very spirit of the physical world. The ancient Greeks were awake to this ideal not only for the female form but the male also. Some glimpses of it seem to reappear today, though spoilt by commercialism in the beauty contests and physical culture displays held periodically in many countries of the world.

5. Self-mastery and discipline, courage and confidence: To control one's impulses, reactions, weaknesses is a very important gain brought about by the practice of athletics and games. We must mention here that the regular use of physical exercises has a healthy influence on the control of sexual energy.
6. Co-operation, impartiality and fair dealings with others: These qualities are especially developed by team games. The English people, who originated or codified most of these games, have been as a nation immensely benefited by them.

Moreover, as we have already seen, physical culture has also favourable results on the vital and mental parts of the being. Unfortunately, there has been recently a tendency to use games and sports as a means of political propaganda. Though the immixture of politics may increase the budget allocated to physical education, its effects on the morale of the athletes cannot but be harmful.

The Vital Education

... the vital is the Life-nature made up of desires, sensations feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reaction of the desire-soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust, etc., that belong to this field of the nature. 16

The vital is a vast kingdom full of forces acting and reacting upon one another, the very nexus of man's life an the motive power of his action - for good or for evil

The organization and training of this complex of forces is of the utmost importance for the building up of character, Even so, school education is usually little concerned with it as this is supposed to be the work of the family. But whosoever's responsibility it is, the same principles apply, especially the principle enunciated by Sri Aurobindo that true knowledge comes from within and conditions must be given for it to manifest.

Accordingly, the key to a strong, straightforward and harmonious character is to awaken in the child the will to overcome his weaknesses and eliminate his defects. The aspiration towards perfection exists in every human being, but too often the conditions in which the child lives, at home and elsewhere, the moral and mental environment are so antagonistic to the tiny little flame of aspiration that it dwindles and dies out. This aspiration has to be gently kindled and helped to translate itself into will.

The child has to be shown that the will can be cultivated by practice, beginning with very easy tasks. He will take interest and little by little become capable of taking charge of himself and of his training.

The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature. 17
A well planned program of physical education. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and premilitary training can be of help for the cultivation of such basic qualities as endurance, courage, decision, resourcefulness, respect for others, truthfulness, faithfulness, loyalty to duty and the common good. However...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.18

This is what is too often done and it leads to what is known as the sowing of wild oats as soon as the yoke of discipline at school and at home is removed, and to social hypocrisy. Only what the man admires and accepts, becomes part of himself; the rest is a mask. He conforms to the discipline of society as he conformed to the moral routine of home and school, but considers himself at liberty to guide his real life, inner and private, according to his own likings and passions.19

The attempt to make boys and girls moral and religious by preaching or by the teaching of moral and religious textbooks is of very little effect as it goes against our first principle of education. It would be an error to say that it has no effect at all. It throws certain seeds of thought into the mind and if these thoughts become habitual they influence the conduct. "But the danger of moral text-books is that they make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good.20

Advice may be given when needed or asked for, but the teacher should remember that "the first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command or impose.21

He has only "to put the child into the right road to his perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping, but not interfering."22 The best method of suggestion is by personal example, converse and the books read from day to day. These I should contain, for the younger student, the lofty examples of the past given, not as moral lessons, but as thin supreme human interest, and, for the elder student great thoughts of great souls, the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest! and aspirations, the records of history and biography exemplify the living of those great thoughts, noble emotions and aspiring ideals. This is a kind of good company, satsanga, which can seldom fail to have effect so long as
sententious sermonising is avoided, and becomes of the highest effect if the personal life of the teacher is moulded by the great things he places before his pupils cannot, however, have full force unless the young life given an opportunity, within its limited sphere, of embodying in action the moral impulses which rise within it.....

Every boy should, therefore, be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in the nature.23

As we have said, the relation between teacher and student should be a relation of soul to soul. Familiarity is required, not even advisable, but consideration and respect, as well as patience, understanding and love.

When a child has made a mistake, see that he confesses you spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confesses make him understand with kindness and affection what wrong in his movement so that he should not repeat it. In any case, never scold him; a fault confessed must be forgiven. You should not allow any fear to slip in between and your child; fear is a disastrous way to education.

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invariably it gives birth to dissimulation and falsehood. An affection that sees clear, that is firm yet gentle and a sufficient practical knowledge will create bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to make the education of your child effective.24

All experience shows that man must be given a certain freedom to stumble in action as well as to err in knowledge so long as he does not get from within himself his freedom from wrong movement and error; otherwise he cannot grow. Society for its own sake has to coerce the dynamic and vital man, but coercion only chains up the devil and alters at best his form of action into more mitigated and civilised movements; it does not and cannot eliminate him. The real virtue of the dynamic and vital being, the Life Purusha, can only come by his finding a higher law and spirit for his activity within himself; to give him that, to illuminate and transform and not to destroy his impulse is the true spiritual means of regeneration.25

[If a child] has bad qualities, bad habits, bad samskaras, whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the Rajayogic method of samyama, rejection and substitution. He should be encouraged to think of them, not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease, alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will, - falsehood being rejected whenever it rises into the mind and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love. Great care will have to be taken that unformed virtues are not rejected as
faults. The wildness and recklessness of many young natures are only the overflowings of an excessive strength, greatness and nobility. They should be purified, not discouraged.26

Punishment and the stimulation of fear are really the last resort and should be avoided. Love and sympathy, desire to help, devotion to an ideal, the satisfaction of being at peace with oneself, are in the end more potent constructive forces

Tolerance, understanding and good-will should encouraged, based on an awakened sense of unity. Children should be made to realize that the unity which aimed at is not uniformity, nor is it achieved by domination and subjection, but it is an all-inclusive order, each individual occupying its true place and playing the role it has play in accordance with its own essential nature, which is a part of the divine Unity. Thus, a rich diversity harmoniously blended and supported by an underlying unity is the highest manifestation of the Divine in any collectivity or nation, or even in mankind and the whole world. "All urge of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination should disappear giving place to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear sighted and effective collaboration".27

We have dealt up till now with the first part of vital education, the building up of character. There is another part, the training of the aesthetic being,

This begins with the education of the senses. They should be trained so as to attain precision and power. Much more can be done along these lines than is generally thought. To this general education of the senses and their action there will be added, as early as possible, the cultivation of discrimination and the aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose take up what is beautiful and harmonious, simple, healthy and pure. For, there is a psychological health as much a physical health; there is a beauty and harmony of the sensations, as much as a beauty of the body and its movements. As the child grows in capacity and understanding, he should be taught, in the course of his education, to add aesthetic taste and refinement to power and precision. He must be shown, made to appreciate, taught to love beautiful, lofty, healthy and noble things, whether in nature or in human creation. It must be a true aesthetic cultures it will save him from degrading influence .... A methodical

and enlightened culture of the senses can, little by little, remove from the child whatever has been vulgar, common place and crude in him through contagion: this culture will
have happy reactions even on his character. For one who has developed a truly refined taste, will feel, because of this very refinement, incapable of acting in a crude, brutal or vulgar manner. This refinement, if it is sincere, will bring to the being a nobility and generosity which will spontaneously find expression in his behaviour and will keep him away from many base and perverse movements.  

The Divine is Purity as well as Beauty and it is by the cultivation of both the ethical and the aesthetic being that the heart's needs can be really fulfilled.

The teaching of the different Arts - dance, music, painting - should be based on the same fundamental principle: to give to the student the best conditions for the perfecting of his own capacities and to help and encourage him in the process. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development.

The highest aim of Art is to find the Divine through beauty. But this discovery has its own laws and the first endeavour is "to see and depict man and Nature and life for their own sake, in their own characteristic truth and beauty; for behind these first characters lies always the beauty of the Divine in life and man and Nature and it is through their just transformation that what was at first veiled by them has to be revealed." In this way the aesthetic being of man will rise towards its diviner possibilities.

The Mental Education

The greatest mistake is to make an accumulation of factual knowledge, i.e., erudition, the crowning end of education. This error distorts the whole process of education itself. Instead of learning how to acquire knowledge, the student is asked to store in his memory the knowledge gained by others, so as to keep it ready at hand - at least for the time of the examination.

This error becomes more apparent every day as the bulk of scientific knowledge constantly increases. It has become so enormous that mathematicians, biologists, physicists chemists, find it impossible to keep up to date even in the own branches; they have to specialize more narrowly, in what may be called a "twig" of science. To keep up with the mass production of scientific knowledge, the syllabuses swell constantly, however one may try to compress more matter in less hours of teaching. To pretend that the student will retain for a very long time all that he has committed memory is an
illusion and a farce. Most of it will fade away except in the speciality in which the student will actual enter and work, because there it will be kept alive constant refreshment.

Besides the illusory attachment to an encyclopaedic knowledge, another pillar of the traditional education is slowly giving way under the pressure of accelerated progress, - it is the idea that man can receive before becoming an adult an education that will suffice him for the whole of professional career. The acceleration of scientific progress, the desiderata of research already impose in certain professions a periodical boosting up on recent theories and techniques (refreshment courses or seminars, sabbatical year)
A permanent education from childhood to the age of retirement will soon become a necessity.

Is not the insistence of the examination upon the accumulation of memorized knowledge a surviving trace of the time when it was believed that the human brain could accommodate an encyclopaedic knowledge? This time has passed and to persist in such an attitude is not only a waste of time and energy but, what is worse, it diverts from the main object of education, which should be the training in acquiring and applying knowledge; whether old or new, it is the same thing: from the point of view of the student every knowledge that he acquires is fresh.

The real gain that one can expect from a well organized and thorough mental education has an individual aspect and a social or collective aspect.

The individual aspect is culture. Culture is not erudition, it does not depend on the amount of knowledge, but on the way knowledge has been assimilated, integrated, transformed into a synthetic Weltanschauung which can serve as a base to a still higher vision and understanding. In fact, it has been said aptly that "culture is what remains when all has been forgotten" (Edouard Herriot). Culture is not acquired by forcefully memorizing but by keeping a wide interest and a mind open to all sources of knowledge (books, magazines, lectures, exhibitions, human contacts, etc.); whatever is retained and assimilated will be welcome; it may be deep or shallow according to one's capacity.

The collective aspect of education is utilitarian and functional. It is connected with the professional life of the individual and his relations with his fellow-beings.

The present trend of the technological society makes it likely that specialization will increase. This means that many jobs will require an early and thorough technical training. But, as a counterpart of the subjection and constraint of his professional life, the young man will find an increasing amount of leisure and he will have at his disposal a real abundance of cultural facilities, such as books and magazines, radio and television
broadcasts, exhibitions, travel arrangements. This will make it possible for him to pursue all his life the cultural formation started at school, so that the two aspects of formation, the professional or functional and the personal or cultural, can be kept harmoniously blended for the benefit of the individual and the society alike.

In view of the variety and the multiplicity of the specialized jobs, it will be necessary to bring out and define the essential features of an education which can serve for all those tasks. What kind of basic mental formation should a be a young man have coming out from university or technological institute, irrespective of his graduation subjects? What would make him a valuable asset in any of the hundred jobs that are open to him? If we analyze what this usefulness consists in, we find

1. the capacity to gather old knowledge, i.e., how to use the various means of documentation (text-books, reference books, technical magazines, etc.) to find out what is already known on a subject; how to grade and organize the knowledge so that it can be made available to oneself for ready reference and to others;

2. the capability to find out new knowledge, i.e., engage successfully in research work; how to face a problem, to analyze and get at the core of it; how to use imagination in the search for analogies and structural similarities; how to formulate and test hypotheses;

3. The capacity to use and apply knowledge (old and new) to specific cases and to deal with concrete situations; how reach optimal decisions; how to get on with fellow-workers and engage in team work, understand others and make oneself understood.

In all this "know-how" the amount of memorized knowledge is of comparatively little importance and will matter less and less, because it is never all-inclusive and needs be verified before it can be applied.

Throughout all his years of formation, the student should be helped to study and unravel his own individual nature and capacities, to develop them and to find the type of work that will suit him best, i.e., in which he will be most happy, successful and useful. That will be true orientation. As already quoted, the chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make perfect for a noble use.

The acquisition of new knowledge, what is usually call "research", is at present reserved for the post-graduate.
level. Up to that level, knowledge is presented as a chewed matter, to be swallowed up and digested. But it is really assimilated only if the student is able to forget it and regain it by himself. *It is this creative discovery of knowledge which should be the aim and means of education.*

It is often complained that the students show little originality. But it is we who stamp out all originality from our students. Instead of helping them towards a discovery, we tell them in all matters what others have discovered and assure them that it is what they would also find if they made the attempt by themselves. Is this a way of inciting them to inquiry and originality?

It is by its best individuals that a society progresses. This fact is becoming gradually recognized and the need for inventive and creative minds increasingly felt as a consequence of the importance taken by research and discovery in all scientific fields. Non-conformism and originality are no longer shunned or ridiculed; they may be indications of a creative capacity and genius. If we want to discover such gifted minds and help them to develop, we should make our education itself a creation, and that at all stages, from the primary to the graduation level. Invention and creation would then become natural and spontaneous.

Moreover, we should remember that, according to some psychologists, the destructive instinct in man results from a deviation of unemployed creative energy. This would explain the anti-social and destructive behaviour of young people when deprived of an outlet for their creative urge.

It is thought that the pre-natal growth of the child recapitulates, so to say, the whole process of biological evolution in general, from the simplest forms of life up to the human type. Should not education in the same way but more broadly enable the child to recapitulate in his own creative experience the whole process of civilization? Thus would culture have a firm foundation and grow during the whole lifetime.

Another point which we have to consider is the range of the faculties which mental education should cover.

In the intellect, or *buddhi*, which is the real instrument of thought and that which orders and organizes the knowledge acquired by the other parts of the mental machine, Sri Aurobindo conveniently distinguishes . . . . several groups of functions, divisible into two important classes, the functions and faculties of the right-hand, the functions and faculties of the left-hand The faculties of the
right-hand are comprehensive, creative and synthetic; the faculties of the left-hand critical and analytic. To the right hand belong judgment, imagination, memory, observation to the left-hand comparison and reasoning. The critical faculties distinguish, compare, classify, generalise, deduce infer, conclude; they are the component parts of the logical reason. The right-hand faculties comprehend, command judge in their own right, grasp, hold and manipulate. right-hand mind is the master of the knowledge, the left-hand its servant. The left-hand touches only the body knowledge, the right-hand penetrates its soul. The left-hand limits itself to ascertained truth, the right-hand grasps that which is still elusive or unascertainable. Both are essential the completeness of the human reason These important functions of the machine have all to be raised to their highest and finest working-power, if the education of the child is not to be imperfect and one-sided.

Sri Aurobindo adds that there is another layer of faculty which, ... not as yet entirely developed in man, is attaining gradually to a wider development and more perfect evolution The powers peculiar to this highest stratum of knowledge are chiefly known to us from the phenomena of genius, sovereign discernment, intuitive perception of truth, plenary inspiration of speech, direct vision of knowledge to an extent often amounting to revelation, making a man a prophet of truth. These powers are rare in their higher development, though many possess them imperfectly or by flashes. They are still greatly distrusted by the critical reason of mankind because of the admixture of error, caprice and a biased imagination which obstructs and distorts their perfect workings. Yet it is clear that humanity could not have advanced to its present stage if it had not been for the help of these faculties, and it is a question with which educationists have not yet grappled, what is to be done with this mighty and baffling element, the element of genius in the pupil. The mere instructor does his best to discourage and stifle genius, the more liberal teacher welcomes it.

The way to deal with such cases is the way we have already advocated: Here, as in all educational operations, (the teacher) can only put the growing soul into the way of its own perfection.

It is customary to divide education between the "humanities" and "science". The term "humanities" has come to mean nowadays a set of certain branches of knowledge: literature, philosophy, history, sociology, etc., while "science" is restricted to mathematics, physical and natural sciences, and the various parts of applied science, such as engineering. This classification may seem to some extent related to the division of faculties between what Sri Aurobindo has called the right-hand faculties and the left-
hand faculties, according to the faculty or faculties that predominate. But a deeper look shows that each branch of knowledge puts a demand on both classes of faculties (although in various proportions) and, as Sri Aurobindo has rightly pointed out, the two classes are complementary and both are necessary. It is therefore idle to oppose the humanities and science on this ground. There is no superior or inferior branch of knowledge. It is a question of personal interest and capacity, and also of general demand at the time.

Moreover, one may note that the division between the humanities and science is somewhat arbitrary. Pure mathematics is sometimes included in the Arts Course, the gap between psychology and physiology is vanishing rapidly, and the introduction of scientific methods in psychology, sociology, economics, history, has earned for them the name of "human sciences" (or "sciences of man").

But there is something more behind the common opposition between the humanities and science. The term "humanities" was initially equivalent to "classical studies" and it was introduced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to describe a conception of education common to all cultural men of that time. Its characteristics were:

1. the idea that an encyclopaedic knowledge is possible knowledge to which "nothing human is alien";
2. the recourse to the lives, deeds and written words of great men of the past as a source of inspiration and a means of building up the moral character;
3. the study of the classical languages, Greek, Latin, and we may add Sanskrit, Persian and Chinese, for this conception of education is not limited to the West, as an instrument of training the mind.

This approach of education was mostly literary and it suited the conditions of society when science was in its infancy and technology still dormant. It had probably been formulated as a protection against the disruptive effect of a budding scientific thought and outlook. Secondary education in France was for long divided into "classical" and "modern". The fact is that classical studies have nowadays fallen into disfavour and they are even considered as obsolete by a number of scientists. Many thinkers however would regard their abandonment as a calamity because they do not believe other studies can inculcate so effectively the finer qualities in man. Truly the results were remarkable, They gave to the mind power and discrimination and to the character a humane disposition of great value: nobility and a wide and generous understanding.
But conditions have changed. Science has invaded the field of knowledge and has inflated it to such an extent that an encyclopaedic attitude is no longer possible. Moreover the technological progress is altering the face of the world so rapidly that the conception and ideals of the past seem hardly to befit our present life. Finally, it is clear that the vast range of scientific studies, *i.e.*, mathematics, the numerous physical, natural and human sciences, and engineering also, offer means of training the mind at least as complete and effective as the grammatical subtleties and literary graces of the classical languages. If we add to these reasons growing need for scientists and technicians, the gradual abandonment of the humanities will be easy to understand.

The cry for a synthesis humanities and science comes from the wish to find a remedy to this situation. Is such a synthesis possible, and how? It is certainly not by a juxtaposition or an amalgamation of the two conceptions that it can be achieved. If our analysis is correct, such a unification can only be accomplished by linking in one great movement the past with the future, by showing that the future conceals and is pregnant with all that has been prized by the great men of the past, and that the ideals of the past will find their realization in the future, here upon earth. In this new vision the various branches of knowledge would not be classified into opposing factions. A grouping of the branches may be done for convenience's sake, with regard to their interconnexion. But, whether their object is the study of man or of nature, they are all legitimate studies of the One in its multitudinous manifestations. Past, present and future are but phases of a single movement.35

The study of classical languages and their literature would not disappear. It is bound to lose - it has already lost - the position it has for long occupied as an all-sufficient instrument of education. But it should retain its due place as a separate and independent branch of knowledge. Moreover literature - poetry as well as prose - would also continue to have a place - a reduced but appropriate place - in the general education, as a part of our cultural inheritance and for the appreciation of beauty they bestow, especially in showing how great ideas and ideals have been perceived, given shape and infused into the human mind and life as promises for the future. The great masterpieces, whether in literature or the fine arts, are immortal landmarks of the Spirit. In this vision the longings of the heart as well as the promptings of the mind would both find their harmonious blending and their ultimate satisfaction.
The Psychic and the Spiritual Education

Till now we have dealt with the education which can be given to all children born upon earth; it is concerned will purely human faculties. But, as The Mother says, one need not stop there:

Every human being carries hidden within him the possibilities of a greater consciousness beyond the frame of his normal life through which he can participate in a higher and vaster life. Indeed, in all exceptional beings it is always this consciousness that governs their life, and organises both the circumstances of their life and their individual reaction these circumstances. What the human mind does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the centre of the being radiating through the thick covering of external consciousness. Some have vague perception of its presence; a good many children are under its influence which shows itself very distinctly at times in their spontaneous reactions and even in their words….

