

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD IN CRISIS

“Everyone of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life.”¹

The Mother

It is important to place our work as teachers in the larger context of the world situation, otherwise we tend to underestimate the crucial role that we play in modern life. When we look at this larger picture, the world all over is in a crisis, a crisis of such gigantic proportions that never before in human history have we faced so much turmoil on such a large scale, on so many different levels of human life. We have a crisis in international relations, in national life and administration, in politics, in religions, in business, economic crisis, social crisis, community and caste-based crisis, family crisis (practically all families are tending to break up), and finally, we face an individual internal crisis — we don't know what is the right thing to do!

At every moment in life we are faced with many conflicting pulls and pushes; what is the right thing? If I do this, that will not be satisfied; if I do that, this will not be satisfied. And this condition of crisis is worsening: we see no signs of any improvement. If anything at all, we might say, the last fifty years have seen a greater intensification of crisis than the last five hundred years, and the last five years have seen more intensification than the last fifty years. At this pace of a geometric progression, we are either heading for an explosive collapse or a breakthrough into something so different that we cannot even imagine what it will be like.

Education is the Key

The world is in a crisis, and education is also in a crisis. But education is, in fact, the key to overcoming the world crisis; because after all, with education we are preparing the new generation that will run the world. If this generation is brought up in an environment of narrowness, conflict and confusion, absorbing these very qualities in their hearts and minds, then when they go out into the world this is what they will contribute. In our hands, as teachers and parents, lies the fate and the future of the world. We must never forget that our work as teachers represents the single most important thing that will determine the future of humanity and the world.

Back to Basics

The present system and content of education has certainly not helped the present humanity, and is not likely to help the future humanity to grow to its true potential. But if we are to reconsider what the educational system for the future

must be, we will have to begin from scratch. We must begin by asking ourselves the three basic questions in sequence:

Why are we teaching?

What are we teaching?

How shall we teach?

If we lack clarity of *why* we teach, we cannot address the *what* and the *how*. If our goal is to teach the child to survive in the jungle, then we only need to teach the basic survival skills; we don't need to teach anything else. If we want the child to get a good job and be comfortable in life, then we teach only the necessary job skills, some vocational background and training. But if we want to teach our children to be good human beings, it demands a much wider scope of teaching content. But even this is not the highest goal.

What is the highest goal that I can set for ourselves and our children? "I want my child to be a complete human being capable of exceeding his humanness". It is this which makes human beings special — that at every step we aspire and struggle to rise beyond the limited scope of our humanness and achieve something still greater. To be able to overcome not only physical limitations of capacity, but also the circumstances which limit our growth and possibilities; to rise far beyond, to be able to remould those very circumstances; not only to exceed oneself, but to exceed Nature! It is this drive which makes the human species unique, and it is this that we have to set for ourselves as the objective of education.

Once we are clear about why we are teaching, then we can ask ourselves the next two questions: what shall we teach, and how shall we teach. And the answer to these rests on a deeper understanding of what the student is really made of, the various parts of the human personality and how they learn and grow.



CHAPTER II

THE PARTS

“Always she [India] has distinguished and cultivated in him [man] a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonist, 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...”²

Sri Aurobindo

We can broadly describe the human being as consisting of five distinct parts, all of which must be developed and harmonised.

The Body

The body is the foundation, the base on which all else rests. What will we train in the body? The body’s natural instinct is survival and comfort. By itself it does not try to exceed that. We can teach the child how to eat and sleep properly, how to work, play a musical instrument, and other specialised skills. We can teach the body to be strong, healthy and supple. All this is very good, but it is not



enough. There is something deeper which is possible and by which we will turn towards exceeding the body’s nature itself. This is the body’s ability to express a spontaneous beauty and harmony. This beauty comes not from appearance alone. I can paint my face with make up, but will I be beautiful? Not necessarily! With true beauty, there is a glow which radiates through the form. You may have seen photographs in *National Geographic* magazines of very old people, more than a hundred years old, with deep wrinkles all over the face, and yet the smile, the gaze and the expression are so beautiful! This glow of beauty can be expressed by the body independent of physical form.

The form is only a means for the beauty to glow out. In the material world (of which the body is a creation)

the divine consciousness expresses itself through beauty.

Beauty is a necessary part of our training and development. This beauty is manifested not just through the glow that radiates, but can also be expressed in movement. When you lift your hand to drink a cup of water, is the movement beautiful and harmonious? When you walk, do you effortlessly radiate a harmony in your movements or is your walk jagged, expressive of the confusion of the consciousness within?

The foundation on which this expression of beauty and harmony rest is the full awakening of the body’s conscious awareness in all the parts and their workings, eventually down to the very cells. A fully conscious body expressing itself perfectly in a spontaneous beauty and harmony — this then must be the goal of our physical training.

The Vitality and the Emotions

The next layer that has evolved in evolution is the life-force, the vitality and the emotions that it rules. This life-force dynamises us with its energy and, according to its character (coarse or refined) is the quality of our emotions and relationships. The emotions are the results of its play within us, linking us to people around, attracting and repelling, binding us socially. Unfortunately most of us have never consciously trained our emotions. That is why, even as adults,



when entering a point of emotional conflict, we fight like kindergarten children: we raise our voices, we repeat ourselves more and more insistently, and that is how we try to convince another and prove that we are right. But that is certainly not the best expression of our emotions. Anger suddenly bursting out uncontrollably is a common experience much like the kindergarten child, because we have not learnt to deal with it.

We want our children to develop an emotional control and refinement so that they flow pure and spontaneous, becoming colours of life and enriching them with a multifaceted joy, sweetness and love. By our bonding and mutuality expressed through refined emotions, one plus one becomes more than two, and humanity grows in its collective life.

The Mind

The next layer that has evolved is the mind which is the crown of humanity. This mind is the main focus of modern education, but its effective working rests on the support of the body and the vitality and emotions. That is why unless we develop the other two parts also, the mind stands on weak foundations, and is often enslaved to the limitations of the other parts.

The great quest of the mind is knowledge and the seeking for perfection. The mind is never satisfied with what is; it always wants to improve, organise and optimise. Measurement, planning, strategy and analysis are the necessary faculties without which our lives cannot improve. But the mind is not just analysis; there is also the “right brain” and its faculties of synthesis, insight, comprehension, creativity, intuition and inspiration.

These three dimensions of our being — the body, the emotions and the mind — even when developed fully and well integrated, will make us no better than thinking animals. A wonderful thinking animal perhaps, but still missing the distinctive features of humanness which emerge from the fourth dimension of our being.



The Fourth Dimension

This dimension is the truth of our being which lives deep within us at the deepest core of our “I-ness”. Not the “I” of my superficial identity which is obsessed with its own pettiness and sense of self-importance. It is an “I” deep within which is a pure flame of conscious aspiration rising always upwards in stillness and a causeless love.

We all have felt and said many times in our lives, “You know, I am actually a very nice person, if only people knew me for what I am, then they would all like me. But somehow when I try to express myself, I come across as this angry and reactive person. If only people could look beyond the surface, to that core of me...” This sweet person that we are deep inside is not the real “I” either. It is itself the reflection of a still deeper core within us. There, in that inmost core, we find something so beautiful, sweet, tender, spontaneously loving; there we find a deeply satisfying peace, joy, love and harmony, flowing causelessly as if from the source of a perennial spring. This source is what we call the psychic being, the soul within, the essence of our humanness. It is from there that arise all of our deeper and higher aspirations, the need to exceed ourselves, the glow of beauty which is reflected in the body, the strength and power which flow through the emotions, and the right knowledge that reveals itself spontaneously in the mind. This is the real “I-ness” within us, of which the ego identity that we live in is a reflection, a false and superficial front used by evolution as a temporary focal point.



It is the psychic being within us which grows across lives, through every kind of experience, retaining the essence of all that we learn and grow to become. Its natural sense of immortality reflects in our outer awareness and gives us the sense and seeking for permanence. All our aspiration for truth, beauty, true love and peace emerge from the psychic core, because that is its nature.

Gradually, as we grow and evolve, the ego “I” has to dissolve into the psychic identity, and the psychic being come in front as our real identity and govern our personality entirely. To assist this is the goal of psychic education.

The Fifth Dimension

Even with the awakening of this fourth dimension, we would not have fully achieved our highest potential. There is still a fifth dimension which we will not dwell upon too much here, but which nevertheless we must keep at the back of our mind as a reference, because without the fifth dimension we cannot fulfil our life’s highest purpose and potential.



The fifth dimension is that realm beyond the mind, which we call the spiritual. It is a realm of consciousness in which a vast Peace, Light, Knowledge, Power and Bliss exist. It is this which the ancient sages of India referred to as the Sat-Chit-Ananda, literally translated as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, a pure divine Bliss which is the origin of our soul as well as of this entire world. To be able to realise that Bliss as our normal state, and to manifest it here on earth in our daily lives, to transform the human life into a divine life, this is the adventure for which we came on earth. But for now we will dwell more on the first four dimensions: the physical, emotional, mental and the psychic, and only in passing touch upon the fifth.

Fivefold Education

Such is the broad framework of what we have to address in the development of the child — and even in ourselves. Each of these parts has to be brought to its highest potential of perfection, and all have to be integrated around the central psychic identity within. The task is not easy, because each one of these parts is so different from the others, and yet each is interdependent with every other. It is not possible to train or develop one exclusively in its separateness. Nor is it practical to train them all simultaneously, because each has its unique requirements. Nor is it easy to integrate such disparate parts into a united whole. Even if we found a way to do this with one person, it would probably not apply to others, because each one of us is uniquely built.

How then shall we go about it? We have to found our efforts on some common and universal insights upon which the entire edifice of education can be rebuilt. We then have to identify the essential principles of education around which we will organise all our learning processes.

All of this requires a first stage of unlearning our habitual ways of viewing education and their associated responses. The key is a change in the *mindset* with which we view education. When this is done, we will discover that the new approach to education will flow from us spontaneously, taking on newer and truer forms of response almost effortlessly.

CHAPTER III

THE INDUSTRIAL MINDSET

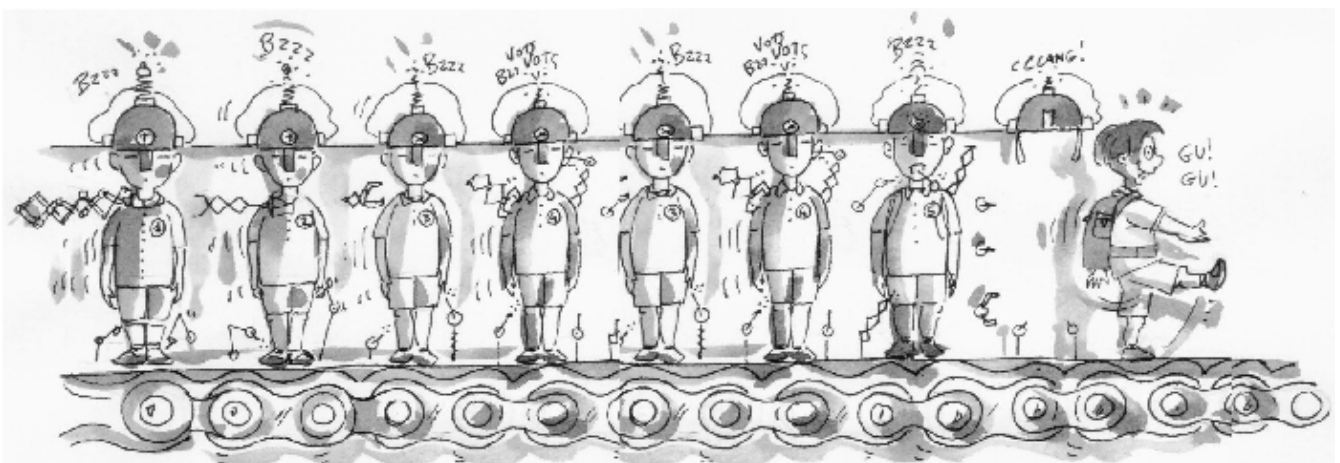
“The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation.”³