With psychic education we come to the problem of the motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, very discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery, the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle. This discovery very generally is associated with mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is religions particularly that have been occupied with this aspect of life. But it need not be necessarily so: the mystic notion of God may be replaced by the more philosophical notion of truth and still the discovery will remain essentially the same, only the road leading to it may be taken even by the most intransigent positivist. For mental notions and ideas possess a very secondary importance in preparing one for the psychic life. The important thing is to live the experience: for it carries its own reality and force apart from any theory that may precede or accompany or follow it, because most often theories are mere explanations that are given to oneself in order to have more or less the illusion of knowledge. Man clothes the ideal or the absolute he seeks to attain with different names according to the environment in which he is born and the education he has received. The experience is essentially the same, if it is sincere: it is only the words and phrases in which it is formulated that differ according to the belief and the mental education of the person who experiences. All formulation is only an approximation that should be progressive and grow in precision as the experience itself becomes more and more precise and
coordinated. Still, if we are to give a general outline of psychic education, we must have an idea, however relative it may be, of what we mean by the psychic being. Thus one can say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the Supreme Origin of all manifestation which, through the one and universal consciousness, is concretised in the law or the truth of an individual and so becomes by a progressive growth its soul or psychic being.\textsuperscript{36}

This definition of the psychic being will be sufficient for our purpose. "Psychic" means "belonging to the soul, or psyche". The psychic being is a conscious form of the Divine growing in the evolution.

It is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him circumstances of his life. In most cases this presence act to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable; in a few among these, again, the presence becomes tangible and its action quite effective. These go forward in their life with an assurance and a certitude all their own, they are masters off their destiny.\textsuperscript{37}

Sri Aurobindo expresses the same idea in this way:

\textit{... the true central being is the soul, but this being stand; back and in most human natures is only the secret witness or, one might say constitutional ruler who allows his minister to rule for him, delegates to them his empire, silently assent to their decisions and only now and then puts in a won, which they can at any moment override and act otherwise. But this is so long as the soul personality put forward by the psychic entity is not yet sufficiently developed; when this is strong enough for the inner entity to impose itself through it then the soul can come forward and control the nature. It is by the coming forward of this true monarch and his taking up of the reins of government that there can take place a real harmonisation of our being and our life.}\textsuperscript{38}

The importance in education of the discovery of the soul is shown by Sri Aurobindo when, speaking of new educational trends evidenced by the experiments carried out in various countries, he says:

The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system; but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there
was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. 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 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. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.  

The discovery of the soul, the real man within, is truly the first great goal of human life. Education can and should give a good start in the right direction. But the discovery is a matter of personal effort and aspiration: The great resolution, a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, chalk out his own path through his own difficulties. The goal is known to some extent; for, most of those who have reached it, have described it more or less clearly. But

the supreme value of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, the genuineness: that escapes all ordinary mental laws. And this is why anyone wanting to take up the adventure, usually seeks at first some person who has gone through it successfully and is able to sustain him and show him the way. Yet there are some solitary travellers and for them a few general indications may be useful.

Here are the first indications which The Mother gives to a young seeker: The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given
the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating an individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many others. All combine in pulling you out of the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But... the path to come to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial. It is like the explorer's journey through virgin forest quest of an unknown land, towards a great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. Still this is the destiny of man and it is an enormous advantage to know that we are each of us moving towards this aim, overtly or secretly, consciously or unconsciously, through many zigzags and many failures, and that we shall succeed in the end. The certitude completely changes our outlook and generates confidence, strength and peace. Never forget the purpose and the goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there soaring over you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendour that will bring to you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always and shall live, that the external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect freed from all chains and instead of advancing with difficulty under the load of circumstances imposed upon you by nature, borne and suffered by you, you can, if you do not want to be crushed under them, walk on straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.
This release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the last fulfilment. There are other steps before one can reach the summit of the psychic realization. Then comes the spiritual realization, which opens the gates of the future.

The Mother puts the question:

Why is it necessary to make a distinction between the psychic education of which we have just now spoken and spiritual education of which we are going to speak presently? It is necessary because the two are usually mixed up under the generic name 'yogic discipline', although the goal they aim at is very different in each case: for one, it is a higher realisation upon earth, for the other, an escape from earthly manifestation, even away from the whole universe, a return to the unmanifest.

So one can say that the psychic life is the life immortal, endless time, limitless space, ever-progressive change, broken continuity in the world of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means to live the infinite and eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation, beyond time and space. To become fully aware of your psychic being and to live a psychic life you must abolish in you selfishness; but to live a spiritual life you must be selfless.

Here also in spiritual education, the goal you set before you will assume, in the mind's formulation of it, different names according to the environment in which you have grown, the path you have followed and the affinities of your temperament. If you have a religious tendency you will call it God and your spiritual effort will be towards identification with the transcendent God beyond all form, in opposition the Immanent God dwelling in each form. Others will call it the Absolute, the Supreme Origin, others again, Nirvanas, yet others who view the world as an unreal illusion will name it the Only Reality and to those who regard all manifestation as falsehood it will be the Sole Truth. And everyone of these definitions contains an element of truth, but all are incomplete, expressing only one aspect of what is. Here also the mental formulation has no great importance and once you go beyond the intermediate steps, it is always the same experience. In any case, the most effective starting-point, the swiftest method is total self-surrender. Besides, no joy more perfect than that of a total self-surrender to the highest point your conception can reach: for some it is the notion of God, for others that of Perfection. If this surrender is made
with persistence and ardour, a moment comes when you go beyond the concept and arrive at an experience that escapes all description, but which is almost always identical in its effect on the being. As your surrender becomes more and more perfect and integral, it will carry with it the aspiration for identification, a total fusion with That to which you have given yourself, and little by little this aspiration will overcome all difficulties and all resistances, especially if the aspiration has, added to it, an intense and spontaneous love; then nothing can stand in the way of its victorious onset.43

The merging into the Absolute, the Formless, is the supreme liberation - Nirvana, Moksha which has been presented as the highest goal of human endeavour. But does it give a satisfactory meaning to this terrestrial existence? (Moreover) a liberation that leaves the world as it is and does in no way affect the conditions of life from which others suffer, cannot satisfy those who refuse to live a felicity which they alone enjoy, and who dream of a world more worthy of the splendours that hide behind its apparent disorder and general misery. They dream that others should profit by the wonders they have discovered in their inner explorations. And the means to do so is within their reach, now that they have arrived at the summit of their ascent.44

The Mother then speaks of what is the core of Sri Aurobindo’s message:

From beyond the frontiers of form, a new force can be evoked, a power of consciousness which has not yet manifested and which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and bring to birth a new world. For the true solution of the problem of suffering, ignorance and death is not the individual escape by self-annihilation from earthly miseries into the non-manifest, nor a problematical collective escape from universal suffering by an integral and final return of the creation to its creator, thus curing the universe by abolishing it, but a transformation, a total transfiguration of matter brought about by the logical continuation of Nature’s ascending march in her progress towards perfection, by the creation of a new species that will be in relation to man what man is in relation to the animal and that will manifest upon earth a new force, a new consciousness and a new power.45

And The Mother hints at the future education, when she adds: Then will begin also a new education which can be called the supramental education; it will, by its all-powerful action work not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and upon the environment in which they live.
Contrary to the type of education we have spoken of hitherto that progresses from below upward through an ascending movement of the different parts of the being, the supramental education will progress from above downward, its influence spreading from one state of being to another till the final state, the physical, is reached. This last transformation will happen in a visible manner only when the inner states of being have already been considerably transformed. It would be therefore quite unreasonable to try to judge the presence of the supramental by physical appearances. The physical is the last to change and the supramental force can be at work in a being long before something of it becomes perceptible in the life of the body.

In brief, one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but in a transformation of the nature itself, a transformation of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance, of the divine race upon earth.46

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Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education

In the foregoing pages I have shown that, if education is to prepare humanity for its future and meet the needs of a rapidly evolving world, it must be based on a clear conception of the true aim of human life, both individual and collective. And I have tried to show that the comprehensive views of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother give a complete answer to this problem.

The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is tentatively trying to translate this ideal into practice, but does not in any way claim to have realized it. The ideal we have accepted, it is towards it that we move with our faith and devotion. But we are still very far from it and its very comprehensiveness makes us more conscious of our limitations; we know that we are only at the beginning of the way and that, to be really worthy of collaborating in this great endeavour, we have first to transform ourselves.

I shall now, and this is the end of this essay, enumerate a few specific conditions in which the Centre functions and which have proved useful for the work that we are carrying on.

There is first what we may call the homogeneity of the school population. Most of the students are children of disciples of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and, whether they
live in hostels or with their families in the Ashram, they have been brought up and are continuing to live in an environment suited to our ideals. Too often, outside, the work of the educator is hampered by the conditions, physical or otherwise, which the child finds at home.

Secondly, there is a *continuity of education* from the Kindergarten till the end of the studies. The students remain in the Centre for ten to fifteen years and they may, if they so choose, live afterwards in the Ashram, which truly offers them a suitable field in practically all lines of human activity.

Thirdly, *the Centre of Education is a part of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram*, its extension, so to say, in the educational field. The life of the children is intimately interwoven with the Ashram life, in which very often they have parents or relatives. This fact, coupled with the first two points, means that they live in a community which is a big family, which the relations are peaceful and loving. Young and old mix freely, without any complex of superiority or inferiority.

The community provides each of its members with what he requires for his growth according to his nature. This one of the reasons why the Ashram has developed into such a complex organism, with many departments and services workshops, farms, and with a number of commercial industrial undertakings attached to it.

Fourthly, *the Centre of Education is international* in practice and not only in name. This is in accordance with Sri Aurobindo’s conception that unity manifests in diversity without losing its unifying oneness. The students as well as the teachers are from all parts of India and from many countries abroad, without any distinction of sex, race, creed or caste. Most of the Indian languages are taught, as also several foreign languages. The cultures of different nations are made accessible not merely intellectually in ideas principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms - painting, sculpture, music dance, architecture and decoration - and physically in dress games and sports. Shows, exhibitions and films are used extensively for this purpose.

[The aim is] to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries upon earth. For all the countries upon earth. For all world organisation, to
be real and to be able to live, must be based upon mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. All these conditions are eminently favourable to a work.

which we consider as an experiment in education. When a biologist wants to produce certain results, he selects the favourable conditions and protects his strain from influences which would hinder or prevent success. The wisdom and protection of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have acted with us in a similar way.

But above all these favourable conditions there is the towering presence of The Mother. She is not only the organizer who directs and harmonizes our effort, but she is the guide, the Guru, the incarnation of the Divine Mother, to whom all, children and parents, students and teachers, girls and boys, come with love and confidence, for advice, help, strength, comfort and peace.

*

The 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 be manifest and we may be ready to receive them.

The Mother

OUR NEW SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

(The Free Progress System)

A series of three lectures delivered by the means to the teachers Sri Aurobindo centre Of Education on September 24 and October 22, 1961.
In Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* we find an explicit and luminous passage, already quoted but which we repeat here because it reveals the secret of true education. Apropos of the new trends evidenced by the experiments in education carried out in various countries, he says:

...the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being., not to the kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.... 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. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this true dealing. The closer touch attempted with the physical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.¹

This passage throws considerable light on the forceful statement which Sri Aurobindo has given as the fundamental principal of education.

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught... ²

It is quite clear that, according to Sri Aurobindo, the current idea that the teacher should impart *his* knowledge - what he knows about a subject - to the child is fundamental wrong. He must show the child *how to learn* that subject by himself, help him in devising his own methods of learning and of organizing the knowledge which he gathers or discover:

We can understand this better if we observe how a young child gains spontaneously the knowledge of his surroundings. He does it through a ceaseless activity which is natural to him whenever he finds interest in the objects at his disposal. He examines, touches, manipulates every object he can lay his hand upon, studies how he
can use it for his own purposes (often very different from his parents' ends and views). He explores every nook and corner of the room of the house, of the garden, sees how he can make use of them for his activities, his games (with little care for the purpose and the tranquility of the grown-ups). All this is done and pursued in conformity with the needs of his stage of growth. It is the learning by doing, as named by Dewey. When we say that a child is amusing himself or playing (alone or with playmates), it is almost always the purposeful activity (solitary or collective) of a growing being deeply engaged in the process of building up and perfecting his instruments of knowledge and action. We are indeed in presence of a genuine education, leading to discovery and invention - discovery of the world around and of its meaning (for the child's mentality). invention of the usage he can put it to (for the child's aims and interests) - and it is a self education as it does not require lectures or books. An adult's intervention is in most cases not sought for, nor is it effective, as the adult's understanding is too remote the child's mentality.

But the adult has an important part to fulfil. When a child is idle, restless or mischievous, it is either that his natural activity has been hampered or distorted, or that he has exhausted the opportunities given to him by his surroundings and his activity has no outlet. It is for the adult - parent or teacher - to keep the environment supplied with elements of interest. These objects should act by their presence, not by their purpose. Their aim is to satisfy an immediate and actual need of the child, not a future need as anticipated by the parent or teacher (pass an exam, get a good job, raise a family). The purpose of a child is always immediate: the satisfaction of an actual need, which is one of the forms taken by the deep fundamental urge in him to grow physically, emotionally and mentally. He does not paint with the aim of becoming an artist (such an aim belongs to the adult mentality, but it is often unwisely and untimely instilled into the child's receptive mind), but for the satisfaction of the creative impulse in him. He does not try to solve a problem of mathematics to become a mathematician or a good engineer, or even to know geometry and algebra, but for the satisfaction of the discovery, the lightning that suddenly flashes into his mind when he "gets it", for the inner joy of having overcome a difficulty and succeeded. He does not play the mouth organ to have a large audience and be recognized as a musician (if he has these ambitions, he got them by the praises bestowed upon him by elders), but for the joy of self-expression and the pleasure he gives to his nearest mates and friends.

Therefore the foremost need of a child is that his environment should be well supplied with all kinds of objects suited to his stage of development. The child will move
freely among these objects and spontaneously display an activity through which, by observation and experiments, he will grow to the knowledge of the environment. The child judges, foresees, compares and reasons for himself in all that concerns him. The knowledge thus gained has already all the characteristics of a scientific knowledge and, more, it is acquired spontaneously in a scientific way, trial and experiment, although (the adult will say) with much fumbling.

Child psychologists have distinguished in the child activities various stages in relation with his surroundings. There is the stage of manipulation, the stage of construction, the stage of observation (truly all are parts of a sir process of discovery). The child comes often across objects the understanding of which is beyond his powers. This is particularly the case of man-made instruments and machines from the time-piece, the sewing-machine and the gramophone, to the motor car and the radio and television set observation alone gives access only to a small part of the secrets. The child will therefore look for help from an elder parent or teacher. Later the age comes when the child begins to open and react to stimuli from objects of a different nature; they are no more material objects, they are objects only in the philosophical sense: we may call the intellectual objects. Such are mathematics, history, geography, foreign languages, sciences, philosophy, in their various branches and aspects. At this time the help of teacher becomes indispensable and assumes a more complex form, which we shall study presently as it is the true support of mental education.

It is certain that this spontaneous activity leading to a knowledge of the surroundings and to their right use and mastery is the most natural and efficient form of education What we have to find are the ways and means to extend form of education to the gradual discovery and knowledge not only of the whole outside world, but also of the inner worlds, the world of emotions and feelings, the world of thought. Above all, our education should induce the child look quietly and persistently for the inner guidance, so that the soul may reveal its presence, assume the leadership and prepare the proper use and true mastery of both the outer and inner worlds. This will be fully in accordance with the injunctions of Sri Aurobindo and it is the aim we place before us.

We can already see that, at every stage of the child's development, the first task of the educator- parent or teacher - will be to keep the environment of the child...
adequately furnished with all that is capable of arousing the stimuli which the child needs at this stage for a natural and continuous growth.

In what he calls "the second principle" of true teaching, Sri Aurobindo has stated that the mind of the child has to be consulted in its own growth.

Therefore the work proposed to a child must be suited to his mental age and outlook, and he must be allowed to do it according to his own capacity and speed. A child who is given a work corresponding to his needs as a growing being, accepts it readily and does it with attention and joy.

From this it follows, that the child must be given individual attention and be allowed to proceed independently. *It is the child, and not the teacher that sets the pace.*

Up to now we have only elaborated the fundamental principles of education as stated by Sri Aurobindo and we have found that they form an explicit rationale of the natural and spontaneous ways through which the young child educates himself and comes to the knowledge and use of his surroundings. This discovery suggests that these principles form also the rationale of a natural, consistent and self-sufficient system of education. At the same time it gives us a hint of how this system can be realized.

To proceed further and derive the practical methods of our system, we shall seek help in the modern findings of child psychology. A considerable amount of study has been done since the beginning of the century, leading to a better understanding of the child's behaviour, his mentality, his needs, his reactions.

Of course, I shall interpret three findings in the light of Sri Aurobindo's teaching. Most of them are simple facts of observation, well-known to many vigilant and attentive parents, but they are frequently lost sight of and neglected as irrelevant to school education. As they are substantiated nowadays by careful study and comparison, they appear almost as rules which one should try to follow; to observe them creates good growing conditions for the child, to neglect them is harmful to a natural and healthy development. In this sense they can be viewed as forming psychological hygiene. We shall study them under the head "The needs of the child".

**II**

The Needs of the Child
The child has interest for an object when by that object he is capable of satisfying one of his needs. Hence the importance of knowing the needs of a child.

As a growing being, the child has certain needs, quite a number of them, of various kinds - physical, affective, psychological, intellectual - and even some so deeply rooted and so important that they may be called "psychic needs", needs pertaining to the soul in evolution.

If the parents and teachers know these needs and give them consideration and satisfaction, the child grows normally and is naturally happy. If they are ignored, two kinds of results may ensue. Some of these neglected needs may manage to get satisfaction in an indirect way and produce deviations or distortions in the child's character; the child may become unstable, irritable, restless, mischievous. The neglect of the other needs, particularly important, result in a more positive and definite harm: the growth is thwarted, stunted or crippled. Happiness may therefore be taken as a sign that the essential needs of a child are met. Conversely, happiness may be said to be the first need of a child because, of course, its presence shows that no important need is neglected, but also, more positively, because happiness is essentially a suffusion of a psychic influence from within, permeating the emotional being and through it the outer personality.

Happiness does not consist in laughing, shouting, clapping hands and running here and there. Happiness is first of all relaxation, a liberation from tension of all sorts, an expansion of the being in silence and peace. Then comes a mute joy, a smile, the effulgence of a sweet presence within, a look of friendliness towards the world.

Such needs as condition the uncovering or revelation of the soul within may rightly be called psychic needs. They are manifestations of the soul's essential tendency towards beauty, nobility, truth, freedom, love and respect, right action and generous justice. It is only in an atmosphere where these qualities are displayed that the soul is able to pierce the outer crust and come to the surface. If they are absent and replaced by their opposites - vulgarity, meanness, wickedness, hate - the flower of the soul can not bloom. Reactions of defence will take place and produce distortions such as hardness, dissimulation, cynicism, revolt destructive impulses, that will permanently impair the child's character. The presence in the character of such traits is a sure sign that the child has found them rampant in
surroundings and that his natural aspirations toward beauty, truth and good have met with misunderstanding contempt or ridicule.

One of these psychic needs is the necessity for the soul to row in freedom, in conformity with the essential nature of the inmost being, with the divine dharma of each individual. This explains the exceptionally strong words used by Aurobindo in his second principle: "To force the nature abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm mutilate its growth and deface its perfection."

Does it mean that the educator is to follow all that the child wants or demands, his whims and fancies?

We shall see that there are several kinds of needs: natural needs and artificial needs, true needs and fancy needs, general needs and individual needs. But the distinction is not easy; it is so difficult that it requires patient observation and long experience, and teachers are often left in a quandary.

However there is a solution, a way out of the difficulty. It is to appeal to the child himself, or rather to "the real man within" the child, to make the distinction and discard what unnecessary and futile.

Let us first study what the artificial needs are, in contrast to the natural needs. A need is artificial that results from intervention of the adult, or of society as a whole, in a child's life. A need is natural that manifests without that intervention. Let us say immediately that we should not think that all artificial needs are to be eliminated. Some are essential to the life in society, but most of them belong to the adult mentality; they should come when the child has reached the necessary maturity, not be infused too early into the child's receptive nature.

Psychologists have sorted out a number of needs that are created by an intervention of the adult in the child's life. Much cannot be said here about this subject; I shall only enumerate some of them:

The need to attract attention, to push oneself in the forefront, to play to the gallery, is due to the too great prominence given to a young child by his parents who like to show him off and revel in the praises bestowed upon him by friends and visitors.

A young child who cannot keep his hands off things has been deprived at home of sufficient very simple objects which every child needs to touch, to handle at leisure, to manipulate and play with.
Some children are incapable of sustained activity; whatever they undertake, they immediately give up and turn to a new occupation. This behaviour is unusual in a normal child who becomes literally engrossed in work and resents all intrusion, once he has found an object of interest. This kind of fickleness has been created by the action of parents who ignore this need of the child and constantly disturb him when engaged in working or playing (for a child playing is working).

Modern psychologists attribute the destructive tendencies of young people to a repression and deviation of their creative urge. In the same way, the boisterous, unruly and turbulent behaviour of children can be traced to the imposed immobility during long hours of class-work and lack of outlet for their plentiful physical energies.

The intervention of the adult can be positive or negative. The adult may act when his action is not required or is detrimental. He may also fail to intervene when his action would be required (for instance, in keeping the environment adequately supplied).

If it is found necessary to suppress or discourage artificial need, the first thing to do is to find out its cause to stop the intervention that lies at its origin. When this is done the need may persist for some time, but its insistence will decrease and in the end it will wither away and disappear, especially when there comes into play the criminating process we shall presently speak of.

When we examine the distinction between true needs and fanciful needs, the situation becomes more difficult. Once we admit the essential distinctiveness of each individual there is truly no criterion by which the teacher can decide whether a need is true or fanciful. What is fancy for one child may be genuine for another child's development. Here the solution lies, as we have said, in bringing gradually the child to take in hand the responsibility of his own education This process of shifting the responsibility from the teacher the student is fundamental in our new education and we shall return to it later. Suffice to say now that, when the child is faced with the necessity of taking for himself all kinds of decisions that hitherto were taken and enforced by parents and teachers, he spontaneously collects himself and turns inwards. He becomes "responsible" and begins to search for an inner guidance. In the child the soul is not far away, it is not yet covered by a hard crust generated by the "hard realities" of life. It is therefore relatively easy for the child, when he begins to look inwards quietly, to come in touch with his soul. Once this contact has been established true discrimination will surely come in and do away with any fancy need, whether obnoxious or futile.
General needs are common to all, or practically all, children, depending to a certain extent on age. They are true needs. Individual needs pertain to a child or to a period of his growth. They also may be true needs and have to be met. Their importance is considerable as their aim is often to restore the balance or eliminate a gap or a lag in the child's development.

It can be said that in our new educational system, except for needs that are visibly artificial or whimsical, every need that the child expresses quietly and confidently is to be met -as far as possible, of course. At the beginning this may seem a dangerous and unwise policy. But very soon, when the child on the way to responsibility is faced with the consequences of his decision or of expressing his likings or dislikings, it becomes evident that the wise policy is to give him a chance to make his own experiments. After all, every human being learns only by experience - one's own. Another person's experience can only be useful as a warning or a confirmation and shorten the duration of the experiment, it does not dispense with it. And when a child has reached this stage of responsibility, he learns quickly indeed, quicker than adults in most cases.

From the examples given above, we can see how a need to which a normal and legitimate fulfilment is denied tries to get satisfaction anyhow and thus generates abnormal tendencies in the child. Moreover, the feeling of dissatisfaction, of frustration, sinks into the subconscient and becomes the source of many psychopathic troubles, ranging from simple irritability to actual neurosis. Neurotic troubles, erratic behaviour, that confound and distress so many parents have no other origin. They are extremely difficult to deal with, as their real cause is not understood.

When I say that the natural needs of a child are to be satisfied, I do not mean that it is the educator who has to satisfy them. In fact, a child's needs are always satisfied by the child himself; the educator must only place the child in conditions where this satisfaction is possible. This is true from the physical needs to the emotional and intellectual needs. Through an active satisfaction of his own needs in answer to the stimuli induced by the external objects, the child develops his various instruments of knowledge and action, skill, strength, the use of his sense-organs, judgment, memory, intellectual capacity, etc. The educator should always remember that he should not try to act upon the child, nor upon the needs, but upon the environment of the child.
We are now in a position to review briefly the most important general needs of childhood.

I shall not speak of the bodily needs, whether belonging to nutrition, health or physical growth. They do not fall within the scope of these lectures. Moreover, they are somehow better known than the psychological needs with which I am particularly concerned here. I say "somehow" because our knowledge and attitude towards these needs are still very much open to improvement, as the little story I shall tell you now will show. It is the true story of an experiment with very young children, related by Washburne.

Fifteen newly weaned children were kept under a continuous scientific observation up to the age of four and a half. At mealtime a tray with a large selection of food was placed before each child: 12 to 15 plates each containing simple food, not modified by flavouring or mixed with another dish. Pure milk or curd, a hardboiled egg, different vegetables, chopped raw meat, roasted beef, etc. The youngest child (9 or 10 months) was the first to make some uncertain movements with the hand and indicated, by chance, a plate. Immediately the supervisor gave him a spoonful of what the plate contained. The child soon learned that whenever he indicated a plate he was given the contents of the plate. He also learned very quickly what each plate contained. The dishes changed from one meal to another, there were altogether 20 or 25, but not more than a dozen were given at each mealtime. Also at each meal the position of the dishes was changed for the very little ones, so that a child would not select a dish because of its particular position but because of its desire to have certain kind of food. The child could eat according to his choice, as much or as little as it wanted. When a plate was empty it was filled again. The child could fill himself up solely with only one dish without the least disapproval being shown. The results were striking. The children grew up as beautiful and healthy a batch as could be desired. Some who were rickety were soon cured. The children were seldom ill, but when they had a cold, they themselves regulated their diet. They did not balance the diet at each meal, but within a certain period of time each child took the needed variety of food and made the very adjustment necessary for his growth.

Let us revert to the psychic needs. The first amongst them is the need for happiness of which I have already spoken sufficiently.

Another need that belongs to the soul and concerns all the parts of the being is the need to grow. Fundamentally, the child is a growing being; growth is his raison
d'être, the law of his existence. And in this growth the child is not passive, submissive, as a tyre when inflated grows in size through an outside action. For the child, to grow is to act, to do something, and by that action, that doing, his body acquires strength, resilience, health, his mind becomes sharp, alert, capable of reasoning, judging and deciding, knowledge grows and the capacity of using that knowledge. Growth is an activity that interests the whole being.

The body grows by the assimilation of suitable food, by exercise, practice and training. The emotional and vital being grows by contacts with other forms of life and beauty, by exchange of feelings and emotions, by a natural expansion in a suitable harmonious environment. Mind grows by dealing with objects and situations, by practice, exercise and training, by observation, experiment, invention and discovery, by assimilation of a freely accepted and suitable mental food, by exchange of ideas and experiences.

It is for this reason that activity is the mark of childhood. And activity can only bring its desired fruits if it is a free activity, spontaneously surging from within at contact with external objects and peoples. Any imposed work or action has little or no value for the soul's purposes, for from such an action the soul is absent.

In a normal child, placed in favourable surroundings, action is always purposeful, even when it is a game or a play. It becomes idle and wasteful only when bad habits have been formed, either through lack of suitable objects of interest in the environment or as a reaction against the dullness of imposed task and lack of freedom in the activity.

When a child takes interest in what he does, it means that the action is purposeful, that is, it brings a contribution to the growth of the soul. Interest is thus the mark of a participation of the soul - a veiled and distant participation, to be sure, but still an indication of the direction in which the educator has to proceed.

And when a child is interested, concentration is spontaneous and anything that disturbs that concentration is resented. He forgets to eat, to sleep and everything else, till he considers that his purpose is obtained. Adults do not generally recognize and value this need and are responsible for much suffering and deviation by disturbing the child and obliging him to conform to their preconceived ideas or plans; this causes habitual restlessness, inattention and fickleness.

A child spontaneously wants to complete his work. He feels satisfaction in this completion; the feeling of achievement is the reward he is expecting. If he is deprived of it, by the shortsightedness of the adult, the child will quickly lose the greater part of his
interest in work and his tendency towards perfection. When a healthy child leaves his work half-finished, slap-dash and untidy, it is a distortion that has been caused by a habitual intervention of the adult in his activities. This point should always be kept in mind.

I would say to the teacher: "Let each child do his work to the best of his ability till he is satisfied and brings his work to you. Do not force him, but give him the necessary time and conditions. Then examine with him sympathetically, but without undue praise, the value of what he has done. Do it immediately if possible or at your earliest convenience, as the child is in a state of expectation. If your advice or correction comes after a week, the child will not have the slightest interest in it. He moves faster than you think."

This concentration upon a work till its purpose is fulfilled is part of a greater and deeper urge towards perfection. To observe a child to whom complete freedom is given is full of interest. When he has taken a liking for a work, his natural tendency is to do it as perfectly as he can. He will spend a considerable amount of time in perfecting it and evidently in this elaboration he gains something and obeys an urge deep rooted in him.

This brings us to the need of beauty. The appreciation of beauty in what is called works of art does not belong to the child stage - at least in the great majority of cases. But there is a tendency towards harmony and beauty in his own work. What the child is interested in is his own self-development, and self-expression is a part of self-development.

The aspect of beauty to which children are most sensitive is psychic beauty, the beauty resulting from the harmony with and the translucence to the soul within. The child is more awake to what is usually called moral beauty in a person, than to commonly recognized physical beauty. Psychic harmony and permeation is congenial to the child's nature and in such an atmosphere he feels happy, relaxed and confident. Generosity, fortitude, devotion, love, unselfish and heroic deeds always find their echo in him. They rouse his emotions to a very high pitch. Nothing repels the soul of a child more than vulgarity, meanness and wickedness. Unfortunately the soul's influence is not the only influence to which a child can open. If a child has not lived from early childhood in surroundings stamped with this psychic touch, the influence of his own soul may have become clouded or obstructed. He is then open to the contagion of vital influences of all kinds, coming to him from elders or classmates, especially if he has himself been a victim of distortions and deviations in the manner which we
have described. A perversion of this kind is akin to possession and is very difficult to cure. The soul must awaken, through a great and painful shock generally and with much suffering, and reassert its presence - what is called "conversion". Otherwise such a state may persist for the whole life.

The need for independence and freedom in children is well known. What is less known is that it springs from the determination of the soul to become the leader. Any rule that is not freely accepted, any external compulsion cannot be endured long by the child, and the more he becomes conscious, the more he feels sensitive to any encroachment upon his freedom. Consequently, in our education great care must be taken that the child is not subjected, whether from parents or teachers, to compulsion or pressure, physical or moral, that would defeat or hinder the aim we have in view.

Curiously enough, there is a complementary aspect to the need for freedom; it is the need for security. By these words it is not meant that the child relishes a comfortable, monotonous and insipid life, devoid of thrill and adventure. The liking of children for risk and even danger is well known (because risk and danger give them a possibility of wider experience and greater mastery). What I mean is the necessity for the child to be sure that his growth will not be hampered or prevented. It is perhaps a feeling that he is not yet capable of meeting all situations and that the difficult ones must not be pressed upon him as long as he does not feel ready. We can say that he likes a risk but he must feel confident that he is capable of running it and succeed. He is surely more interested in success than in the risk itself, therefore he must be free to make the experiment or to refuse it. He does not like to be compelled either to make it or refrain from it. The child wants also the assurance that in case of difficulty the necessary aid will not be denied to him. Not that he dislikes effort and will actually take the help, but before he makes the forward move, he will make sure that the supporting hand will be available, if needed. It would be a great mistake if the ready hand supplied support before help was really needed or requested.

If the first task of the teacher is to keep the environment adequately supplied, his second task is to be constantly present, entirely present, at the child's disposal. The child must know that whenever he needs an explanation, a piece of information, a hint, a moral help, an intervention from hint should not be given before they are actually needed or
asked for. Else they would spoil the whole value of the child's action. Remember that for a child every action is an experiment; do not rob him of the fruit of his experiment.

To inspire confidence and security, the teacher must be steady and unwavering. Nothing disconcerts the child more than changeable behaviour on the teacher's part. The child knows his teacher, in fact he knows him very well, he knows his weaknesses and does not expect him to be perfect, but he expects him to be consistent and reliable, he expects him to be tomorrow the same as yesterday. If the teacher behaves unexpectedly, if on some days he is severe and forbids something, and on other days without reason or explanation he is lenient and allows it, or *vice versa*, then the need of the child for security is affected. If the teacher is severe, let him be severe for all days and for every one, but he should not behave like an equivocal weather-cock unforeseeable and unreliable.

The teacher should also be the same within and without. When the children discover that the teacher behaves in private differently than when he is before them, when they find that his virtue is only pretence, they are shocked, and they will never give back their confidence to the person who has thus betrayed them.

In truth, independence and security are not incompatible. The child must be free; he must feel that freedom is guaranteed to him. But the granting of this freedom is not an absence of the teacher, an abstention or a surrender on his part. The child knows that the teacher will not prevent him from making the experiments he needs for his growth, but he is also confident that the teacher will always be present, effectively and efficiently whenever he will need his advice, his help, his support. Freedom and support are the complementary gifts that the child expects from the teacher.

Connected with security is the need of the child for success in his experiments. He is capable of swift and burning enthusiasm, but also subject to despondency and dejection if his expectations are not fulfilled. Consequently one should be careful not to give a child a work above his capacity. Failure is harmful for the child; it does not stir him to action as it does with the adult, it disheartens him. The problems and exercises must be well adapted to his strength, neither too easy nor too difficult. If he fails, do not tell him: "You see, you cannot do it"; and above all do not do the work for him, to show that you can do it. Try giving him a slight hint, a suggestion, or ask him to do at first a similar problem, but easier; help him unnoticed so that he may find the way to discovery and success.
When learning to ride, it happens that one is thrown from the horse. In such a case, except if there is a broken limb, it is customary that the instructor should request the novice immediately to bestride his horse again. One should not rest upon a failure.

The joy of achievement, of overcoming a difficulty, is one of the chief incentives to work, as for the child it is an indication of progress. In our new education it is perhaps the only incentive, as all others have been removed. Let the child understand that it is the true and only reward that is worthy of him. He must be asked to look into himself for the source of the joy that he feels in discovery, in achievement, in progress, to observe how and whence it comes, to go deep into it. This may help him to feel the touch of his soul and to grow under its influence.

Contrary to current opinion, a child likes order; it is apart of his need for security. But the child's order is rarely the parent's order. What the child requires is to be able to find the thing he wants, at the place where he has left it. But his mother has another conception of order. She wants things to be arranged according to certain fixed rules which she has declared to be logical and proper, and she reprimands the child when he has left his toy on the chair or put his note-books on the sewing-machine. It is therefore good to select in the home and also in the class-room a place which will be the child's property and to which he shall have free access, where he can keep and arrange his books, note-books, pencils and the few odd things that have so much value for a child because they are related to his affective life.

Regularity in meals, time of sleep, time of coming to and leaving the school, has also a value for the child and normally he will adhere to it easily. The breach of rules comes most often from difficulties at home.

We shall see that in our system, although there are certain fixed timings, such as coming to the school and leaving it, the time-table is flexible. This is done with the view that the child should organize freely his own work. In many cases, he will feel by himself the need of drafting his own time-table. The teacher may point out to him that it is one thing to write down a time-table and quite another to stick to it, that the latter is worth trying, but that it will be a difficult achievement. He must encourage the child and guide him gently and patiently. Whatever form it takes, what is important is the assumption of responsibility by the child, the responsibility that is the fruit of freedom.

There are needs that belong to the emotional or affective life of the child, although, as you may have noticed, all the child's needs are truly tinged with affectivity. The most
important is the need of sympathy, affection and love. And naturally, as the teacher is for
the child the centre of his school life, it is in the teacher (after the parents) that he expects
to find them. Everyone knows this, but let me insist that sympathy and love should be
based on a true understanding and should not blur the vision of the teacher. Fondling is
not to be encouraged, nor familiarity. The relation between teacher and pupil should be based upon trust and respect. Have
confidence in your children and be worthy of their confidence. Respect them and they
will respect you. Let the relation between them and you be, as much as possible, a contact
of soul with soul, be always ready to give ungrudgingly your attention, time and care to
them, and keep in mind the reason of your presence with them: to be the helper, the guide
that moves along with them on their way to self-discovery and self-mastery.

We have spoken of the relation between teacher and pupil. At the school age the
relation between parent and child must be much of the same nature. The extreme physical
dependence of the early age has ended, but it remains often difficult for parents to
understand the need of freedom in their child. They resent what they consider to be pride
and ungrateful self-assertion. They expect a silent obedience, sure as they are that they
know better than the child what is good or harmful for him. Here lies the greatest obstacle
to a healthy relation between them. I shall not say more, as I am not addressing parents as
such.

Let us come to the relation between the children themselves. At the age of about 8-9 a need begins to appear, which culminates at 12-13. It is the social need. The child
begins to act, to build, to experiment with the help of other children; he feels the need of
sharing his discoveries, inventions, with comrades, either to get their approval, or to
modify his ideas in accordance with theirs. He finds pleasure in a common activity, far
overpassing the playing relations which he had with them at an earlier age. It is also the
time when children spontaneously form themselves into teams, bands or gangs, dividing
between themselves the work and responsibility whether for games, picnics, scouting
parties, exploration or work. The class-mate is a new object of interest that the child
discovers in his surroundings. He begins to experiment with him as he does with the other
objects of interest. He tries to evoke reactions and studies his own reactions, and by these
exchanges comes to know
his fellow-beings, and thus prepares himself for life in a society. Such association has to be accepted and helped to grow in a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect. It can become very fruitful and provision must be made for it in our methods of education, under the form of team-work or child in the choice of his associates, though hints may sometimes be given as to the effect of certain associations. Group-work is only fruitful when the group can form freely and dissolve freely. And if a child prefers to work alone, let him do so..

For a child, the teacher becomes an object of interest much in the same way as his class-mates. The child studies his teacher all day long, provokes and observes his reactions under all possible conditions, tests his sensitivity, his patience, his forbearance, and regulates his own conduct by his findings. A feeling of being deliberately tested has often been reported by teachers.

The end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence is marked by the appearance of a new object of interest for the child: it is his own inner being. There is a withdrawal within, an inner search. The child tries to understand his feelings, his emotions, his passions and to establish his relations with the world and peoples; he is looking for the meaning of his life and for the meaning of the world. It is frequently the time of a deeply felt crisis. The teacher should help the boy or girl to face squarely the problems of this age and pass through them. Here also a silent sympathy and a few words of encouragement are a powerful help. Advice should be given on books for reading - there is often a craze for novels - a well-chosen book may help to untangle a complicated knot.