“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.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo

The modern system of education is actually not so modern. It is the creation of a much earlier era, today known as the Industrial Age in Europe about two hundred years ago. And because that is the character of the Age, the entire thought-process of the Age is stamped with the single dominating theme of machinery, industry and factory. When viewed through the coloured lens of industry, society is also seen as a gigantic piece of machinery. Education, therefore, is viewed as another industry with the school as a factory and the child as its raw material! This is the inevitable result of the industrial *mindset*. I want to emphasise the importance of the mindset because the details and the processes of education emerge from and are the result of the mindset — they are secondary results. This understanding is the key to real and lasting change.

The reason why most attempts to change the national educational system have failed is that these attempts have only aimed at changing the secondary processes of education, and have ignored the industrial mindset which is the real issue. For the last several decades we have been tinkering with the details of content and techniques, but the mindset has never been directly addressed. One cannot overcome the inertia of the mindset by forcing change in the details — rather the mindset will gradually reach in and subvert all these peripheral changes and limit, neutralise or distort their results!



How does the industrial mindset view education? In its perspective, the child is the raw material: thrust him in by force through the gates of the factory called school; inside are the teachers, the machines that chop, twist, grind and shape the child; and then at each step of the assembly line of “grades” numbered one to twelve, you have to test the product. Is this piece properly cut and shaped or is it defective? The mass production assembly line ends in a massive exam, based on an artificial uniformity that crushes the child’s individuality. The “defective” child is marked “failed” and thrown out of the system, a reject of society. Whoever has “passed” has to fit into society like a cog-wheel in a machine. You are designed for a standardised role in life and you must cut off all other interests, stick to this one subject which is your only competence as determined from your marks by a career guide.

What is the end result of this mindset? Through all this machine processing, the humanness is squeezed out of existence. Children are churned out of our schools losing their individuality, happiness and creativity with each passing year. Look at their faces on the day of the exams and you see death — no smiles, no life — only a dead blankness masking fear. After the exam is a violent reaction to freedom... finally I’m free! Students not only throw away the books, they throw away all that they have learnt. I have asked school and college students all over India, “You have just finished an exam a month ago, what do you remember of it?” Everyone says, “Nothing! And I’m glad to have forgotten it all.” Something is fundamentally wrong, isn’t it?

But the effect of the industrial mindset goes further still. The examination system is designed for mass-processing and compels uniformity in all aspects of education — not just ignoring individual variation, but actively suppressing it! Mass evaluation of results is difficult if the criteria for evaluation are subjective. And gradually the emphasis on objective criteria pushes out subjective knowledge and makes the entire content of education focus on objective information alone. When your entire worth is determined by your answers to exam questions, your learning strategy also narrows to whatever is useful to pass exams! You begin to limit yourself to objective information, learn formulas and apply them without bothering to understand what they represent. Teachers try to drill in the information; students seek to learn by repetition. You prepare for tests which asks questions such as, “How many wives did Henry VIII have? Name them!” or “In which year was the first computer invented and what was it called?” As a student, how does this matter to me? Is this the standard you want to set for me, that I must have fourteen wives? Are these the values you are trying to communicate? No, this is just some arbitrary factual information you are required to know, because it is part of your history test, that’s all!

But wait, the industrial mindset seeps deeper still. The school’s reputation is now set by the pass percentage of its students, which depends on how efficiently it can drill in the information. This school charges higher fees because it guarantees 90% pass percentage. In order to ensure that it can live up to that guarantee, it must select only the high-performing students based on past exams, or it must require an additional entrance exam to sift out only those who will be able to meet the demands of its reputation. And the pressure seeps

backwards every year until it reaches ridiculous and inhuman proportions. A recent news item claims that an elite school in Mumbai admits children at kindergarten only after an examination that lasts four hours. In this test, the child is supposed to recite the mathematics tables, name his parents, residential address and phone number, and name the Prime Minister of India. One of the questions that is asked, “Name the spinning object on top of a helicopter.” (In case you don’t know, it is called a “rotor”.) A three-year old child is supposed to know that! What is the point?

If you try to teach mathematical tables at the age of two, you are likely to cause brain damage because the brain is not ready for that kind of activity. At that age the brain is turned towards sensory development. If you force it into abstract thought processes before it is ready for them, then you skip stages of its intermediate development and you can end up with dyslexia! Modern brain scan studies confirm that dyslexia is the result of the brain skipping certain intermediate stages of its processing. More often than not, this is the result of our education forcing the brain to handle abstractions prematurely, instead of following the natural sequence of sensory development. We are making our children sick! There is a worldwide “epidemic” of dyslexia brought about by the perversions that arise inevitably when the industrial mindset is applied to education.