To end this chapter on the needs of childhood, I must emphasize the fact that needs are not fixed once for all; they are subject to change, not only with different children, but for one child with age, stage of evolution and the actual circumstances of his physical, emotional and intellectual life,
It is certainly true that childhood recapitulates the whole human evolution. Every educator knows how at various stages the child is fascinated by different stories, stories of the life in the jungle or in the Far West, of taming of animals, of adventure and heroic deeds, of scientific discoveries, of sentimental exchanges, of cultural associations, etc. Each stage must be well accomplished before entering the next one, as each has something to contribute to the wholeness of the being. There is no purpose in hurrying up the children through these various stages as if the last were the only one worthy of attention.

Truly, growth should continue throughout the whole life, and education also. It is like a piece of music, a song or symphony; each note or chord has a meaning only in relation with the others. The symphony has a meaning as a whole and not in any one of its notes or chords. It is the same with life.

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III

The Educational Environment

The purpose of the school environment is to give to the child the stimuli that impel him to a self-educative activity. These stimuli are produced by the multiple objects that constitute the equipment of the class-room. In theory, they have to fulfil a double condition. Firstly, they should correspond to actual needs of the children of the class; and secondly, all the needs of these children should find satisfaction in them. In simpler words, no need should be left unsatisfied, no object should be felt as useless. In practice, the environment must offer stimuli in sufficient number and variety, so that the interest of all the children may be constantly kept alive. And the environment must be constantly renewed so as to keep up with the forward march of the class.

If a child does not find in the environment objects corresponding to one of his immediate needs, they can for some time be replaced by objects corresponding to other needs. But the substitution cannot be effective for very long; the neglected need presses and the child shows it unconsciously by restlessness and stress. Naturally things are worse when several needs are left unsatisfied. It can be stated as a sound rule that a child becomes restless when he does not act and he stops acting when he does not find in the environment a meaning for his action.

It may happen that a child responds only to a very few stimuli. This occurs when the corresponding need or needs of the child have been long suppressed; consequently
satisfaction of these has assumed priority over all other needs. It may also come about when the objects offered for the child's attention correspond to needs that have not yet developed in him. In both cases, and if the child does not disturb the class, it is best to wait and see, that is, to observe without showing any disapproval. The child may after some time become receptive to other stimuli, which shows that the dormant needs have become operative.

But if the child remains persistently closed to the solicitations of the school environment, it means either that he is an abnormally dull child or that his needs are elsewhere. After all there are children who will never show any appetite for science, grammar or history. In such cases an attempt should be made to find out whether the child has hidden artistic tendencies: drawing, painting, music, dance. If this also fails, the inclusion of manual work of various types in the school environment may become extremely useful. Not only will this help to discover natural abilities of the child and give him the necessary help in his own line, but it may also happen that, having satisfied through a manual activity a long suppressed need, the child relaxes and begins to take a more lively interest in some mental activities, for which he had hitherto shown no bent.

It is the task of the teacher to gauge and find out the needs of his pupils and to assemble or prepare the class equipment accordingly. This is surely a considerable work and it will require much time, especially during the first year when the class starts from scratch. Much of the class vitality and push will depend on the manner in which this equipment is conceived and realized, and how it is used.

When a child has confidence in his teacher he will often spontaneously mention a suppressed source of interest for which he is longing. The satisfaction of this longing, when possible, may solve a long-standing psychological problem of the child.

On the other hand, it has been noticed that an environment that is all-organized or too rich causes often in the child a feeling of insecurity and bewilderment. The class must be clean and tidy, always kept in order. The children may be offered this responsibility and they will gladly accept it provided the teacher does not withdraw his interest, but brings them his collaboration by interest and suggestion.

A similar insecurity may arise when the class-room is stuffed with many objects that do not correspond to the
children's needs: objects in which they are now no longer interested or which they are yet incapable of understanding. The class equipment must not be an incongruous medley, but a careful selection of well-adapted and well-presented objects of interest.

What should be the equipment of the class? Much depends on the age and mental development of the children, that is, on the level of the class. We have distinguished three stages in the relation of the children with the outer material world: manipulation, construction, observation.

The first stage belongs to early childhood and is that of the Kindergarten; the second belongs to the primary levels and is the phase when educational games and construction kits (of the meccano type) are particularly effective. It is true that there is no sharp delimitation of the three stages and that they blend gradually into one another.

We are more concerned here with the stage of observation. It begins with the primary and develops all along the secondary levels. It would be best if the children could meet the objects of study and observe them in their original state and actual working: animals and plants in their natural environment, tools and machines in actual operation, arts and crafts in the productive setting. This is possible only rarely, but the opportunity should not be missed. Other means have to be resorted to and, as it is not possible to bring elephants, giraffes, steamers, airplanes into the classroom, some kinds of diminutive reproductions of the world will have to be created. In the order of their relative efficiency, they are: samples and models, pictures and photos, descriptions.

Some of these items belong to the scientific collections and laboratories of our Centre; they are common to all the classes: stuffed or preserved animals and skeletons, herbarium, slides and film stripes, models of engines and scientific and technological devices, demonstration outfits in elementary science, laboratory equipment for physics, chemistry and biology. The co-ordination of the needs of the various classes has to be planned carefully so as to ensure the best use of the extensive facilities that we now possess in our laboratories. Practical work for the desirous children must be arranged at as early a stage as possible - in fact as soon as elementary science (leons de choses) is taken up. This can be done at first with the help of experimental outfits which could be lent to the class, if accommodation is available. However, most of the practical work will have to be done in the laboratories themselves.

The class equipment proper will thus in major part consist of pictures and photos, text-books, reading books and books of reference (dictionaries, atlases, junior encyclopedias). This documentation is the basis of the school work.
Text-books should not be used as such, for they present to the child only a chewed food which he is expected to swallow and digest. This process does not at all satisfy the need for a creative discovery so essential in the child's life, or it satisfies it only partially and at a later stage. But text-books of the self-instructor type are on the way to proper teaching. In a book of this type, each step is carefully explained so that the student can follow it easily, and at each step questions are put that enliven the mind, keep it alert and inquisitive, oblige it to ensure and test its understanding. All this is very good, but the defect is that self-instructors are standard books, they do not take into account the variations in individual capacities.

For this reason we have introduced what we shall call the “work-sheets” (fiches de travail in French). I shall describe them in more detail in the next chapter. For the present, let me say that they are built on the same principles as the self-instructors, but made into separate lessons or sections related to a single theme of interest, sometimes to separate problems or experiments. The work-sheets are given individually to the students by the teacher, one at a time, and the student has to answer the prescribed questions before proceeding to the next one. This system, as we shall see, is more flexible than a book and has many advantages.

A time comes in the child's development when manipulation and observation do not suffice. By living with adults and sharing their company, the child acquires some new needs, such as reading, writing and counting. They are what we have termed artificial needs, but we have to admit them as true needs when they manifest spontaneously, because they mark the passage from action to thought. They arise at the same time as the social need, from the necessity of communication and exchange with fellow beings and their appearance signifies the admission of the child into the (mental) human community.

Reading, writing and counting can hardly be acquired by children without the help of an adult: they require learning. That does not mean that teaching becomes necessary, in the sense it is generally understood: that of showing and asking the child to reproduce what the teacher does. No doubt, imitation should have a part in learning, but it is not the essential part. If we want the process of learning to be rapid and fruitful, it must be based on personal striving, invention and discovery. The child must be induced to try and experiment. By a balanced amalgam of encouragement, guidance and correction, he can be b ought to learn by himself, so that he may not lose the joy of a constant progress and self-perfecting. Imitation belongs to the last stage of the corrective
process when the child fumbles and fails to succeed alone. Truly imitation is only justified as a perfecting technique; it is hardly conducive to discovery.

The child opens later to more elaborate stimuli. These are produced not by the immediate material surroundings, but by the world at large. The child is thus introduced into the various branches of knowledge, which we may continue for practical reasons to classify under four headings:

Languages
Mathematics
Sciences
History and Geography

We shall now see how the work-sheet system applies to each of these categories with only slight modifications.

The aim of the documentation and scientific equipment is to help the child in the building up of his knowledge. This building up is achieved mostly through the work prescribed in the work-sheets. In the documentation, the child must find all the information needed to answer the questions put to him.

The documentation - pictures, text-books, reference books - are considered by us as a source of information rather than a source of knowledge, because the child is not expected simply to store up in his memory what lies in the documentation but to find in it the stimuli that will call forth the knowledge that lies in him. In common parlance the word "knowledge" has two distinct meanings. First, "the act of knowing"; secondly, "the sum of what is known". Our education is directed towards knowledge in the first sense, while an encyclopedia constitutes a "storehouse of knowledge" in the second sense, i.e., a store of known facts.

The part played by information in the process of learning becomes at times very important, but at the school level the child should never be crushed under its weight. Once again, the aim is not to make him mug up the information, but to teach him how and where to find information, so that he learns to use it for his own development and its various applications.

There is one source of information which I have hitherto not mentioned - it is the teacher. To him, the child will come for any information that he does not find in the documentation, or for an explanation. The teacher must answer with kindness, precision and clarity, and give to the child exactly what the child expects, and no more. He must strictly resist the temptation to pour out all that he knows on the subject. What the child
needs is a piece of information, not a display of knowledge. If he needs anything further, he will ask for it.

IV 
The Class Work

I shall not speak of the teaching of reading, writing and counting. This teaching is started in the Kindergarten and pursued during the first two years of the school. It is a subject which has received considerable attention outside and we freely use the Montessori and other similar methods, though we do not follow strictly any one of them. The classes are small (not more than 10-15 children) and there is a blending of collective teaching with individual attention: we make a large use of educational games and other devices that we owe to the ingenuity of our teacher.

It has been found preferable to have two teachers for one class, one of them giving only part of his time; the main teacher can be relieved for a few periods and at other times a division in two groups can be carried out, which is convenient for certain purposes.

We shall henceforth assume that the child has a good working knowledge of reading, writing and counting. Then only can the new system make the best of its originality and usefulness.

The work in a new class falls under three heads:
A. Collective teaching
B. Individual Work
C. Team Work.

A. Collective Teaching

In order to find out what part of the class-work can or should be done collectively, i.e., by the teacher addressing the whole class, let us first see more in detail what is the aim he has in view while speaking to his students. We must distinguish among our four types of talks:

1. The teacher speaks out his knowledge with the view to communicate it to the students, i.e., that they should accept it, try to understand it and remember all they can. This is the traditional aim of lectures - the imparting of knowledge — which, for reasons I shall just explain, we are led to reject entirely.
2. The teacher's aim is to train the ear of the students and their tongue if the talking is on both sides. This is an indispensaible part of the teaching of languages and we do give it its due place here.

3. The aim is to supply a needed information. This aim is perfectly justified, but usually the need arises in one or a few students at a time and the delivery must be made to those students alone; to the others it is useless and boring. There fore, at least at school level, the resort to lectures of this type will arise rarely. For adults, the case is different, as we shall see later.

4. The teacher talks to his students with the view to give them guidance - of a specific nature and for a given work, or of a general nature, concerning their attitude, their approach to some problems of life or to some subject of study, etc. In most cases, the guidance is best given individually or to a small group. But it happens also that the group of interested Students grows to include the whole class. We shall discuss this in greater detail, and particularly the nature of the legitimate guidance to be given - whether it should include admonition and reproach, the arousing of interest, the communication of the teacher's experience. This is a vast and difficult subject, full of subtle distinctions and I shall only give a few guiding hints. The teacher has also to build up his own experience and knowledge.

Let us first discuss the case of lecturing as a means of imparting knowledge. We have seen the strong objection taken by Sri Aurobindo against this very conception of teaching. It has also been subjected to attacks by a number of modern educationists. According to them the traditional means of teaching through lectures and collective explanations, followed by class-work and/or home-work, suffers from two main defects:

1. The teacher addresses the whole class. In spite of all efforts at a uniform grading, there is among the students a great diversity of talent and of nature. Even if they could be really of one single grade at the beginning of the year, this would not last long. The class contains brilliant and dull children, quick and slow, attentive and absent-minded, healthy and listless. When lecturing the teacher tries usually to reach what is called the average student - or a little above average. The brilliant ones understand quickly, almost quicker than the teacher speaks, and their mind remains partly vacant and distracted; they dislike explanations and repetitions that they do not need. This is surely not the way to keep their interest alive, to make the best use of their time and train their ability to the utmost. The duller ones follow with great effort or soon lag behind; they are constantly prodded by
the teacher and accused of inattention and laziness - often quite wrongly. A child who is often scolded, by teacher or parents, gets nervous and upset; he comes to believe that he is unfit, gets discouraged and is inclined to give up the subject.

2. During all the lecture hours there is very little participation from the students. However interesting the teacher may be, the students are almost exclusively passive. And a passive mind cannot for long remain attentive. It becomes drowsy or wanders about.

What then develops in the child is the habit of remaining most of the time in a passive state, half-attentive, half-dreaming. The mind, accustomed to be spoon-fed - and spoon-fed to the brim - becomes blunt and sluggish.

It is true that some participation is requested from the students during their exercises, problems, essays, etc. whether done at home or in the class-room. But here also, except perhaps in mathematics, much attention is given to reproduction and the great incentive of discovery is practically not utilised.

whenever a child puts a question to his teacher, what he truly needs is a specific piece of information. But what he usually gets is an avalanche of words in which the very answer to his question is lost. After a few experiments of this kind, the child gives up questioning. Thus disappears the inquisitive attitude so natural to children when they join the school.

The dullness and lack of interest of students can be traced almost with a certitude to a mental overfeeding and the absence of the best incentive: a work leading to discovery and creation. It has been said with more than a grain of truth that lecturing satisfies only one need, that of the teacher for speaking.

The difference between imparting knowledge as such and supplying information is important and must be well grasped. I hope to be pardoned for my insistence.

When a lecture is given to a group of research workers (at post-graduate level, for instance), about a subject familiar to them, by somebody who has a personal contribution to offer, then the lecture is given and received as a piece of information and it takes its proper place in the documentation that the mature students have for their use. Well and good, it is then perfectly justified and useful. But this is not the case at school level, when the young students have just started building up their own knowledge. Here the lecture is not given as a piece of information, but as the very knowledge that they have to assimilate and store up in their mind. They are asked to listen, understand and possibly remember what the lecturer has said. Where is the purposeful activity, where the discovery?
Another legitimate use of lectures is the dissemination or presentation of information in a popular form to an adult audience: for instance, what is the present state of things in a that country or in the world at large. Such lectures are on a par with magazines, documentary films and news-reels: their role is to add a *piece of information* to an already existing documentation. Even when the object is to present a new discovery, this discovery is evidently made by another person and not by the listener.

Once again, this presentation of information has a completely different character when it is made to a mature mind or to a child at school level. The adult has already a constituted knowledge in the form of a frame or set of notions to which any new mental acquisition is forthwith compared so as to take its proper place in the mental setting. The child's critical faculty is not yet awakened (I mean the logical mental discrimination, for he can be very critical otherwise). His mental frame of reference is in the process of formation and still imperfect. Moreover, as I said, the lectures given at school level are always presented with the authority of one who knows - the teacher - to those who do not know yet - the students - with the aim that they will accept this knowledge and make it their own. And that is the wrong way of teaching. Says Sri Aurobindo: "He (the teacher) does not impart knowledge to him (the student), he shows him how to acquire knowledge."

Even in the outside educational world, at university level in Europe, lectures have nowadays come into disfavour. They are more and more replaced by variations of the tutorial system. For instance, the professor in charge may write his course which is then printed (or cyclostyled) and distributed to the students in sheet form all through the year. The students are arranged in groups of 10-12 under the guidance of assistants. They study the printed sheets alone and meet for discussion, exercises and other work under the guidance and strict control of the assistant. The professor carries on general supervision of the whole process and the assistants refer to him. The professor himself chooses often to deliver a few initial lectures and a concluding one to his whole class - probably to introduce himself to them and give a personal touch to his teaching.

Why has the magistral system of lectures been thus discredited? It is said that it involves a waste of time. The
time of the students is used with better efficiency through a personal approach to the
printed course, followed by a work done under the constant guidance and control of the
assistant.

An argument that is sometimes advanced in favour of lectures is that they have an
inspiring power, that they communicate something more than mere intellectual content
and that they should therefore have a place in a complete system of education.

It is true that a force is sometimes active behind the words of a speaker and this is
often felt in a political leader or a religious orator of the revivalist type. This kind of
transmission has no place in our educational scheme. It is certainly easy to inflame the
emotions of children, but it is not a sound and healthy process as the level of the force
involved is almost invariably vital. The case of a true spiritual force is very, very rare
and, let me say it once, when it manifests, everything should bow down to it.

But what the arguer has probably in view is the communication of an interest, an
enthusiasm, the creation of an atmosphere. Such a power is said to be the mark of a true
teacher. Many of us will remember the deep impact made upon us by the few rare
teachers and professors of this type to whom we had the good fortune to listen.

It is no doubt very necessary that the students should feel, not only an interest, but
an enthusiasm for what they do, and the influence of the teacher in this respect is very
great. But lectures are not necessary. It is rather the life and behaviour of the teacher that
must, by his example, awaken a similar enthusiasm in the students. What is useful is
a living enthusiasm, not a verbal enthusiasm. In a poem or a work of art, the teacher may
show the beauty, through a few words. Beauty can be shown and seen; it is not necessary
but rather detractive to describe it lengthily, at least to young people. To enter into long
considerations will shift the emphasis from the experience of beauty to its intellectual
analysis. This may be useful for the formation of an art

critic, but not of an artist and lover of beauty. Those who are sensitive to beauty will not
need your long explanations; and for those who are only sensitive to your words, I would
say that it is your enthusiasm that you have infused into them; it is your experience that
you have reproduced in them, by a kind of resonance. Is this entirely justified?

I believe that our aim must be something more stable, and more rooted in the
student himself, less dependent on the teacher. The interest that we should try to evoke is
from within the student in response to the stimuli of the external objects. The presentation
of the objects has certainly an importance and to make them attractive is legitimate. But
care should be taken lest the solicitation from the teacher should be of so forceful a nature
that the personal reaction of the student has really been replaced by the teacher’s, in which case the danger is that, when the excitation is absent, the enthusiasm will collapse, the interest will vanish. True, they may persist, which only means that the student was just ready and the lecture gave him the opening touch. Still this recourse to an external solicitation does not seem to be exempt from drawbacks. Therefore, while I would not advise against the occasional use of such lectures (provided of course the didactic element is eliminated), I would not advise either a habitual recourse to them as a means of keeping the interest of the students alive. It is almost a principle of the new education that the teacher should not act upon the student, but upon the environment. I quote again Sri Aurobindo: "He [the teacher] does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him [the student] where it is and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface."

Let me add that the importance in traditional education of a teacher capable of firing the interest of his student comes mostly from the fact that there is in the traditional setting no other means of provoking their interest. But the main object of our system is to generate in the student, by leading him to discovery and creation, a living and stable interest in his work. So I feel that the need and importance of lectures of this kind will not be felt so keenly by us.

What is really valuable in a speech or a talk is the presence of a spiritual or psychic trend. But the immense value of a psychic atmosphere cannot be put forward as a plea in favour of lectures. The creation of such an atmosphere does not require a lecture. It has for prerequisite a certain harmonious, free and happy relation between teacher and students which is within the scope of our new system. Then, when the time comes and the opportunity presents itself, a few words from the teacher may bring about the inner concentration, the looking inwards that will release the psychic presence.

In agreement with the above analysis and discussion, it is only in the study of the languages that collective teaching is really necessary as a consistent and regular means of acquiring knowledge and capacity. It will consist in lectures from the teacher, reading aloud, comment, dictation, oral questions and answers, conversation, debate, drama - any work which is done in a raised voice with the aim of perfecting oral expression, whether prose or poetry, and which involves the whole class.