When education is reduced to remembering information, and real learning is pushed out of schools, where does it go? Take a typical student’s daily routine. In his class there are sixty pupils to a teacher, and he can never ask questions. So after school he must go for tuition. The tutor meets the child one-on-one and communicates to him what should have been taught in school in the first place. (Often the tutor is the same teacher who did not teach well in school, now paying more personal attention for additional fees!) This worked well at first, until gradually the very success of tuition classes turned it into big business, with tutors advertising high pass percentages for their wards and taking in more students to earn more money. Now the tuition classes have thirty or more students. While that is still better than the sixty in school, it is not good enough. Nowadays, after three hours of tuition, the student still goes home and says, “Mummy, I still don’t understand this! Please sit with me and explain.” After a gruelling and mostly wasted day, he finally receives some love and understanding as mummy takes the trouble to meet individually and explain as necessary! Effective schooling should mean that a child should never have to approach a tutor outside school. But our industrial system ends up repeating the entire teaching process three times, wasting so much time, energy and money, inflicting needless suffering on children, simply because we did not teach them with proper attention the first time in school.

The resulting pressure of all these perversions on our children is so great that all over the world children are driven to suicide out of stress and fear of exams. A news-magazine recently estimated that about 4’000 children in India commit suicide at exam time every year. But in Japan it is has taken a strange turn — the extreme nature of competition drives *parents* to suicide because their children did not do well in exams. And this cycle repeats every year... every

single year! And it has not changed. Rather the pressures are increasing. Kerala, which is the most literate State in India, has the highest depression and suicide rate in the country. Finland which has one of the best welfare support systems and public education in the world stands also among the highest in suicide rates. A recent study found a close correspondence between literacy rates and suicide rates throughout Europe. These statistics may bode well for the business of psychiatry, but we must face the fact that at least in the field of education, the industrial mindset has done more harm than good.

Instead of trying to correct the many interdependent distortions arising from the industrial mindset, let us set them all aside. Let us rather seek a deeper truth, a new mindset which is innate to the deepest knowing in our hearts.

A Deeper Knowing

There is something deep within us, a place, a state, or a source of inspiration, where we spontaneously know exactly what is right for our children. We have called it the psychic. It is this which we must seek. Those of you who are mothers will recall the doubts and worries that troubled you, "Will I be a good mother? How will I know what to do?" But all that changed in the very first experience after your child was born, when you looked into the eyes of your child. The child gazed at you with such sweetness, tenderness and love that your heart burst open and a flood of love poured out towards him. Until then, you never knew you were capable of such love and self-giving, where your sense of "I" didn't matter any more, where you could pour all that you are into this child. And at that moment you *knew* that you would be all that you had to be to mother him. Who taught you that? The child did! He taught you how to love him. When he looked at you, he taught you how to be a good mother. And thereafter, at every moment, you *knew*; you knew exactly what the child needed. When he is crying and people ask, "Why is he crying?" You say, "He is hungry", or another time, "He is feeling cold", or "It is noisy here." How do you know? The child teaches you! Somewhere within your heart there is a connection of oneness by which you are identified with the child, that is where you *know*. This knowledge is there inherent within all of us: the knowledge of what we need to give the child to nourish and to help him to grow to be himself truly. What is the source of this secret inner knowledge? The Indian civilisation offers us a profound insight.

A Soul in Evolution

India's vision of life and of the child is very different. We look upon the child not as a monkey to be beaten into shape and trained. For us, every child is a soul in evolution, a spark of God, a psychic being come down here on earth in order to grow through experiences. It has come with a deeper sense of purpose; perhaps it has even chosen the broad lines of the growth that it wants to experience. Often it has even chosen the environment and the family where it is born because that will best help to support the growth that it seeks. There is no question of inferiority or superiority in our relationship with the child, for we are as much a soul in evolution as the child is.

Our task then, as teachers, is to relate to this spark of God with love and to serve it. We give ourselves in love, and in that deeper identification our inner being knows what is best for the child. We help him to be whatever his inner being or his psychic being aspires to be; we do not impose our ideas and expectations on him. Our task is to nourish the seed, not to cut and twist and shape. We will pour water, offer fresh air and sunlight, and the plant will bloom as it chooses. It knows whether it has to become a stalk of wheat or a stalk of rice; whether it will bloom to be a beautiful red flower or a tiny pink rose; *it* knows — there within the seed — and we have nothing to worry about.

This deeper and more embracing perspective is the foundation of our new mindset; from this our new approach toward education will flow; we will rebuild the entire edifice of education on this fundamental insight that *every child is a soul in evolution*. As we proceed, we will find that from this one insight all else naturally emerges, down to the details. We will discover that even the most advanced “techniques” of teaching which we may have learnt will emerge spontaneously and flow naturally from this mindset.

With this mindset as our foundation, let us proceed to organise the larger movements and processes of our task of creation, the *Yajna* that is education.

CHAPTER IV

FIVE ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION

“To learn in order to know, to study in order to have the knowledge of the secrets of Nature and of life, to educate oneself in order to increase one’s consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to be master of oneself, to overcome one’s weakness, one’s incapacity and ignorance, to prepare oneself in order to progress in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true...”⁵

The Mother

In any task of creation there are five elements, symbolically represented by earth, water, fire, air, and ether. In education, they can be seen to represent the student, the teacher, the knowledge, the means of communication, and the environment.



The first element, Earth, represents the student. This is the base, the substance and personality which is being moulded, through which the soul in evolution wants to express itself and experience life. The student is like the clay, ready to be moulded, yet the clay has its own intrinsic qualities which must be taken into account. Some clay is more malleable, some harder, some clay is shiny, some dull, some finer and some coarser. Then, there is a unique mould of

personality imprinted on the “clay” which we call *swabhava*, the temperament of the child, which is partly inherited, partly moulded by circumstances, and partly influenced by the soul.