Collective teaching may conveniently fill 3 hours a week in both English and French, i.e., about half the time allocated formerly to these languages. The same proportion may hold for the other languages.
In subjects other than languages and at the secondary level, the need of a general lecture may be felt from time to time, but I believe this occasion will not be frequent, if only on account of the varied grading of the students in the new classes.

B. Individual Work

We have seen that the principles of our education require that students should receive individual guidance in their self-educative activity aiming at the discovery of knowledge.

How is this to be achieved in a class of 20 to 30 students?

The method of individual work based on the work-sheet answers this stipulation to a large extent. At the same time it avoids the pitfalls of the magistral collective teaching.

Fundamentally, a work-sheet is a set of instructions concerning the work that the child should himself do. It includes, or may include:

a) A didactic part (didactic = meant to teach), where the student will find an introduction to the subject, definitions of the new terms, a historical background. That part may also contain a piece of reasoning that is given to the student as an example (a theorem of mathematics, for instance), or a description (history and geography) or a set of rules (grammar), etc.

Each detailed step of the didactic text must be so drafted that the student understands it readily. After each step questions are put which he must answer - by a word or a short sentence - easy questions which we may call (mind) focussing questions. Their function is to help the child to delve into the text, understand it and assimilate it. Then exercises or problems follow, that offer practice and training.

b) A heuristic part (heuristic = serving to discover), with the delineation of the research to be made, the indication of the documentation, or documentary equipment (models, skeletons, etc.), to be consulted or studied (natural science, history and geography), of the experiments to be done (physics and chemistry). Then comes a set of focussing questions, fixing the student's attention on certain points and guiding him in his work, and finally the concluding questions, in answer to which he is asked to supply his results, his conclusions.

It happens that some subjects require work-sheets where the didactic part is to a large extent predominant; this is the case with languages and mathematics. This type of work sheets may be called the didactic type.
For other subjects - zoology, botany, physics, chemistry the predominance is of the heuristic part. We may say that the work-sheet pertaining to them are of the heuristic type.

Finally, the work-sheets appropriate for history and geography are of a mixed type, as they contain at the best a didactic part and a heuristic part.

A fourth type of work-sheet consists in testing questions and is called the testing type. It is given to the student at the end of a section, of a chapter, and aims at leading him to recapitulation and control of his work. If he succeeds in the test he proceeds to a new section, a new chapter. If not, he is given a work-sheet of the supplementary type, suited to his deficiencies. If he answers to the testing questions of this supplementary work-sheet, he moves forward: otherwise he has to step back a little and make his knowledge more secure.

Thus we have already five types of work-sheets: didactic, heuristic, mixed, testing, supplementary. These names are not given to make a show, but with the view to establish among us a common language. More types will surely be evolved during the development of the process. A principle common to all: to ensure the utmost participation of the student in an active manner. The heuristic type asks for work done with the class documentation or the laboratory equipment. In the didactic type, the work is to be done with little or no help from anything else (dictionary), but the progress, the discovery are reached through the exercises (training) or the problems (solution).

A work-sheet is given to a student. He reads it and should be able to understand it readily, but if he does not, he goes to the teacher for an explanation. Then he goes back to his place and sets himself to work, answering the questions as they come, and jots down the answers in a rough note-book. If there is a question that he cannot answer, he goes again to the teacher, receives a hint and works again, and so on. When he has completed the work and written down all the answers, he brings his note-book to the teacher who, on the spot if possible, checks his work, detects the answers that are incorrect and which need a further attempt by the student, and so on till the answers are all correct. The student has then to make a fair copy of the whole - questions and answers - in another note-book which will be again submitted to the teacher for control and signature. This note-book will be carefully
preserved as a warrant of the work done, and at the same time as a reference book for future use.

After deduction of the periods allotted to collective work, the rest of the time forms a common pool for all the written work. The student is free to do his work in the order he likes, subject to the restriction that all the teachers are not available at all times for help and control. Students know the periods when each teacher will be present in the class and they organize their work accordingly. The necessary presence of a teacher can be roughly estimated at 1 1/2 - 2 times the number of periods previously assigned to his subject, e.g., 5 hours a week for written French or English, 6-7 hours for mathematics, about the same for science, etc.

There will then be always two and sometimes three teachers present in a class of 25-30 students. They will sit at different tables and students will come to them in their turn. Needless to say, all talking must take place in a subdued voice, almost a whisper. It is a very good discipline for all not to disturb the work of others and not to be disturbed by a slight external activity.

Home-work as such is not prescribed to the students, but if any student wishes to do part of his written work at home, he is naturally free to do so. Indeed many students do and some come to the class-room in the afternoon to continue in tranquillity their written work.

Let us now turn rapidly to the subjects of study and enumerate some peculiarities of their respective work-sheets.

1. Languages: While the collective teaching, essential to the study of any living language, is done orally at fixed periods, the written work is a part of the common pool. The work-sheet is of the didactic type, very much like the pages of a self-instructor. There should be plenty of exercises and of a great variety. If drafted with zest, they will attract and stimulate the interest of children who take this work with enjoyment. Even quizzes and cross-words can be used. Exercises requiring a little composition can be introduced gradually, but this kind of work should not be taxing. Later, essay writing can be brought in by easy stages. If properly tackled, children will feel by themselves the need of perfecting their self-expression. Free composition can be resorted to, i.e., a subject chosen entirely by the student.

2. Mathematics: Here also the work-sheet is of the didactic type. In this subject especially each step of the reasoning should be so unmistakably clear that the normal
student who has reached this point can follow it without help. The usual text-books are too condensed; the work-sheet has to be more detailed. And the focussing questions should bring out immediately an answer. A number of graded exercises shall precede the problems, which are also graded.

Besides the normal set of exercises and problems, it is advisable to give an optional set. Some children assimilate and reach mastery easily, but others require more practice. The optional set would meet this need.

It has also been found convenient to arrange for a self checking system. Parallel to the work-sheet-index, there is a solution-index, where the student can find a card bearing the correct solution of the problem he has done. After a short training the student will use this solution-index by himself. It has even been found useful to introduce a hint-index to which the student may apply himself when he needs a clue and before looking into the solution-index. These two indices are introduced with the view, not only to ease the task of the teacher, but also to teach the child honesty, restraint and fair play.

3. Science, i.e., elementary science ("le ons de choses" in French), botany, zoology, and later geology, biology, physics and chemistry: Here the work-sheet is of the heuristic type (botany, zoology, biology) or of the mixed type (elementary science, physics, and chemistry). Students should have a laboratory-book in which they jot their notes and prepare their answers; after submitting these answers to the teacher, they will carry them over to a fair note-book, again controlled and signed by the teacher. This fair note-book will be at the same time the testimony of their work and serve as a reference book for their future work. The use of drawings in observational and practical work is to be warmly encouraged; it is often more expressive than lengthy writing.

Outings can very well be arranged (perhaps from level 5 upward) to study insects, animals, plants, rocks, fossils, etc. in their natural surroundings, but precautions should be taken to keep an atmosphere of inquisitiveness and research; they should never be allowed to turn into picnic parties (picnic parties can be held separately, everybody enjoys them).

In physics and chemistry, instead of a work-sheet of the mixed type, there may be separate work-sheets for the didactic part and the experimental work. The latter will be much in the line of the usual instruction-sheets given for practicals at a later stage; but they should be more elaborate.

Here I shall make a remark which is valid not only for the science work-sheets, but for all the work-sheets. The foremost place must be given to the heuristic part; whenever
it is possible to present a subject in a way leading to discovery, this is to be adopted. For instance, in physics and chemistry, an experimental work should be so drafted as to bring the student to *rediscover* a law rather than to *verify* it.

Another instance. Instead of telling the child that it is a law of arithmetic that 3 x 5 = 5 x 3 and that he can verify it, let him examine the figure

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and count the dots first line-wise, then column-wise and compare. Ask him whether the same is true of any rectangular figure he can draw in this way. Then let him ponder on the significance of this result and try to express it to someone else. If he can find by himself "Yes, 3 times 5 = 5 times 3", it will be surely a discovery.

A friend of ours, who is a professor of mathematics in an Indian University, related to me a few days ago that his father brought him to this very experience and that he was so much struck by it that he remembers it to this day. Very likely this incident was one of the determining factors of his career.

Practicals are for us of fundamental importance, both in natural history and in physics science. The ideal would be to have a small laboratory attached to each class. As this is not always possible, ways must be designed to send the children to the laboratories not only for demonstrations, but in small groups (see team work) for experimental work. Experiments are more profitable than documentation - they are on a quite different level.

4. *History and Geography:* History must be first considered as the study of man's life and behaviour at different places and at different ages. Later on will come the notion of development and evolution.

The work-sheet is of the mixed type. The didactic part is interspaced with focussing questions, but the tendency to provoke an essay type of answer should be avoided - as such essays would not rest on a personal contact with the world, but only be a reproduction.

The heuristic part is a kind of research work, done with the help of a documentation - mostly with pictures. The relevant pictures can be attached to the work-sheet itself or they can be sorted out from the school documentation. Students have to pick out the pictures related to the questions put to them, study and compare them and draw their conclusions. The focussing questions should be precise and solicit short and relevant answers. Only one or two questions in a work-sheet should be of a concluding type, and
aim at drawing somewhat more elaborate answers, as a summing up of the work done - about 10-15 lines at the levels 3-4 with a gradual increase up to one page. Insistence must be placed on precision rather than diffusion.

At levels 1-2, history would be taught through legends and stories, the lives of heroes and great men. No written work.

At levels 3-4, history and geography can very well be taught together. History will be limited to selected concrete aspects of human life, with the aim of bringing the students in touch with the life of races and nations at different times. The subjects may include, for instance, the history of human dwellings, dresses, food, agriculture, means of transportation, relations of man with animals (hunting, fishing, taming, domestication, various uses of animals, pets, natural reserves), arts and crafts. Geography may have a few introductory separate work-sheets, after which a survey of the globe will be done through the history work-sheets. These work-sheets should naturally be drafted accordingly; they should put the students in touch with different continents, countries and natural configurations, different climates, faunae and florae. These work-sheets are of the mixed type and are drafted as already stated. The documentation consists in pictures.

At level 5, history will be the study of the daily life in various countries at different times, starting with tribal life (Red Indians, present day aborigines, Eskimos, nomads of Arabia), then proceeding with ancient Egypt, India, China, Pre-Colombian civilizations, Greece, Rome, Japan and other countries at various epochs. The heuristic work of the work-sheets will be carried out with the help of pictures, and a book or two (encyclopedias). The documentation may also include a few short anecdotes or stories assisting in figuring the daily life - if possible quotations from authors of that time. These written documentations will be typed on loose sheets. When a book is used, it should be only to find out a specific information (generally a picture).

All aspects of life will be brought under review: material life, agriculture, cities, crafts, trade, classes of society, dresses, habits, language, arts, religion, etc. At this stage geography should be synchronized with history. The work-sheet will deal with the same countries and contribute to the understanding of the daily life of the people.

At levels 6-7-8, history will consist in the study of a few historical movements which had a deep effect on civilization. Here the insistence will be on the dynamic and evolutive aspects of history. A few such subjects are listed here: birth and life of Buddha and spreading of Buddhism, life of Christ and the spreading of Christianity (martyrs,
conquest of Europe, Crusades, religious wars, the Papacy and the Reformation), life of Mohammed and the expansion of Islam, the Mauryan period, the Gupta period, Charlemagne and his empire, the Renaissance in Europe, the great geographical discoveries, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Napoleonic Conquests and the Social Movement, the American War of Independence, the War of Secession, the First World War, the Liberation of India, etc.

At levels 9-10, there will be a more systematic study of the history of a few nations, with an emphasis on their political evolution throughout the ages. The Second World War and contemporary world history will be given a special attention.

The above programme is tentative; it has been given here only with the aim to show how, in my opinion, the study of history can be introduced at school level so as to conform to the general principles of the new education. Our aim will not be to teach history, but to teach how to work like a historian. Once a student becomes interested and has gone through this initiation, the reading of a few books on history will surely at a later stage complete his historical knowledge. He will have acquired what constitutes the spirit of history and he will know very well where and how to look for an information if/when it is needed. The same is true with geography.

Geography should probably, from level 6 upwards, be treated as a separate science with a mixed type of work-sheets. The practical work already begun during the preceding years will start with the drawing of plans and maps and their various uses (plan of a house, of the school, of a part of the city, etc.). A few study trips in the country will help to connect the world and the maps, familiarize with the technical vocabulary of geography, demonstrate the use of maps in the open (orientation). The same precautions must be taken for these outings as in the case of natural history. An interesting practical work will be the preparation of a trip from one city of the world to another, i.e., itinerary, means of transportation, time-table, expenses, places of interest, living conditions of the peoples on the way, etc. If such a study is coupled with the showing of a suitable film, it will enhance the interest of both.

Economical and political geography will be introduced at level 10.

The preparation of the work-sheets for history and geography and the collection of the necessary documentation is a considerable work. It is also a new venture and I am sure that we shall make many interesting discoveries all along.

As I am speaking of films, let me say that, in our new system, slides and films should be treated as additional sources of information. In spite of their vividness they can
practical or experimental work. A too great reliance on films and slides would have the same inhibiting effect on creative activity as the use of text-books and the indulgence in novels.

C. Team Work

I have already pointed out that team work takes into consideration the need of the child for contact, association and collaboration with other children (social need). I have also said that the association of children for work should be left entirely to the discretion of the participants. If the teacher has something to say, he must give it as an advice, a suggestion. The decisions must be taken by the children themselves: scope of the work, how it is to be done, allocation of its various parts to the participants, materials needed and where to get them, rules and details of execution.

The attitude of the teacher must always be the same: a constant and attentive presence, always ready to guide and to assist, but understanding the needs of the children and respecting their freedom. Such a guidance is not resented and is none the less effective. Why do children engaged in a common work so often say to the adults: "Do not come; we shall show you the work when it is finished"? It is because they apprehend the intervention of the adults.

But if the teacher must spare his commands and his criticisms, he should not spare his interest in the work that is being done and in the achievement.

Many subjects lend themselves to such team work. Practical work in science is an ideal matter. But there are others: plans and maps, models, toys and every kind of manual work requiring several hands, dramas, etc.

Recapitulative charts with drawings and captions have this year captivated the interest of many children of the new class. They seem to find in such work the answer to several needs: social need, need of ensuring their knowledge by a revision, of gaining a synthetic view of the subject, of giving a concrete shape to abstract notions, of relaxation by a manual work from a purely mental work, of doing a work as perfectly as possible, of achieving something. It is a kind of liberation.

I have only a few more words to add about the material organization of the classroom. As I have already said, each student has a table, always the same. On the whole,
the students prefer flat tables to inclined desks. Flat tables have also the advantage that they can be assembled into larger units for team work.

Some space should be usually kept between the tables, though for special reasons (experience in friendly contacts) tables may be temporarily joined.

As two or three teachers may be simultaneously present in the class-room, accommodation should be provided for them. A large cement table is also very convenient for special work and for talks to a small group of students. Besides these, shelves or other tables must be available to keep the class equipment: reference books, boxes and files that contain the work-sheets of the various subjects, solution indices, hint indices, the documentation in pictures, etc. One or two black-boards and hanging fixtures for maps and charts will complete the material set-up of the class.

It is clear that the room itself should be larger than the usual class-room. The children remain indoors sometimes the whole morning; they cannot be crammed into a small place. There is no objection to two rooms communicating by a door.

It will be found that the disposition of the tables and chairs may go through several modifications in the course of the year. The class as a whole is a living organism with changing needs.

The placing of the children in the class-room must suit both the child and the teacher. It is good to give heed to the preferences of the child, though the teacher has naturally a say in the matter. He may sometimes yield to a strongly felt preference but warn the child of the probable consequences of his choice. Whenever a child asks for a change of places, it should be carefully considered and granted if there is a valid reason for it (generally a turn in the personal relation between children).

The children should feel when they enter their class-room a sense of freedom and security, the twin needs of which I have stressed the importance.

There is only one principle on which the teacher must insist with firmness: the freedom of each is conditioned by the freedom of others.

A Valuation of the New System

We have already compared the traditional and the new systems on many points. Let us summarize our results to derive further conclusions.
1. At every moment the student is to some extent free to select the work he will do, *i.e.*, he himself has to organize his work. At times he will be engaged almost exclusively in one subject; at other times he will be less exclusive - that does not matter much. There is in the child a self-regulating principle - his soul that tends towards a harmonious development, provided the child has been given the freedom and responsibility and has had time to shed the bad habits of the past. This self-regulating process acts even with regard to the body, as we have seen from the story quoted from Washburne.

2. It may happen that a student takes keen interest in one or a few subjects and neglects the others. If this want of balance goes too far, it must be brought to his notice. If it persists, he may be asked the reason for his partiality and a gentle admonition given to him, pointing out the advantages of a balanced development. But this should be done with understanding and tact. Usually when a student is enthusiastic about one subject to the point of neglecting the others, he is coldly told that this won't do and that he has to cut down the time and attention he gives to his favourite topic. This acts like a damper and the student loses his enthusiasm without making any headway in the neglected subjects. The facts must be placed before the student, but nothing more should be done; there is no question of imposing anything. The decision rests with him. Apart from the self-regulating action of which I just spoke, there is also in each, man the seed of an individual nature, with its own capacities, its own propensities, its own *dharma*. And this seed will shoot out roots and branches all through childhood,

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till it bears blossoms and ripe fruits. Our task is to assist the child, the youngster in the process, not to counteract it by an arbitrary nipping and pruning, for we recognize man's soul as the master of his destiny. We have therefore to give up the idea that our education should bring the students to a standard-level in all subjects. Each student should be helped to manifest what he himself stands for.

If a student swallows work-sheet after work-sheet, and if the work is neat and thorough, his enthusiasm is welcome and useful. He may by himself reduce his pace after some time. But if he does not, it is also all right: there may be in him talent or genius. Avoid being forced to tell him: "You are going too fast. There is no work-sheet ready for you." You would clip his wings.

In any case, the only normal and legitimate way to promote the interest of a child in a subject that he neglects is to pay attention to the work-sheets. And whenever a class
exhibits a general indifference to one subject, the cause lies in the teacher or in the equipment (especially the worksheets), not in the students.

3. The student is allowed to proceed at his own pace. Whether he goes fast or slow does not affect the work of others. It is now possible to keep equally alive the interest of both the quick-minded and the slow-minded. The bright student receives the particular attention he deserves, and so does the dull student. Each one receives what he needs. This is an outstanding advantage.

4. It will usually be found that the students of a class will very soon spread themselves over the work-sheets of the year. No attempt should be made to prevent such a spacing; it is quite normal. As a consequence the students will give up the idea of competing with one another, although they will note and acknowledge the capacity of the other children. But they take to the work for work's sake and for the joy they find in it. They become also more sincere and honest in their work and they no longer hide their weaknesses, but try to mend them.

5. Each student is confronted only with a work suited to his present knowledge and capacity. He is not given at the beginning of the year a huge book full of things he does not understand and which frightens him. Each work-sheet brings a feeling of freshness and novelty, unlike the pages of his text-book which have turned stale by the time he takes them up. It is a good sign that our children often ask: "What will come next, when I finish this chapter?"

6. After a little practice in a new class, a child is able to understand the work-sheets with relatively few explanations from the teacher. And after 6 or 7 years of such training, he will be capable not only of working alone but of making a proper use of books and other documentation, as a source of information to be consulted when needed. This will obviate the usual complaint that when students leave the school, they have almost everything to learn in this respect.

7. If the teacher is not lax and negligent, the system allows a constant control of the work of each student. Besides the self-testing which is done at every step, the student receives at the end of each section or chapter a testing-sheet, the purpose of which is to confirm that he has assimilated and mastered the subject. Normally the student accepts readily this form of testing, because it corresponds to his own need of checking his knowledge; very often he himself makes a request for such tests. As he is not pressed by the necessity of catching up with others, he likes to make his progress secure. Not seldom, a student asks to step back to a previous chapter to fill up a gap in his knowledge.
The student's note-books are a permanent testimony of the work he has done. No other test or examination is required.

8. In our Centre of Education it has always been difficult to obtain home-work from the student, the principal reason being that the late afternoon is given to physical education and the night to a multiplicity of cultural activities (cinema and slides, dance, music and theatricals or rehearsals). In the new classes, the common pool of written work gives the students time enough to do all that was previously defined as home-work - and to do much more and do it well, with taste and neatness. In one year several students have each filled in 11-13 note-books with problems of mathematics - about 700-750 problems covering a 21/2 year course. What they have achieved in mathematics they can also do in other subjects, provided the work-sheets appeal to them.

9. The question of promotion will no longer be embarrassing as we can now envisage a workable solution. Though a student may remain for two years in the same class, there is no 'redoubling', for he will start the second year exactly at the place where he stopped at the end of the last. His work will always be fresh. If a student is given a 'double promotion', there will however be no gap in his knowledge, for here also he will start exactly where he stopped.

The class in which a student is placed is determined by a kind of compromise. He will probably lead in some subjects and lag behind in others; the class will be so chosen as to minimize the discrepancies.

10. The subject-wise classification of students according to their capacity, which is an interesting and valuable feature of our present system, will apparently disappear, but the new system will nevertheless allow each student to do exactly the work suited to his grade and to progress independently at his own pace in each subject.

It is only in the oral language classes that the disparity among students may be a little embarrassing. Happily the oral work admits some such inequality in grading, especially if the mental level is fairly even.

In the written work, if the whole syllabus could be at once distributed among the totality of the classes and the work-sheets prepared accordingly, and if the work-sheets could be easily duplicated, then the problem of sparsely graded students would raise no difficulty. The teacher could always secure the work-sheets adapted to the grade of any of his students and each would thus progress normally. The problem is therefore practical rather than theoretical. We shall have to solve it.

The principal advantage of our present system is thus
preserved and still at the same time the class acquires a unity hitherto unattained, as it is composed always of the same students, working together in the same room. If the classroom is made pleasant, well-furnished and well-equipped, the students take a liking to it. It satisfies their need for security and freedom, and they feel it is their class. But it is necessary that it should preserve always an atmosphere of quietness and work.

11. All the difficulties that we have met with in our attempt to find an ideal marking system vanish, because the need of giving marks does not arise. The supervision of the student's work is achieved through the regular self-checking and testing system. As for promotion, we have seen that it loses much of its troublesomeness.

VI

The Evolution of a Class

I shall now describe, on the basis of the very limited yet significant experience of this year, the response of students placed for the first time in a new class. They pass very distinctly through three stages:

1. A Stage of Adaptation: Some children understand immediately what is asked of them and enter into the spirit of the new method. Some appear passive and try their best without much live understanding. Others find it more difficult to adapt themselves; for them it is a period of adjustment and wavering. A few, very few seem unwilling or incapable of doing away with unruly and mischievous habits.

Little by little a greater number of children begin to relax and find interest and pleasure in their work. Gradually the class settles down. There are ups and downs, days of relative quietness followed by a resurgence of restlessness. An imperturbable patience is needed from the teacher, without any show of temper or even displeasure. He should observe impassively all that happens in the class, try to understand each child and treat him according to his own nature, so as to make it easier for the child to attain the proper attitude. For the teacher it is a trying period as he does not see much apparent progress; it lasts rather long, perhaps three months.

As long as a child does not disturb others, even if he does not progress otherwise and remains closed, he can be kept in the class. Experience has shown that the closed bud may in the end open.
When a boisterous child no longer gets an approving response from the other children, he begins to feel uneasy. It happens (we had two cases this year) that he feels so out of place that he asks to be sent to an ordinary class. At this stage of the class evolution, if a disturbing child does not spontaneously show a desire to go, he may be asked whether he is happy and wishes to remain in the class. As long as he expresses a sure desire to stay, there is a possibility for a change of behaviour. If he agrees to go, let him be put aside temporarily, or else the progress of the whole class may be hampered.

2. At first for a short duration, then for longer periods, the children relax and do their work with a quiet concentration. The stage of responsibility is at hand. The majority of the children understand now what is expected of them and they do it with an increasing seriousness. Signs are manifest that they begin to experience the joy of discovery and progress. They appreciate the freedom that is given to them and begin to make a better use of it. The responsibility of education is gradually shifted from the teacher to the student. This may begin with a few children, but it is contagious and others feel attracted.

It is now evident to the teacher that the initial agitation and perplexity were due to the bad habits, deviation and distortions which the children had previously acquired. Children come to us loaded with all their past, a short but sometimes a heavy past, with the imprints left upon it by family and society. Each of these distortions was initially a defence against an imposition, an aggression from outside. Now it has become part of the nature and it takes time to be eliminated. Placed in the favourable conditions of a new class, these lingerings from the past will slowly subside like the waves of the sea after heavy winds. But it requires time, apparently interminable time. Endless patience is required and the loving attention that will redress what has been twisted and smoothen what has been crumpled.

As the teacher remains in the class-room for a long time, he observes the reactions of all his students. As they come to him individually for guidance, he begins to know them well. At times a friendly chat starts; it is about the work, about some happening in the class, some psychological difficulty of the child, or about the reason of being in the class or the Ashram. The teacher may help a child considerably by an attentive and warm heart-to-heart talk. Such talks must be allowed to come up as the circumstances permit, following the trend of the children's preoccupations, in a very simple and unassuming way. The teacher must be open and understanding, and avoid
especially high-sounding and pompous words. He should even refrain, except in emergencies, to give an advice with the force of his authority; it is definitely preferable to help the child to find out by himself the source of his difficulty and put him on the way to solve it by himself. That means that the teacher must always aim to bring the child face to face with his own problem and let him look for the inner guidance and help from 'The Mother'.

Such talks do not come up often nor with every child, but even if they do not, the contact between teacher and student is much more close and durable than in the traditional teaching (I mean at the secondary level).

If the teacher is of real help to his pupils, he will find that the friendly talks extend spontaneously and in the end the whole class may voluntarily join in. If however a child remains aloof, no sign of disapproval should ever be shown to him.

How and when is one to speak of 'The Mother and Sri Aurobindo to a child? It will naturally depend on the personal approach of the teacher; he must act and speak to the best of his knowledge and feeling. But this is a matter of considerable importance for the evolution of the class and the teacher has to be extremely careful. I shall give here a few suggestions in a negative form:

Speak of 'The Mother to a child, to a group or to the class, only when they are at their best, i.e., when they are in a state of peaceful collectedness or when they make a specific request for help in a difficult situation. It is better to remain silent than to speak of 'The Mother at a wrong time or in a wrong way.

Do not mention the name of 'The Mother when children are unruly and boisterous. Do not threaten to report to The Mother their mistakes or misdeeds, but rather their aspirations and achievements.

Never use 'The Mother's name to support your authority. You would do harm to the children and to yourself.

Never speak of your own spiritual experiences but remain always what you truly are: a child of 'The Mother among other children of 'The Mother.

3. When a peaceful atmosphere of work has become the normal condition of the class and many children have reached the stage of responsibility, then one day after a friendly talk to a group of children and as the outcome of a subsequent state of self-collectedness, a new thing happens. It is an inner contact, an opening within, call it what you want. There is rapt attention, a deep self-gathering, like listening to something within that is unmistakably happening in the depths. The atmosphere is of silent
intensity. The faces express a peaceful and smiling gravity, a translucent beauty, the beauty of the soul that reaches the surface. The feeling that this experience (for it is truly an experience!) stirs up in the teacher is one of wonder and respect. It will surely mark the children's life, and the teacher's also, although all the children may not be equally conscious of what has happened. A new consciousness has emerged, and even if it recedes and disappears for a time, it will surely work from behind towards its reappearance. The main preoccupation of the teacher will henceforth be to protect it from all disruptive intrusions, so that it may stabilize and perfect itself.

This experience is crucial. It is a promise of a conscious inner guidance. The teacher realizes the meaning of Sri Aurobindo's words:

... 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 to the teacher comes the certitude that, if he wants the soul to come forward and assume the lead, the child must be brought to the stage of responsibility, and this can be done best through the protected freedom (freedom+ security) which is the gist of the new system. For the teacher who has been a witness to the beautiful change which marks the beginning of the stage of psychic opening, not only anger but scolding his pupils becomes impossible. Indeed for a child who has reached this stage scolding becomes injurious, especially if it is done by the person who has been instrumental in bringing about the psychic change. In face of a fault or a mistake, a misbehaviour, the only thing the teacher can do is to help the child to examine lucidly and quietly the inner and outer consequences of his action and decide whether the same course of things has to go on forever. Let him collect himself, take the decision from within and seek by himself the steps to implement his decision. The teacher should then give his wise: and restrained support to the child.

The three stages I have described belong to the individual development of the child, but the collective atmosphere has a great role in this evolution. The harmonious surroundings in which the child lives a large part of the day engaged in perfecting his instruments of knowledge and action, and the persistent attempt to give him the charge of his own education, in an atmosphere of freedom and security, are the means conducive to the unveiling of the psychic entity within. This blossoming is the result of a slow
maturation in favourable conditions and cannot be rushed through. One may work for it, hope for it, pray for it, but one cannot summon it.

I shall close this chapter with two remarks:

1. Students who have already been in a class of the new system for one or two years will certainly adapt themselves to it rapidly, but the assimilation of a number of other new students has a considerable repercussion on the whole class. In any case there will always be a period of adaptation, even if it is only an adaptation of students to teachers and of students to one another. The length of this period will largely depend on the experience of the teachers taken individually and on their unity of purpose and attitude.

2. One can easily imagine that the progress towards responsibility and psychic opening will become easier and quicker if the child finds, outside the class-room, similarly favourable conditions. The understanding and collaboration of the family would be a great asset. Parents or guardians should be given, in their own language, an outline of the new principles and methods. It is not expected, except in a few individual cases, that they should adopt at home the methods, but they should try to understand the spirit that is behind them and accept all the implications of their child's growth, particularly his gradual evolution towards independence and responsibility.

The Task of the Educator

1. As I have already said, the first task of the teacher is to maintain the class environment well supplied with objects of interest suited to the varied grading of his students. He has to prepare the work-sheets - a considerable work - and the related documentation (photos, pictures, etc.). I hope I have clearly shown that the self-education which is the core of the method can only start and sustain itself when the child finds a satisfaction of his needs in the school equipment.

2. The second task is to organize and maintain the goodwill of the students. For this purpose the teacher must carefully observe the behaviour of every student and detect any sign of boredom, fatigue or restlessness, any hitch in the normal functioning of the class. He must find the cause of the disturbance and remove the obstruction.
It is wrong to believe that the teacher should constantly goad his students into activity. The urge to work must come from the student himself. The teacher is there only to canalize the interest of the child and supply a constructive outlet to his activity.

During the first stage (adaptation) the teacher's role is mainly to see that the necessary equipment is available, to eliminate obstacles due to a faulty organization of the class work, to smoothen and facilitate the adaptation of the children to the new method.

During the second stage (responsibility) he should help the students to organize their work and show them the way to responsibility. His intervention should always be restrained, tactful and unassuming. He should avoid pushing himself forward and act only when requested. Especially in speech, he should be moderate and discreet. In most cases, the initiative of speech should come from the student, and the teacher's answer should fit exactly to the student's question.

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Indeed the teacher must guard himself against reverting to the old outlook, i.e., the attitude of one who has the knowledge an whose duty it is to impart it to the student. There are very subtle forms of this reversion and the teacher will find that the return of old habits has disastrous results.

Many people may think that the teacher has now a reduced role and that he may as well be dispensed with. Nothing could be farther from the truth. His presence is of paramount importance: it must be constant and total, as I have expired. The success of the class will depend on the correctness of his attitude towards the children, on his psychological insight, his forbearance, self-mastery, his devotion to the work and his spirit of collaboration with his colleagues.

Let there be no misunderstanding. When I say that the teacher must be moderate, discreet and unassuming, I do not mean that he should concede every demand of the student- When I say that he is not the one who has the knowledge and whose duty is to impart it to his students, I do not "lean that he is devoid of knowledge, but that his aim is to teach the students how to liberate the knowledge that is within them. If he should not speak too much, it is because he is a source of information and not of knowledge and he must supply only the information that is needed. If he should not enforce his decisions, it is not because he is unable to reach a decision or to impose it, but because his purpose is to train the students to come to their own decisions. The teacher is there to support the children's growth towards responsibility and self-acquired knowledge. He must therefore be steady, strong and reliable. Thus only can he inspire confidence and conform to the need of the child for security and protection. In short, I can say that the good teacher is
certainly a person of character and authority, but these should be felt rather than asserted. His action and guidance are constant, but they are indirect and veiled.

3 The third aspect of the teacher's work is to help the child to find the inner guidance. This part is the most delicate of all: to be able to induce a psychic opening in the children he should himself always keep in touch with his soul.

As The Mother said:

Teachers who do not possess a perfect calm, an unfailing endurance, an unshakable quietness, who are full of self-conceit will reach nowhere.

One must be a saint and a hero to become a good teacher.

One must be a great Yogi to become a good teacher.

One must have the perfect attitude in order to be able to exact from one's pupils a perfect attitude.

You cannot ask of a person what you do not do yourself. It is a rule.¹

This statement should not give rise to hesitation and misgiving, it should rather encourage us. To teach is certainly a very efficient form of sadhana and The Mother has also said:

I have never asked any of those - who were educated here - to give lessons unless I saw that it would be for him the best means of disciplining himself, of learning in the best way what he has to teach and to attain an inner perfection which he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this occasion for disciplining himself, which is exceptionally hard.²

We can say that the demand made upon a teacher is great, but his reward is to watch and assist the emergence of living souls.

Now there is a point about the teacher's action at which I have hitherto only hinted. It is the collaboration among teachers.

The organization and working of a new class require a constant exchange of thoughts and experiences, co-ordination and harmonization of decisions among the teachers of the same class. They must know each other well, trust one another and act as a team. A new class is thus a very good field for the practice of true collaboration. It has been found also that the presence at the same time of more than one teacher is beneficial both to teachers and students: a better mutual understanding among teachers, a more intimate
knowledge of the students, more dignity, self-mastery and punctuality from the teachers, a feeling of closeness and unity, and better relations between teachers and students.

The necessity of a co-ordinated collective action of the teachers makes it indispensable that one of the class-teachers should be in charge of the organization of the class and responsible for its unity. Let us call him the First Teacher.

Some teachers might be afraid lest this organization should restrict their own independence. Freedom for the child is all right, they will say, but what about the freedom of the teacher? Will there not be a great rigidity and fixity in the system?

First, when text-books, collective class-teaching and home-work are replaced with work-sheets prepared by the teacher and with individual work by the students under his guidance and control, the teacher's freedom of action is not impaired in any way, it means only that one set of instruments have replaced another set. And the new one gives to the teacher the possibility of a greater adaptation to the individual nature of the children and hence a greater flexibility.

But it is true that the new class is a collective unit, from the point of view of both students and teachers. The action and attitude of every teacher have often immediate and important repercussions on the atmosphere of the class, and therefore on its work and progress. In the same way every child's behaviour has an effect on the whole class. This is also true in the traditional education, but it is perhaps felt here with a greater acuity, owing to the quietness of the class and the harmonious yet independent activity of the students. One can say that the atmosphere is more sensitive. This is probably due to the fact that the children are less subjected to outer commands and impacts, more often placed face to face with themselves and asked to look silently within for guidance.

What would one say of a musician who refuses to play his agreed part in an orchestra but insists on complete independence and freedom of action? Or of a mason who rejects the architect's plan and follows his own inspiration regardless of what the others are doing? Or of a volley-ball player who declines to concert and synchronize his movements with the fellow-players'? The same is true of all collective work. The independence of each is qualified by the interdependence of all. Each one has to accept a certain degree of restriction and even subordination. The closer the collaboration, the better the efficiency.

Now, a new class is eminently a collective undertaking. Yet much freedom is left to the teacher, not only in the preparation of the work-sheets, but in the guidance of the
students and in contact with them. What is important is that the principles and distinctive features of the method should be carefully observed - the rules of the game - as any deviation from them would create confusion and render the scheme worthless. The principles have been laid down by Sri Aurobindo and the features of the method are in complete conformity with these principles. Moreover, both principles and features are supported by the recent findings of child psychology and the trend of modern research in education. Therefore, there can be no valid objection to a sadhak's entering into such collaboration.

However, as the method is new and not yet fully tested, it must be expected that some teachers of our Centre of Education may be reticent and feel the need of further experiment before committing themselves. For this reason there can be no question of imposing the new method on anybody. Those who will join the new classes as teachers will be entirely volunteers. Not only must they accept freely the method, but it is my opinion that they should feel a

certitude about its correctness, its value - they should see it as a step in the right direction. Moreover, if they understand all its implications, they will discover that it is truly a new attitude towards the child and education. They must feel an urge to participate in what is and will be a pioneering work.

I recall there the recent words of The Mother in connection precisely with this new venture:

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.³

To those who are inclined to enter the field I would say: "Study the method carefully, from its most general principles down to all its implications and minutes details. If you feel enthusiastic about it and if you are ready to devote much of your time and attention, then give your name. We shall try to? form the team for each class as much as possible with the common agreement of all its members."

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VIII

Do We Need a New System of Education?
The title given to these lectures, "Our New System of Education", is almost a misnomer, for what Sri Aurobindo has in view is not a system, if by this word is meant a set of rules, methods and techniques. What is the essence of our new education? For the teacher, it is a specific attitude towards the child, for the child it is a way of living, growing and progressing. The teacher is there to ensure the protected freedom necessary to the child for his self-educative process.

But for the purpose of carrying this attitude of the teacher and this way of living of the child into the collective life and work of the school, we have to construct a framework, to devise methods, to elaborate techniques. The principal aims of these methods and techniques are to co-ordinate the activities of the numerous teachers and students and safeguard the continuity of education throughout the school life.

This casting into forms of the principles is unavoidable. Methods and techniques have: their importance; they must be constantly refined and perfected. But it is the principles that we have to enforce to understand, assimilate and accept fully. It is to the principles that we have to turn whenever we are in difficulty. It is the principles that we have to keep in mind in our daily work and contact with the students. With this understanding, we may speak of "our new system of education".

A person who would select any of our methods - for instance, the work-sheet technique - and incorporate it in the traditional education with the view to make the students work more or better, would in no way enter into the spirit of our new education, and the results would be partial and limited, and perhaps deceptive.

What is the aim of our education? I need not repeat here what has been fully explained in the part Education and the Aim of Human Life.¹

One sentence of The Mother sums it up: "We do not want brilliant students, we want living souls."

Let me only add that, in my opinion, the full acceptance of our new system will exclude the aim of assigning to the student a fixed amount of factual knowledge and consequently the preparation for examinations as they are nowadays almost universally understood. At least this applies to the Secondary schooling. What modifications this outlook will impose on our Higher Course, it is too early to say; it will have to be studied and investigated in the coming years. One may imagine provisionally that when a student has done satisfactorily - i.e., checked and controlled by the teacher - all the work assigned to Class 10 in any one subject, then a certain number of avenues of study will open to him in the Higher Course. If he has reached this level in two subjects a larger number of
avenues will lie open before him and so on. The necessity of acquiring a certain mastery to be able to prosecute higher studies usefully would in this way be taken into account without imposing any compulsion on the students. Every student would be allowed to pursue the studies for which he has made himself fit and which correspond to the bent of his nature. I need not speak further on this matter.