The second element of education is water, representing we, the teachers. The water pours itself into the earth, nourishing the earth, helping it to soften and remould itself the way it wants. Our task is to pour ourselves and nourish the child to help him become truly himself.

The third element is fire, the fire of knowledge which bakes the jar that was moulded by the water out of the earth. The jar cannot hold its content of ambrosia unless it has been baked by the fire of knowledge. It is this third element in education, which bakes the child, preparing and strengthening him

with the fire of knowledge, with its growing intensity — *Tapas* — that burns all impurities and dispels darkness with its intense illumination. Watch what happens after baking: the water evaporates, leaving only the child as he is meant to be.

The fourth element is air, which is the means by which we communicate, transmit or evoke experiences, insights and knowledge in the child. There are principles which govern this communication and several distinct channels through which it can reach out.

The fifth element is ether, the environment in which this whole *Yajna* of education takes place. Although the environment is the most subtle, it is also the most powerful because it moulds us unconsciously bypassing the conscious filters of awareness. But we are almost entirely oblivious of its action and its results.

Let us now dwell upon these five elements of education with our new mindset, and give form to what flows from our heart's inner knowing. All that we will discuss here will not be entirely new to you, and yet it will not be old either. You will find that all that we will "dis-cover" is already there deep within our hearts, only sometimes it is covered up; and the ideas and the forms we will give to them will resonate with that deeper *knowing* within you. Keep in mind always that if something does not resonate with the deeper knowing, then it is probably not true, at least in the form stated. The truth always resonates because deep within us, in the psychic core, the truth is already present as in a seed. But the deeper knowing is normally covered up, and the purpose of our interactions is precisely to help draw it out in the open and let it flow into spontaneous action.

Let us explore each of the five elements of education in the reverse order, beginning with the environment.

Ether, the Environment

The environment consists of three layers: physical, psychological and spiritual, and each moulds us more powerfully than any conscious effort. How? When you try to learn something consciously, the mind's effort itself becomes a kind of filter, a limiting layer. If I ask you to sit down and learn new words to enrich your vocabulary, you will struggle to try to *learn* by heart. By your very effort, the new words remain stuck in the surface conscious mind. But the subconscious mind learns differently. It has no filter — it just soaks up like a sponge. If I leave you in front of TV with a movie channel for just a few minutes, you will find that you can easily repeat all the swear-words that you have just heard. How did that happen? When you watch TV, the conscious mind becomes passive, and the subconscious mind is exposed. All that you watch is just swallowed up, soaked into the subconscious, and later comes up spontaneously. It is absorbed deep within you directly as it does not have to pass through the filter of the conscious mind. Observe people who are watching TV and you will see that their pupils are dilated and their eyes don't blink. These are two standard symptoms of mild hypnosis. Children and adults are in a state of mild hypnosis as they watch TV — clinical hypnosis. It is not just a metaphor I am using. It is a measurable fact. That is why the words that we hear on TV,

good or bad, are learnt so rapidly. We will discuss later how to use the TV and the media as a powerful tool in education, but we must know the negative impact also so that we can compensate for it.

I have used the example of television to demonstrate the power of subconscious learning. Let us now study the three environmental influences that work on us subconsciously.

The Physical Environment

The subconscious soaks just as rapidly from the physical environment. If I grow up in a school where everything is kept dirty, with cobwebs all over, where the desk is scratched and unpainted, where the chairs are broken, that is what I will learn as the standard of living for my life, and that is what will seep in to become the character of my mind, my heart and my actions. Look at a government office which is not well maintained, you will find the people full of inertia. You go to another office, a corporate office or even a government office which has been reorganised as a corporation, where everything is clean, neat, beautiful, and you will find that the people are working efficiently. That is because the physical environment moulds our personality.

Make the classroom beautiful and involve children in the effort. Why should teachers or interior decorators alone beautify it? Let the children experience the joy of changing their environment and making it beautiful. You have all experienced what happens when you clean your own house or room: after you have swept all the dirt and thrown away the garbage you feel clean inside your heart. Again, it is not just an image we are using; it is a concrete psychological experience that we become cleaner inside, our thoughts become clearer, and

our emotions flow more freely. So, get the children to participate in beautifying their classroom and school — not just clean and tidy the place, but actively beautify it! It is not enough to have a slogan advertised on the roads saying, "keep your city green". We see the slogan and then switch off the next moment. But if we have actually *done it*, even once, and experienced the difference, then we will automatically do it thereafter. Mere slogans and advice only lead to hypocrisy.



The Psychological Environment

Consider the psychological and academic ambience of your school and your own class. Are you encouraged to ask questions, to think for yourself, to be creative? Or are you stuck in the suffocating rut of “Do only what you are told, don’t trouble me, don’t ask silly questions”? Unfortunately such is often the character of entire schools, or of teachers in class, or of the manner in which a subject is taught. I knew a teacher who in the very first class would sternly say, “Children, I know you are very mischievous, but I will not tolerate any nonsense in my class.” Instantly the children’s hearts and minds would shut, and for the rest of the year they would consider that class and that subject to be boring. The subconscious message seeping into the children is that learning is a passive process, and that all new learning is painful and laborious. You can see how deeply this negative message has influenced the adult life of most human beings! The system then tries to artificially activate students by a combination of fear and reward, a distorted sense of competition generally imposed through exams.