I am now coming to the end of these lectures, which I would call preliminary, as they contain more hopes than results.

During these lectures, some of you may have thought: "Pavitra is telling us all kinds of nice things about the ideal child who, according to him, is always turned towards progress, full of good disposition, who uses his freedom to organize his work, gain knowledge and mastery, who is naturally concentrated and listens to his soul - an enchanting portrait! But we know how different the reality is. We have taken classes in our school for years; we know that there are good children, inclined towards study and congenial to our ideals, but we know also that there are other children who, though they may not be wicked, are unruly and not amenable to advice or reason. Whatever we say, they only do what they like and some openly scoff at us. They have very little interest in knowledge and mastery, and they use the freedom that they get here to play and not work, and the more freedom they get, the more uncontrollable they become."

Well, I may agree with you about this picture, though it may not be a complete view of the situation. But, then, why are we in such a mess? The goodwill and spirit of dedication of most of our teachers are undeniable; they try to do their duty and to bear their lot with equanimity. Why then are our children like that? Is my version of the needs of the normal child wishful thinking and this new education a mere mirage?

To this I shall answer by giving what I believe is the diagnosis of our illness.

We have already repudiated the idea of coercing the child to do his appointed work, we have given up the means of coercion: we do not beat children and we have no punishment. We have eliminated the incitements usually offered by society such as valuable diplomas, good salary, high positions. The only means at our command to influence the child is persuasion and reprimand. Neither of them brings much result and they seem to become less and less effective as the years pass. But we have hitherto kept the idea of a fixed standard of knowledge up to which the children are to be brought. This knowledge is communicated to the students by the teachers or the text-books. It has to be remembered and assimilated, not discovered by experiment and research. The tests that
we have do not differ fundamentally from the examinations held outside: they do not aim exclusively or even mainly at checking that the work has been done and at verifying the understanding and capacity to apply the knowledge, but much more at verifying that the students remember what they have learnt. It is true that we have made study as painless as possible: books, entertainments, audio-visual aids, demonstrations and practicals, film shows and exhibitions are given by us to children in a measure not matched by many institutions. If we have done away with yearly examinations, our aim is still to bring anyhow our students to a level at least comparable with the outside institutions. And by 'comparable' we mean that we expect them to have the same kind of formation, the same insistence on factual knowledge. And we would be quite pleased when they are recognized to be as good as graduates from other universities. Well, these aims are not natural to children of this age living and growing in freedom. They are imposed upon us and upon them by the present-day state of society. We have given them a good amount of free choice and we find that they do not turn with interest to the studies which we present to them. Mind! I do not say that mathematics, history, geography, etc., are not objects of interest for students. I am convinced that they are or can be. But the interest will be aroused and kept only if the joy of discovery and progress is the constant companion of study, and this comes about only when the study answers a need of the child. Traditional education has paid very little attention to the needs of the growing child and the ways in which the child satisfies them.

Therefore I say that while keeping the aims of traditional education we have deprived ourselves of the means of achieving them. We have a foot in one boat and a foot in another, and the two boats are moving away from each other. Is it surprising that we find ourselves in an uncomfortable situation?

What has happened to us is a clear proof that the traditional education is unable to evoke and sustain the interest of young people in the acquisition of knowledge - at least at the school age - without the succour of external compulsion or social solicitation. And the reason is that it does not give heed to the needs of the children as growing beings but wants to impose upon them what the adult world in its wisdom considers useful for them.

Children up to 10-11 are relatively docile and yield to
persuasion or command. But when youngsters of the critical age (11-16) who have to build up the frame of their knowledge are left with unsatisfied needs, deviations and distortions take place that cause dullness in some, restlessness and boisterousness in others, in any case an aversion for imposed studies. Later, at about 17, when knowledge itself is an object of cogitation, they realize with stupefaction how they have wasted their time. They want to make up for the loss, but it is too late; they have lost the most precious years, when the mind is plastic, receptive and quick at learning. They lament that they have become dull and sluggish. Our experience has thus laid bare the defects of traditional education.

What is the remedy? How are we to come out of this predicament? Either we keep the aims of traditional education and also suitable means to enforce their attainment, or we accept fully the ideal of a free growth of the child with an awakening to the inner guidance; and then we have to give up once for all the traditional aim and adopt squarely the aim set before us by Sri Aurobindo: "the evocation of the real man within", that is, the calling of the soul to the foreground as "the leader of the march set in our front" There is no doubt that we have truly chosen, even if we have not yet realized all the implications of our choice.

The experience of this year in our pilot classes shows that this goal is not a Utopia. We had glimpses of it and those who witnessed feel sure that they are really on the way to it.

I must admit that we shall have initial difficulties, for months and perhaps for years. But I believe that most of the difficulties are due to the distorting effect of the traditional system, of which I have spoken at length. I firmly believe that their force will gradually decrease and that they will not long hinder our progress. It is highly probable that the great majority of our children are capable of profiting by the new system, each according to his own capacity.

In our extension programme for next year, we have to take into consideration the following facts:

1. We have to train ourselves and elaborate the methods and techniques;
2. The material means, which these methods and techniques require, may not be immediately available;
3. We have to earn the acquiescence and collaboration of as many teachers as possible. Some may already feel enthusiastic, but some will yield only to results. Let every one be free to follow his inclination. We shall all meet at the end.
Someone told me: "What is new in your talks? Educationists the world over have been telling this since a long time." This statement shows that the person has understood very little if anything what I wanted to convey. It is true that there have been intuitive perceptions by a number of educationists, but the fundamental conception of the soul as the leader of the march, the evocation of the real man within as the right object of education is, to my knowledge, only found in Sri Aurobindo. The handing over of responsibility to the child as a means towards this evocation is also entirely new. It is true that there have been very valuable attempts to put into practice partial glimpses of the principles of our education. It is true also that modern child psychology confirms the soundness of Sri Aurobindo's views and consequently that the trend of educational research everywhere is pointing in the same direction. But, taken as a whole, conception of education set before us by Sri Aurobindo and expounded by The Mother gives an entirely new outlook. Face to face with it, one cannot but be struck by its newness, its originality, its comprehensiveness. It is like a new land that is disclosed to us and that we begin to explore. It is this feeling that I would very much like to have conveyed to you all.

TWO CARDINAL POINTS OF EDUCATION

A Collective Memorandum presented in 1965 to the Education Commission, Government of India, by P.B. Saint Hilaire (Pavitra), Director, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, on behalf of the Teachers of this Institution.*

"This Memorandum is an official document stating the position of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. It is in fact a summary of the thesis expounded in the previous pans of this book. The reader will excuse the unavoidable repetitions.

In the right view of things the true purpose of education is not only to bring out of the child the best and the noblest that he is capable of, but also to endow him with an understanding of the true aim and significance of human life so as to provide him with a lasting source of inspiration when he enters and faces the world at the end of his academic training.

This second point needs all the more attention nowadays because of the uncertainty that surrounds even the most immediate future. We have reached a phase of accelerated scientific and technological progress that may lead to the liberation of man from want and
to a considerable amount of well-being and security - what has been called an affluent society; but it may lead also to self-annihilation. What is then coming next? Is mankind to be led blindly to wanton destruction or to a still worse soulless fate? Are there no truer and more deeply inspiring words of guidance for our young people than subtleties on the absurdity of life? How shall we counteract the effect of such lack of genuine guidance and help them to surmount the confusion in which so many flounder?

In this connection two points are of cardinal importance. The first springs from a true insight into human nature and constitution, and this will determine the attitude that the teacher should take towards the growing child. The second concerns the future of man, of man the individual and humanity the collective man.

Modern education, on the whole, takes the child as an undeveloped body endowed with a young life, untrained sensibilities, acute but often unrestrained emotions, an immature mind and, as he grows, a nascent and groping reason. Reason is the highest recognized faculty, and to make of the full-grown child a being governed by reason and capable of discrimination and rational thinking, with a healthy and strong body, a sensitive but chastened emotional and aesthetic being, well trained in the conventional morality and customs of the present day social life, will appear to many educationists an ideal achievement so far as the individual child is concerned. But society has its word to say; it requires a regular supply of young men and women, immediately serviceable for its complicated economic, administrative and industrial machinery and therefore demands that they should be classified according to ability and capacity. In the process of training, the child is submitted to the powerful (for his delicate and impressionable nature) influence of parents, teachers and school-mates. Moreover the requirements of society to some extent run counter to the innate urge of the child. Thus the best of which the child would have been capable does not realize itself fully - far from it.

The defects of modern education are well known. They have often been described and analysed. But the remedies that have been proposed are mere palliatives. They counter the effects and not the cause. If we want to find a genuine solution to the present difficulties, we have to discover the cause of the evil and for that to re-examine the whole foundation on which education rests.

As early as 1910 when he was a political leader in Bengal, Sri Aurobindo propounded certain principles of education. At that time they were truly revolutionary as they broke away deliberately from the conventional notions on education that were then
prevalent under the foreign domination. These principles, of which I quote here below the first one, most important and sufficient for my present purpose, did not seem to have attracted the attention they deserve and they remain even today practically unknown to the educational world.

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a 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. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.¹

Since the beginning of the century the educationists have been devoting themselves especially in the West to initiating and carrying out a considerable amount of theoretical and experimental research work in the field of education and child psychology and have come to conclusions similar to those expressed so forcefully by Sri Aurobindo. For them the child is foremost a developing being who has its own needs, different from an adult's and for that reason easily misunderstood by the adult. The first task of the educator is to make sure that the child's needs are satisfied and that the child is happy. New education... is really a new attitude towards the child. An attitude of understanding and love, and above all an attitude of respect. An attitude of expectation, of patience; the restraint of a delicate hand that dare not open a flower- bud nor disturb a baby in the midst of his first experiments, a student in the course of his early work....

The child has within himself everything that is necessary for a true education, and particularly a ceaseless activity, incessantly revived, in which he is totally engrossed, the activity of a growing being who is continuously developing and to whom for that very reason, our help may be useful, but our direction is not necessary.²
Speaking of this new trend in western education, Sri Aurobindo regards it as a healthy step. It shows the beginning of... the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. 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. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.

How this is to be brought about is mainly a matter of tactful dealing with the child. Of course, there must be a great freedom in the choice of the subjects, in the time allotted to each subject, so that the child can progress at his own pace. This last result calls for individual handling and a sufficient knowledge of the language by the child so as to be able to read and comprehend. Text-books are usually too condensed, therefore work on files or work-sheets is preferable, but their preparation imposes a heavy burden on the teacher. Anyhow a real Free Progress Class - as these classes may be called - can only begin when the child is able to read and write fairly well, i.e., in Class IV or V.

Before that level, the teacher has to use his own discretion. But the right attitude towards the child must be adopted from the very beginning, in the Kindergarten. A child's soul is usually very close to the surface and, if a proper environment is maintained, it will continue to be so for several years.

Ordinary education and the influence of adult society usually act to muffle and distort this happy and healthy spontaneity, and replace it by an automatism based on the...
more or less arbitrary conventions of family and society and no less arbitrary rules of moral or religious education.

In order to awaken the child to the understanding of the relations existing between the two worlds which almost simultaneously - the inner and the outer - he should be told how to observe carefully what happens in himself. He has to be shown that he is the playground, sometimes the battlefield of different forces and inner movements: sensations, impulses, emotions, ideas. And he must be taught how to distinguish between them practically and find out their nature and origin. For this discovery intellectual explanations are insufficient, it is no use lecturing and moralizing. It is with concrete instances, from the day to day school life, taking advantage of apparently insignificant incidents, that the discrimination can be slowly developed.

The child will then be shown that it is possible to rise above the fleeting inner movements that he has now learnt to discriminate and not to be frightened by the inner silence in which he may enter - this silence that will later reveal itself as a plenitude.

As an illustration, I shall give the case when a tense situation has somehow arisen and a decision has to be taken.

or when an obstacle hampers all progress. At a suitable time, the teacher may call the child when alone, present to him impartially, in a few kind and simple words, the consequences of the possible alternatives, then ask him to consider quietly the whole matter and, after a moment of silence, to aspire for light and truth. Not by the mind and the reason, because truth does not depend on arguments, nor by the emotions, although restrained and purified emotions will greatly contribute to reaching a solution by their quietness, but in the freedom, impartiality and equality of the spirit, the teacher may succeed in imparting the little touch which, by its repetition, will awaken the still receptive young being to the presence of the inner divinity. What the child then decides must not be questioned, he should be allowed to proceed; he knows the consequences and will remember them. Thus only will the child acquire the sense of responsibility which is aimed at.

The justification of this attitude is given by Sri Aurobindo in these terms:

All experience shows that man must be given a certain freedom to stumble in action as well as to err in knowledge so long as he does not get from within himself his freedom from wrong movement and error; otherwise he cannot grow.4

Thus the child will be shown by experience that there is in him, above the movements of the ordinary nature - likes and dislikes, impulses and fancies, ideas, etc. - a
region of deep peace and silence. If he listens carefully he will discover that in this silence, there is also the feeling of a Presence, a conscious Presence. And after some time, when he turns back to his problems, he will be found one day to say: "Oh! I know now what to do!" The quality of such decisions is very different from the ordinary movements. The child will recognize gradually that this inner guidance is the only valid and most satisfying one, it alone gives a peace and joy that surpass pleasures and enjoyments, but it is difficult to discover and listen to, because emotions and thoughts are too active and noisy - an inner silence has to be established first. If the teacher succeeds in establishing with his pupil a soul to soul contact, a kind of helpful link is created.

The Mother has shown how a proper relation between teacher and pupil can be established and maintained. When a child has made a mistake, see that he confesses it to you spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confessed, make him understand with kindness and affection what was wrong in his movement and that he should not repeat it. In any case, never scold him; a fault confessed must be forgiven. You should not allow any fear to slip in between you and your child; fear is a disastrous way to education: invariably it gives birth to dissimulation and falsehood. An affection that sees clear, that is firm yet gentle and a sufficiently practical knowledge will create bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to make the education of your child effective.  

Threat and punishment should be completely avoided. An untimely outburst from the teacher is all that is needed to wipe out all the confidence that the child has in him; the way will be blocked for a long time and often irreparably. Love and sympathy, desire to help, devotion to an ideal, the satisfaction of being at peace with oneself, are in the end more potent constructive forces than fear of punishment, whether by the headmaster, the police or a god. "Coercion", says Sri Aurobindo, "only chains up the devil and alters at best his form of action into more mitigated and civilised movements; it does not and cannot eliminate him."  

But this should not lead one to believe that we advocate a freedom which allows the child to indulge indiscriminately his desires and caprices. The freedom we vindicate for the child is the freedom to establish the conditions of his own
progress - hence the name *Free Progress Classes*, as we like to call the classes of our method. Being, so to say, his own master, the child is obliged to refer constantly to the inner guidance, if he wants to avoid pitfalls, because experience will have taught him the price he has to pay in the shape of loss of inner harmony and peace, clouding of the mind and dissipation of his time and energy. This necessity of perpetual choice is the creative element in this education; its aim is to inculcate in the student a spirit of self-reliance and responsibility. Nothing can be a better gift to a growing child. And we allow him the freedom to err or stumble, because we know that by his errors and stumblings he will be able to walk straight.

Regarding the inner guidance Sri Aurobindo writes:

If one keeps the true will and true attitude, then the intuitions or intimations from within will begin to grow, become clear, precise, unmistakable and the strength to follow them will grow also. . . .

On the other hand we do not expect the child to be at once the master of the inner movements; it requires many years of patient work, even a whole lifetime. But he can observe them in a calm and detached manner, study and identify them. This is an indispensable first step, preliminary to mastery. The gaining of mastery is an important subject, which we cannot even touch here.

Well, it is certainly good that the old coercive methods of education have gone or are going, but on the condition that something higher replaces them; otherwise the results will be disastrous. And if we judge from the direction taken by some of the most advanced nations in matter of education, they are rapidly reaching a state in which the child will give a free rein to his impulses and caprices, without any higher guidance, inner or outer, to help him towards self-knowledge and self-mastery. This is indeed a dismal prospect, of which we can see a few forebodings in the growing lawlessness among the students and in the ever-increasing number of juvenile delinquents.

Such a mistake could not have been committed if there had been a full grasp of the meaning and function assigned to education by Sri Aurobindo. The western educationists, and after them the entire world, have seized only half the truth, and this deficiency may be the source of the ominous trend in education evinced the world over.

No human collective life is possible without discipline, but it ought to be a discipline taking into account as much the *diversity* of human nature as the *unity* of the soul, the deeper consciousness in man. Only a discipline of this kind is freely acceptable as it does not interfere with the subtle action of the soul. Once such a discipline is freely accepted -
and under these conditions - it should be carefully observed, without consideration for passing caprices. *Unity* does not entail *uniformity*; the latter is nothing but a deformation and a caricature of the former. It is the confusion between unity and uniformity which is so harmful in political ideologies.

It may be argued that the guidance of the soul we recognize is nothing more than the "voice of conscience", the moral sense of right and wrong that every human being has more or less developed within himself; and the action, usefulness and limitations of the conscience have been well studied by moralists and psychologists. It is perfectly true that the soul - the psychic entity which enshrines the divine spark in man - is the origin of the conscience. In some cases the conscience may be so developed that it will fit the description we have given. But in most cases the action of the soul is covered up and smothered by desires, ambitions and passions, hardened by the bare facts of life and mixed up hopelessly with family, national, social and religious conventions and prejudices, so as to have lost almost all of its purity and reliability. What we present is precisely a method aiming at disengaging it from these distorting influences by an action undertaken at an early age, when the "small voice" is not yet completely muffled, restoring it to its pristine purity and making it available as an impartial and trustworthy witness and guide.

In his search for a reliable way of discriminating among the various inner movements, and still more in his quest for his soul, the child can receive a genuine help only from someone who has undergone the same patient efforts at inner discrimination, who has gone through the same persistent search. Now in India this is effectively a part of the training in Yoga. It is in this sense that The Mother, speaking to teachers, has said:

One must be a great Yogi to be a good teacher.

One must have the perfect attitude to be able to exact from one's pupils a perfect attitude.8

And a little further:

Those who are successful as teachers here... , *i.e.*, who become truly good teachers, that would signify that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, and mastering their movements and that they have a clear sight, an understanding of others and a patience that never fails.9
To be a teacher in a Free Progress Class is certainly a heavy onus, but it offers also an ample reward by watching and helping the blossoming of young souls, fully engaged in their effort of self-discovery and self-mastery.

Thus the main task of the secondary education (inclusive of higher secondary) is to make the child soul-conscious, in the sense we have explained, and bring him to the correlative freedom and sense of responsibility. The adolescent will have by now understood how his soul guides his destiny. In the meanwhile, he will have learnt - at least to some extent - how to work and how to learn.

Now, during the three college years, some time is given regularly to the study of human evolution, social and political, but mainly spiritual, with a special reference to the present day world situation, so that the young people may understand the nature of the world in which they are going to enter and work, its significance and its promises. To explain what we mean, we have to outline Sri Aurobindo's conception of man's future upon earth. This we shall do by following up the birth and development of the notion of progress.

II

It can be shown" that the advent of progress has cut the course of history in two parts:

1. A period when society was almost static in its vision of things. There was little change from one generation to another. Civilisations and empires grew, bloomed and decayed, without affecting the ways of living and the outlook of the masses. Surprisingly little attention was given to alleviating the conditions of life and work of the common labourer and the tiller of the soil; consequently the productivity of labour remained almost constant for hundreds and even thousands of years and, as the main source of wealth was human labour, a general enrichment could hardly be envisaged. What men perceived in the contemporary events was their intensity, their violence, not their evolutionary trend, which was invisible to them.