But a teacher who deliberately provokes you to think, asks you questions, challenges you with new ideas, compels you to find answers, can create a very different environment of a vibrant creativity. And that is the message that seeps into the subconscious. Children learn that it is good to ask questions, that it is good to think by themselves, to be creative, to find their own solutions in life. Learning is then seen as an active and joyous process. Children want to learn for the joy of learning and the growth that it leads to. One does not need to goad them either with fear or with artificial rewards.

The deliberate cultivation of the right psychological and academic atmosphere can make an enormous difference to all activities in the school, including the most casual play.

The Spiritual Atmosphere

The third layer of environmental influence is the spiritual atmosphere, an ambience where there is serenity, joy and beauty, and this too can and should be consciously cultivated. Sometimes it can be given a formal symbol in the activities or in the physical space, often as a centre for meditation or prayer. The physical symbol helps us to connect to the spiritual atmosphere and helps to intensify it. But by whatever means this atmosphere is essential if our intention is to help the child to discover his true self. For the deepest truth of our being is psychic and spiritual, and its emergence needs a supporting atmosphere outside.

There are also the messages that we indirectly and unintentionally communicate to our children — through our behaviour and example — which are the most powerful moulding influences, which we will discuss later when we dwell on the implicit curriculum.

All these three layers of influence represent the ether as an *implicit curriculum*, as opposed to the explicit curriculum which is what you explicitly try to teach. The implicit curriculum is what the child absorbs from what *you do* and what *you are*, not what you teach and what you show.

The Air, the Means of Communication

The next element of education is the air, the means by which we communicate knowledge. Recall that we began with the deeper perception that the child is a soul in evolution. He already is a spark of God, and therefore carries all knowledge within him, like a seed, as a potential. In the seed is the knowledge of how to grow, how to find the sun, how to make the fruit, how to become the flower. So it is in every child. Deep within him is all knowledge as a potential. Not only the knowledge to become himself truly, but also all the knowledge that exists in the universe from the most practical to the most abstract.

Three Principles of Education

Therefore the right way to communicate knowledge is not to try to force it into the child, but to catalyse an awakening of the knowledge that already exists within as a potential. One can even say that knowledge *cannot* be pushed into the child from outside at all. In other words, *nothing can be taught!* This then becomes the first principle of true teaching.

The process of awakening knowledge is necessarily dependent on the nature and temperament of the child. This leads us to the second principle of true teaching, that *the mind must be consulted in its growth*. And finally, there is a natural sequence of the awakening of knowledge and the parts of consciousness in their development. This is formulated in the third principle of true teaching, that we must grow *from the near to the far*. These three principles are like *sutras*, compact formulation of a vast body of knowledge. Their implications can be drawn out and developed much like the tiny compact roll of thread which can be drawn out to unroll for kilometres.

These *sutras* embrace every possible issue in education, and it is my experience that any problem can be solved by referring to these three. These principles and other insights emerge from our deeper understanding of the nature of knowledge and the way it unfolds. We will develop these ideas over the next few chapters.

The Fire of Knowledge

What is this fire of knowledge? Knowledge is something quite different from information. It is more like the awakening of an insight such as when you exclaim, "Aha! I've got it!" How would you represent such an experience in images? A smiling face, a light bulb, the illumination of a flame? These are the images associated with the dawning of knowledge. Even the words we use — "dawning of knowledge" — represent the spread of light. Ignorance is like darkness that covers whatever is around us, and knowledge is like light that reveals all. We experience intuition as a flash of revealing knowledge, like a flash of lightning. All these are images of light! That is why knowledge is always described as a flame. And the flame of knowledge also burns — it burns impurities and makes pure. That is what a flame does: you can feed it anything and it will burn it, and what comes out from the flame is pure. Even the most



dangerous plastics are transmuted into ecologically safe compounds by intense fire.

The burning flame of knowledge dispels darkness, purifies and reveals. It also gives us heat — the intensity of concentration. And it points upwards — symbolising our aspiration. These are profound and powerful symbols describing the true character of knowledge. Traditionally, in India, we are taught that all knowledge preexists, and it is possible for us to open to it and reflect it or even to receive and contain it.

Receiving Knowledge

There is a famous story in one of the Upanishads of a young man who has studied for twenty years. When he comes home, his father (who is a great Rishi) asks him, “What have you studied?” And the young man lists all of the subjects and skills that he has mastered. Then his father asks, “My child, have you learnt that by knowing which all is known?” The son asks, “Is there such a thing? If so, please teach me.” And the rest of the Upanishad contains what his father reveals of this ultimate knowledge. Throughout the ages we have consistently held this idea that all knowledge is pre-existent in some higher state of awareness, and that our relationship to knowledge is that of a receptacle. I am the vessel into which the knowledge is poured, but I must first prepare myself to receive it. We are taught that our mind is in reality a reflector of true knowledge. That is why in the yogic traditions they say, “Your mind is like the agitated surface of a lake. Still your mind so that the sun of knowledge above it can reflect in it without distortion.” There is a deep truth in this. Historically you will find that the greatest discoveries of science have not been thought out, they are “seen”, not created. Knowledge is never created; it is only received or perceived or held as a living experience.

What then is the relationship that we should have with knowledge in order to be able to receive it? The first requirement is humility. Without humility you cannot receive knowledge. If you try to grab knowledge, like you try to grab sand or water, it leaks out of your fingers. If you cup your hands, you can receive and hold the water, and it will not leak



out! So too, knowledge has to be received with humility. The attitude of humility should be in the student as well as in the teacher; otherwise the knowledge does not flow.