2. And a period when the human mind turned to the mastery of physical nature and applied its discoveries and inventions in a deliberate and concerted effort to the economic and social betterment of the whole society. This possibility dawned upon man with the seventeenth century and within two centuries Europe had become the scene of a great intellectual activity in the cause of general education and culture, in an effort at
emancipation from tradition, convention and prejudice and with a keen interest in the theoretical and applied sciences.

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<td>We need not follow in detail the birth of the great hopes that marked the “Age of Enlightenment” and the successive disillusions that followed. At the beginning of the 20th century, many thinkers were led to the conclusion that, while a marked advance in the economic sphere and an improvement in the conditions of life and labour were noticeable, leading no doubt to an amelioration in the social relations, still human nature had not changed to any appreciable extent. Egoism and greed have always tried to divert any new discovery or improvement for the benefit of a few individuals or for a group - class or nation. Even the goodwill of men and their spirit of sacrifice have been exploited in this way. It is this apparent obduracy of human nature which is the radical obstacle to a wholesome and harmonious progress. The notion of an all-embracing progress of society was therefore questioned. There was no sign that people were really &quot;happier” than in the past. The prospect appeared gloomy.</td>
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<td>With the passing years and the tremendous impetus given to scientific and technological progress by the two world wars, the situation has now changed to some extent. The material and social amelioration in the industrially developed nations can no longer be denied. The disparity between labour and management has considerably diminished and a classless society is near at hand - although achieved differently in the capitalist U.S.A. and the socialist U.S.S.R.</td>
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<td>A new conceptions of wealth has emerged. As it has by now gained an implicit and general acceptance, it is difficult to realize its truly revolutionary character. It would certainly have startled the ancient philosophers and historians. As Bertrand de Jouvenel puts it: The great modern idea is that it is possible to enrich collectively and individually all members of a society through continuous progress in the organization of work, in its processes and instruments, that this enrichment provides by itself the means of its further development, and that this development can be rapid and indefinite.”</td>
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<td>But new questions arise. Technological progress seems to create more problems than it can solve. It has also many social and political implications, both pleasant and unpleasant. Great dangers are looming in the future and doubts are rising whether mankind will have the foresight, the wisdom and the strength to avert them.</td>
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The accelerated pace of scientific and technological achievements has led economists and industrialists to scrutinize more attentively the growth of all private and public undertakings. This concern with the future has caused planning to be resorted to, even in the most liberal economy, on a yet unknown scale. But the rapidity of change in the economic, social and even political spheres is so great that the common man himself begins to look at the future as if hidden by a big question mark.

Looking around us we see that the most developed nations have already achieved a very high standard of material well-being - what really forms the beginning of a civilization of plenty or affluent society - with an abundance of amenities of all description, food, houses, motor cars and aeroplanes, gadgets of all kinds. But there are ominous signs also and the social order does not follow the same forward movement. Crime is rather on the increase, especially juvenile delinquency; the same is true of mental diseases and the use of narcotics is spreading. Again happiness escapes the grasp of man.

The ideal of a welfare society, which had taken possession of the mind and heart of man, was indeed a great historic force in shaping the modern world. But, as it is drawing close to its realization, it is losing much of its inspiring power. It is no longer generating the same enthusiasm, as is evidenced by the decline of the socialist parties in We Europe. Moreover the capitalist society comes in the end to adopt much of what was originally purely-socialist, so that both social orders are moving towards each other and seem likely to meet half way.

In former times, man turned to religion to satisfy aspirations which seemed to be denied to him by his surroundings. But religion is gradually losing its hold and the young especially are turning away from it.

The main reason is...

... that religions have always laid emphasis on a world beyond, giving to this one only a passing importance. For some religions this world is an illusion from which we have to awaken. For some it is a cosmic snare from which man has painfully to disentangle himself. For others it is a place of trial, in which a divine decree has placed us so that we may gain immortal life elsewhere when our term is finished. All religions have more or less shunned the world and life, and declared them impure, debased and incapable of regeneration. What our young men and women are truly looking for, is to know the aims of their life - of human life in general, of their own life in particular - to find an ideal that can give a meaning to their daily work, to their joys and sorrows, to life in the society in
which they are going to enter, and at the same time help them in growing towards the mastery and perfection which vaguely but intimately, they feel waiting in the depths of themselves.12

Another reason is that all religions take their inspiration from the past. Their founders, prophets or heroes were rightly figures who lived centuries ago in a world far different from the one we live in. The problems they had to solve have little in common with the situations that confront us nowadays. We may admire their fortitude, their unflinching devotion, their sovereign detachment, but it becomes increasingly difficult for our young people to believe that their example is applicable to present-day life.

From all this we see that the advent of progress has really cut the course of history in two: one epoch in which men

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were looking at the past, another in which they turn their look to the future. Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, the past Asiatic civilizations, even the Renaissance, did not look ahead for the ideals and origins, in their ancient glories, their fabled heroes, their pristine virtues real or fancied. Unlike modern man, who dreams of the world he will make, pre-modern man dreamed of the world he had left.13

We are therefore led to two conclusions:

1. Man has definitely turned his face towards the future. Man knows that he can change his lot. He knows that he already has the power to influence his destiny. An elimination of poverty and disease, a life of abundance and leisure are almost within the reach of the most advanced nations and are held forth as a bait to the still suffering, toiling and starving under-developed masses. The latest discoveries of science have put in our hands an immense, almost limitless power which can be turned for the ultimate material liberation of man from the curse of toil or for his own destruction.

2. But we know also - and it becomes evident as soon as the immediate wants are satisfied - that all the material achievements, however much necessary today, will not satisfy us in the end, if they come alone. They will leave us weary, empty and disillusioned. What then is missing?

Sri Aurobindo supplies an answer and gives us at the same time the key to the future evolution of man. He shows that the theory of evolution of which modern science is justly proud and which holds that life evolved out of matter and mind out of life, is susceptible of being extended one step further. May not mind be a veil of a still hidden higher power, which awaits the time of its emergence?
The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man.

Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?  

This next step would not be a mere amelioration, even a perfecting of man's present faculties, but a radical change of consciousness. This would mean the emergence in him of a new power of consciousness, as different from mind as mind is different from life and life from matter. Sri Aurobindo spent the last forty years of his life - his retirement period in Pondicherry - to the study and realization of this new power of consciousness which he calls simply the Supermind, of the conditions of its emergence and of the consequences of this emergence.

In Sri Aurobindo's view the present world crisis is nothing but the preparation for the manifestation of an evolutionary mutation which is pressed upon man by the gigantic development of his outer life, out of proportion with his present day limited faculties - mental, ethical and spiritual. The shaking mankind is undergoing in every domain - scientific, social, political, philosophical, ethical and religious - is nothing but the break-up of the past, indispensable to the forward movement.

The word "progress" assumes a new significance. It is not simply an increase in the technological development and material well-being. It is the opening of a new world, the dawning of a New Age, the beginning of a new life. And the faith of man's unlimited perfectibility, the fundamental optimism of man's heart and mind are completely justified.

Biological evolution up to man has proceeded under the pressure of Nature, without the conscious participation of the creatures drawn along this evolution. But man marks the passage from unconscious to conscious evolution. He has attained a position of full spiritual responsibility and is well aware that he has the power to influence, for good or for evil, his destiny, both individual and collective. The next step of evolution can only be conscious and deliberate.

In this Sri Aurobindo sees an indication that the new being next to man in the evolutionary scale will be evolved in man, rather than out of man. And this is confirmed by the fact that, among all earthly creatures, man is the only dissatisfied one. There is in him some divine urge to aim higher, to transcend himself.
The recognition is spreading that the old remedies are of no avail, that the lights that have so far guided man, are now failing him. A change in the form of Government or even of social system will not help. The change that is needed is of a deeper kind, it is an upheaval. There must grow in a few individuals at first, then in an increasing number, the urge to overpass the old limitations, to find in themselves or above themselves a new light, a New Consciousness, a new guiding principle of knowledge and action, and a decision to abide by it, to let this new consciousness transform their nature and life.

This is possible, says Sri Aurobindo, because by Yoga man has shown that he is able to raise himself to a higher consciousness. There is then nothing irrational or even fundamentally new in the process. The innovation lies in the direction given to the spiritual effort, tapasyā: a liberation from nature, life and world, not to get away from them and leave them unchanged behind, but to turn back to them and transform them. This point is of extreme importance because it explains what is meant by a conscious collaboration with the evolutionary process.

The western countries, especially France, are now under the sway of the scientific works - posthumously published of the Jesuit Father and palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin, who has argued very aptly that modern biology, supports the theory of an evolutionary future for man. It would be, after a more or less prolonged period of adjustment, a perfecting of the human faculties, especially the moral and spiritual, leading to an extension of consciousness and ultimately - for those who have chosen the right path - to the union with God.

There is thus a resemblance with Sri Aurobindo's views, but points of difference also exist. One of them is that the conscious collaboration of man, especially such as Yoga implies, with the evolutionary process has not been fully seized by Father Teilhard, or at least has not been expressed with the same all round emphasis. Another point of divergence is that the Father does not conceive as possible that a complete union with God can be accomplished here upon earth in a material body. There is therefore no alternative at a certain stage but to leave the earth-life. But in India there is no difficulty in that respect, the conceptions of both the jīvanmukta (liberated while living) and vīdehamukta (liberated without a body) exist in the spiritual tradition.

Sri Aurobindo has outlined his conception of the future evolution of man in the philosophical magazine Arya, published in Pondicherry, during the years 1914-1921. At the same time, he has made a synthesis of the traditional systems of Indian Yoga and
welded them into his all embracing "Integral Yoga". Both are thus complementary: Yoga is the individual, evolution the collective, aspect.16

In the last chapter of Sri Aurobindo's The Human Cycle we find a description of a transitional period - what he calls a "spiritualised society". It is a stage when mankind, having accepted the ideal, will be engaged in the process of giving it a shape in all its activities and institutions. It will reveal to man the divinity in himself as the Light, Strength, Beauty, Good, Delight, Immortality that dwells within and build up in his outer life also the kingdom of God which is first discovered within us. It will show man the way to seek for the Divine in every way of his being, sarvabhāvena,18 and so find it and live in it, that however - even in all kinds of ways - he lives and acts, he shall live and act in that,18 in the Divine, in the Spirit, in the eternal Reality of his being.19

And in the last six chapters of The Life Divine Sri Aurobindo has outlined the main stages of the complete supramental transformation of the individual man. This transformation, once generalised, will establish upon earth what might fitly be characterised as a divine life; for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material Nature.20

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.21

The unveiling of this evolutionary future before an adolescent at the end of his academic formation is indeed a seal, a kind of consecration to the highest possible ideal. Not only does he understand now the meaning of the long succession of hopes, failures
and achievements of human history, but he will perceive, throughout his life, the meaning of his own individual existence. He will know that, in whatever walk of life he is placed, whatever struggles, anguishes and failures he has to go through, any effort on his part towards light, truth, beauty and good will be also an effort to lift up humanity towards its goal; in this knowledge he finds the strength to endure. And if he knows how to offer up his struggles, disillusions and failures to his inmost soul, the Divine in him, he will really share in the Great Endeavour.

He will understand that the visions of the seers and prophets of all religions, the words of the sages of all nations, the dreams of the idealists of all times were not mere chimeras; they were promises. And he can see now that the future will realise all the promises of the past.

*

Such is the basis that we, the teachers of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, would wish should be given to education in this country. India is in a unique position in this respect and we believe she has a great future before her, a future which is also a promise of her past.

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**Bibliography**

**WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO**

**WORKS OF THE MOTHER**
<table>
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<th>WORKS OF THE AUTHOR</th>
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<td><em>(The Future Evolution of Man contains extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo, with a summary and notes by the compiler. The other two compilations contain extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.)</em></td>
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<th>WORKS OF OTHER AUTHORS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Condorcet, Antoine Nicolas. <em>Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain.</em></td>
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Bibliographical details about the sources listed below may be found in the Bibliography. The author's references to citations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been updated by the editors of his fifth edition. The new citations refer to the volumes of the Sri Aurobindo Birth - Centenary Library (SABCL) and the Mother's collected Works (MCW). The reader may note that although citations from the Mother's works have been updated to accord with her Collected Works, the original translations of her statements in French have been kept: in other words the translations used by the author have been retained.

**Epigraph.** Sri Aurobindo, SABCL vol. 17, p. 205.

**EDUCATION AND THE AIM OF HUMAN LIFE.**

**Introduction.** No notes.

**I The Purpose of Education.** No notes.

**II The Conception of Progress and the Present World Crisis.**

1. I follow here Robert L. Heilbroner in *The Future as History*.
2. Several modern historians trace the origin of the movement to the extraordinary genius of Leonard da Vinci (1452-1519), and certainly he anticipated, if not ushered in, a basic improvement in the technology of almost all arts and crafts.

**introduction.** Périod I.

7. The problem of the right use of wealth and leisure has begun to seriously engage the attention of economists and sociologists. The reader is referred to John Kenneth Galbraith's book *The Affluent society*, especially Chapter XXIV, "Labor, Leisure and New Class". which contains a good deal of provocative thought. See also Georges Hourdin, *une Civilisation des loisirs*, and the article of Bertrand de Jouvenel in *Diogène*, No. 33, jan-mars 1961.

10. The Bible says "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Compare this with "The greatest prospect that we face - indeed what must now be counted one of the central economic goals of our society - is to eliminate toil as a required economic institution. This is not a utopian vision. We are on the way." (Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, p. 340)


12-17 These Quotations about the Prospective Movement are translated from various issues of the magazine *Prospective* during the period 1959-1960.


19. The journal *La Suisse*, 10-4-67. This episode is an addition to the third edition.

20. The head of the Prospective Movement, Gaston Berger, a leading educationist, visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, of which the Sri Aurobindo international centre of Education is a part, in 1959. He said that he was surprised to find among the members here an "identity of preoccupations" with those of the Prospective groups in France. He died in late 1960 in an accident.


**III. The Dawning of a New age**

1. The Supermind can be described as a self-effectuationg Truth-consciousness.

2. Sri Aurobindo, SABCL vol. 18, pp. 3-4

3. Sri Aurobindo's major works were first published serially in the philosophical monthly *Arya* between 1914 and 1921. They were later revised by him and published in book form by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

4. If the reader wishes to know Sri Aurobindo's views on the later stages of human evolution, he is referred to the last six chapters of *The Life Divine*, in which Sri Aurobindo deals with the triple transformation (psychic, spiritual, supramental) and the advent of a race of supramental beings. The compilation *The Future Evolution of Man* is a selection of quotations from Sri Aurobindo on the subject.


6. Ibid., p. 211.

7. Ibid., pp. 213-213.

8. Ibid., p. 213.
IV. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education

1. John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, p. 9. How little of this beautiful programme has been carried over, even today, into actual teaching practice!

2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality*, chapter "My School".

3. This work may be tentatively classified under three headings:
   a) Philosophy of Education (Stanley Hall, Dewey, Claparède);
   b) Child Psychology (Binet, Piaget, Wallon, Gesell);
   c) Experimental Pedagogy (Binet and the experiments done in the U.S.A. under the auspices of the New Education Fellowship and the Progressive Education Association).

   The outcome has been new methods of education, the best known of which are the Montessori and Becroly methods. Others may also be mentioned: the Dalton Plan (Miss H. Parkhurst), the Winnetka Plan (C. Washburne), the "Activity Schools" (A. Ferriere), the "Project Method" (inspired by the work of Dewey and Kilpatrick), the Cousinet Method, and the Dottrens's "Individualised Work".


6. Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education*, first published in the journal *Karmayogin* in 1910, when Sri Aurobindo was a member of the Nationalist Movement in Bengal. It is currently published in SABCL vol. 17, p. 204.

7. Ibid., p. 204.

8. The Mother, *MCW* vol. 12, p. 70.
10. Ibid., p. 11.
11. Ibid., p. 9.
12. Ibid., p. 8.
15. Ibid., pp. 5, 6.
18. Ibid., p. 209.
20. Ibid., p. 209.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., pp. 210-11.
24. The Mother, MCW vol. 12, p. 11.

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<td>27.</td>
<td>The Mother, MCW vol. 12, p. 40.</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Ibid., pp. 207-08.</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Ibid., p. 208.</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>As an illustration of this synthetic tendency, I may mention that the recent XXth volume of <em>Encyclopédic Francaise</em> (French Encyclopedia) is entitled <em>Le Monde en Devenir</em> (The World in Becoming) and its sub-divisions are History, Evolution and Prospective.</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Ibid., p. 32.</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo, SABCL vol. 19, p. 900.</td>
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OUR NEW SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

I. How the Child Educates Himself
   2. See the two extracts on pages 49-50 of this book.
   3. See the extract on page 50 of this book.

II. The Needs of the Child
   1. See R. Cousinet, L'education nouvelle, chapter I. I recommend this book to those interested in knowing how far Western educationists (a few of them) have progressed independently on the road traced out by Sri Aurobindo.
   3. The problem of love and sexual life, left untouched in these lectures, has been dealt with in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love.

III. The Educational Environment. No notes.

IV. The Class Work
   1. R. Dottern's L'enseignement individualise contains samples of work-sheets, specially for languages. Teachers may also consult C. Muresanu's L'education de l'adolescent par la composition libre.

V. A Valuation of the New System. None.

VI. The Evolution of a Class
   1. See the note on the Mother on page 80 of this book.
   2. Sri Aurobindo, SABCL vol. 15, p. 28.

VII. The Task of the Educator
   1. The Mother, MCW vol. 8, pp. 353-54.
VIII. Do We Need a New System of Education?
1. The Mother, MCW vol. 12, p. 118.

TWO CARDINAL POINTS OF EDUCATION
4. Ibid., p. 216.
5. The Mother, MCW vol. 12, p. 11.
7. Sri Aurobindo, SABCL vol. 23, p. 904.
8. The Mother, MCW vol. 8, p. 354.
9. Ibid.
10. Heilbronner, The Future as History. See also chapter II of the first section of this book.
12. The author, pp. 18-19 of this book.
15. See the author's compilation The Future Evolution of Man. See also Satprem, Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness.
16. Sri Aurobindo's major works, published serially in the Arya between 1914-21, include The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, The Human Cycle (The Psychology of Social Development) and The Ideal of Human Unity. They were later revised by Sri Aurobindo and published as books.
17. From the Bhagavad Gita.
18. From the Bhagavad Gita: sarvathā vartamāno’pi sa yogi mayi vartate.
The first edition of *Education and the Aim of Human Life*, published in 1961, comprised only the first section of the present book. A revised version of that text was issued in the following year. The text of the third edition (1967) was enlarged considerably by the inclusion of two new sections: "Our New System of Education", a transcript of a series of three lectures delivered by the author in 1961 to the teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, and "Two Cardinal Points of Education", a collective memorandum written by the author and presented by him in 1965 to the Education Commission of the Government of India. This enlarged edition was brought out again in 1976 and is presently (1991) being issued for a fifth time. All five editions have been published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

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*Education and the Aim of Human Life*

By Pavitra (P. B. Saint-Hilaire)

Written in 1961 and revised by the author in 1967, this book offers a succinct analysis of the nexus between education and the aim of human life. Examining how education is linked to the aim of human life prevalent in any age, Pavitra sees the conception of progress, born in the 17th century's Age of Enlightenment, as a shift in the focus of man's aspirations away from the traditions and ideals of the past to the promises of a better future. For hundreds of years progress then meant primarily the application of mind to the mastery of physical nature to benefit society, and education was meant to serve that end. The modern age faces an evolutionary crisis in the apparent failure of scientific and industrial progress to bring perfection and harmony to all aspects of life. Pavitra shows how "with Sri Aurobindo, the past is luminously linked with the future" and "how this ideal has led the way to the dawn of a new age and the development of a new educational system to help our children become "creators of the future". 