By giving knowledge you do not lose it, you also gain. In teaching, you too will grow. This is an interesting characteristic of knowledge. Normally, when you give something away, you lose it. But knowledge grows by giving. It is like a flame lighting another flame. The flame actually grows brighter because each time you give it, you have to present or communicate it differently, and in a sense you rediscover it. That is why one can teach the same subject for years and still find it interesting. Otherwise we would get bored and say, "Replace me with a tape recorder."

Why do we enjoy teaching? Because we are growing while we teach. And our effort should be to kindle the same thirst for knowledge in the child. As we have seen, if this is begun, the rest follows.

Water, the Teacher

We move on to the next element, which is water. Water, represents the teacher, you and I. We are going to dwell on it in detail later on, but for now I will only emphasise the basic approach we take. Teaching is not just a job — it is a sacred task. You can see how important this idea is. I started by saying that it is sacred, but by now you can see how much is involved in it, how important it is to the future of the world, to the child and even to us, as a means of growth and fulfilment. We must keep this in mind and remind ourselves *every day*, because it is easy to forget and we tend to forget. When teaching becomes boring, it is because you have forgotten what it truly is about.

Now, I want you to look back and recall the time when you chose to be a teacher, and recognise why you became a teacher. Why didn't you take a different track? Take your time and feel it, introspect and follow to the source, the deepest urge. What was the deepest compulsion to teach? Some may think, "Well, I could not do what I wanted to do so I took up teaching instead." But I will still ask them to go deeper — why did you take up teaching instead of

any other activity? Somewhere in the chain of events, *you chose* teaching over other options. Why? Try to feel in your heart what was that compulsion. Perhaps you wanted to learn and and share knowledge. Perhaps you wanted to be with children. Perhaps you wanted to share, to give, to grow. Perhaps you wanted to enjoy the togetherness — learning together, playing together. It is a deep impulse, emerging



from somewhere deep within you, from a depth of stillness which is indescribable, but you can feel it. And if that deep impulse is there within you, that is all you need to become an effective teacher. Just as it was with the child who taught you how to love him — he only awakened the impulse which was already there within you. So it is with this seed impulse of why it is that you chose to be a teacher. In it you will find all that you need to be a good teacher.

Relating to the Child

What is the relationship that I should have with the child which will help the flow and the awakening of knowledge? There are three kinds of relationships a teacher can have.

The most obvious and common is the relationship of authority: “I am the boss, you are a minion, you submit to me and obey me entirely!” Like the teacher who said, “Don’t try to fool around in my class.” It is useful sometimes, but on the whole it is more harmful than helpful, because the child’s mind and heart respond by closing up.

If you want to get the child to open like a flower then do what you do to open a flower: you give it soil, water, fresh air and sunlight and the flower blooms in happiness. You must become a friend, a helper, someone the child loves and trusts. This is the ideal relationship.

Unfortunately, sometimes when you are too nice, too helpful, too free with them, children take advantage of you. This is a problem that all the sweet, loving and “nice” teachers face. You are taken advantage of. By the end of the year, your class is in chaos and you can shout at the top of your voice, “Please keep quiet, please don’t shout” but it does not help. Yet, the authoritarian teacher has her class with the same children well in control all through the year! So, is it wrong to be loving? Not at all. To be loving is necessary, even essential, otherwise you are not going to get across to them at all, and there will be no teaching if there is no relationship. The error we make is in our understanding of love. We confuse love with indulgence. As parents also, most of us make the same mistake. Because I love my child I give him whatever he asks for. I cannot say “no” because I love him too much! This is indulgence, not love. True love is when I can deny what he wants when necessary *because* I know that I love him — and I will then deny it *with love*. True love is a love backed by strength. A weak love is not love — it is dependence.

As a nation we are making the same mistake in our foreign policy when we say, “Let us live in peace” from a position of weakness. And no country respects weakness; they all respect strength. It is only when you are strong, when from a position of strength you say, “I don’t depend on you, but because I love you let us work together in peace” that they respect you and reciprocate your love.

The same applies in teaching. I will love always, but I also must know where to draw the line with discipline and behaviour. When children cross that line, I can immediately say *with love* and without anger, “No, in this class we are not going to do this” and children will appreciate you for this. I learnt this the hard way. The first three or four years of my teaching, I had my classes going out of control within six months and I didn’t know what I was doing wrong. At the end of

the year, I would give them a report card to fill out describing how I was as a teacher. The consistent response from them was, “You must be more strict with us” or “Please enforce discipline.” They know it, they want it, they need it, and they respect you when you give it to them with love! Disciplining cannot be with anger but with a loving firmness. We will discuss how to develop the class and school discipline, and the intricacies of the psychology of disciplining children later on. For now, we are just establishing the relationship of friendship in a free and open flow.

I remember one of our best maths teacher in our school. He began teaching mathematics in an unusual way. He was told by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, “You have to teach maths.” He replied, “But I am not good in maths, how can I teach it?” She told him, “I see this potential within you, and I want you to teach.” This teacher went to the students and said, “You see, I know as little of maths as you do. So we will all learn together.” To this day, after the thirty or forty years that he has been teaching, he is still the most interesting mathematics teacher because of this attitude, and this relationship which he continues with the students. He has retained the same attitude through the years — he is still a student. When an innovative student comes up with something new, he says, “Wonderful, I didn’t think of that!” He is a friend, a co-learner, a guide. If nothing can be taught, this is the only meaningful relationship we can have.

There is a third relationship possible. The first was one of authority, the second was one of friendship, and there is a third which you can apply very rarely, and that is when *you* become the child. When a little child is telling you, “You know... I’ve learnt this... I know this ... I do that...” and you listen in wonder as if you did not know and were hearing for the first time, at that moment he is the teacher and you become the child. And you will find something unusual happening: the child comes into his own, almost as an adult, and shares with you something deep within him. Sometimes he opens himself fully to his most vulnerable core, and at that point you may be in a position to plant a seed, a word of encouragement, a gesture, a look, or an appreciation. The seed planted at that moment can influence or determine the entire course of his life. We know

of cases where children have changed completely from a single event. One example comes to mind of how a young girl took to higher maths. As you know, women generally don’t pursue maths too far. This young girl was considered to be poor in maths class and used to daydream all the time. One day, the teacher called her and said, “I find that you can do very well in maths. I want you to sit next to me, right up in



front.” The child received the personal contact with the teacher, and so paid more attention, and that was all that was needed. She scored highest in the next exam. From then on maths was the most interesting subject for her. What made this possible? The personal connection, and the implanting of a seed through that. This is our *real* task as teachers. All else follows.

Think of your favourite teachers in childhood. You will find there was one teacher who was able to touch you deeply in some way, sometimes merely by example. And that influence has stuck and even determined your teaching style today. You too will have occasions like that, not too many perhaps, but they will come. Be conscious and catch those opportunities.

These are the three kinds of relationships in which the knowledge flows. The binding element of all three relationships is love. Love is the basis on which knowledge will flow. Love is the basis of our relationships. But this love is not a weakness. It is not bound. It is detached. It knows what is right and acts decisively, always with love. Love is utter self-giving, when you pour yourself, all that you have, all that you are, into your child, the student, the earth.

Earth, the Student

The last element is the earth, the child. We are now going to undergo a paradigm shift. We have already redefined the paradigm of education; now let us redefine the paradigm of the child himself. Yes, we have seen that the child is a soul in evolution, we have discussed which parts we need to address, and to some extent how to address them, but now we must consider what is the priority of the content that we will teach the child.

But before we take this up, I will ask you one question: all that you have studied so far in your whole life, the content of all the year-end exams that you have prepared for, for weeks and months and years of your life, what is it that you remember from all those studies? How much of what you mugged up remains with you in the rest of your life? Nothing at all? Almost all of the students that I have asked this question, often soon after the exam, have replied that they remember nothing at all. How useful were those studies and those exams for the real life that you faced afterwards? Tell me in percentage. Five percent? Ten percent? The fact is that the bulk of what you are and what you know today has been learnt *after* completing your formal studies! You came into your own afterwards. You really discovered what you are capable of doing only after you stopped formal studies and entered real life. Then we can ask, was all that you learnt in formal studies wasted? It was not. It left you with something very important. You may have forgotten the *content* of the studies, but the *training* of the studies has moulded your character and developed your capacities and your faculties. This is the invaluable and lasting result of your studies! Let us elaborate.

Faculty development

Your capacity to think clearly has grown from certain types of activities — mathematics, logic, philosophy. Your perspective of the world has developed from the time spent in geography, history and science classes. Your self-

confidence has grown through the games you played, from theatre, the presentations you made, the discussions and debates. Your ability to communicate has developed from specific activities. What remains with us are the *faculties* of personality that we have developed, not the content of information or subjects that we prepared for. If this is what really matters ultimately, then why bother with the rest? Does it matter to you that you do not remember your differential calculus, or your algebra, or the name of the longest river? Mostly it does not. What matters is that the *capacity*, the *faculties* that are involved, have developed within you and are with you for life. In real life, if you have to apply it, you can pick up a good book, and with a few minutes of practice recover the easy use of that presently rusted capacity! The capacity is still within you, developed but in disuse. Even if you have forgotten the details you can get it back today.

So, what is the lesson for us? That it is not the subjects you learn that matter, but the faculties that you develop. So we are going to make a huge shift of perspective: faculty development first. Subjects are only as useful as they can help to develop these faculties!

We will consciously focus on training faculties, and in order to support faculty development, we will bring in any subject that we want. We will not worry too much about the content of information, but focus rather on the ability to handle the information. Some kinds of information may seem important; you must know the states of your country, some dates or names for sure, but if for some reason you did not learn them, it is not a big deal. The important point is that through whatever you have learnt you should have developed the faculties that were necessary *for that age*.

Interestingly, we find that whatever faculty we may choose, we can develop it through any subject. For example, my capacity for observation can be trained through language, mathematics, biology or painting. Or rational thinking, though developed more easily through mathematics, can be just as well developed through grammar analysis or perspectives in drawing. In principle, any faculty can be trained through any subject, and any subject can be used to train all faculties. Obviously certain subjects are more conducive to training certain faculties. But in principle we can be free from all considerations of subject and focus entirely on faculties. This is a very important change we are going to make in all our classes. It is the massive paradigm shift that we introduce when considering the child's needs. When I plan my class content I am going to plan for which faculties to focus on irrespective of the subject.

As an example, let us look at some of basic faculties that have to be developed in a child in sequence — because there is a natural sequence of their interdependence and their enfoldment as we grow up. My faculty of abstract thought is not effective if the faculty of observation is not trained. If I did not register the factual information correctly, where is the question of making a correct logical deduction from it? Fortunately, Nature leads the child to develop his faculties in their natural sequence. We find that the faculty which is most important for a child at his age is also the faculty that is the most interesting for him at that time of his life! This is the clue for us in answer to the question, “How

do I know when to focus on a specific faculty?” Observe the child’s natural interest and follow it. The instinct of Nature in the child leads us always with sure steps.

Observation

First is the faculty of observation by which we know our world, and this is developed very early, although we must consciously train it to its full potential. There are many ways to train it. We can train to observe through all five senses, not just one. When we say “observe”, we think of



observing through the eyes only. Did you hear? Did you pay attention? You just touched the table cloth — did you notice whether the cloth was rough or smooth? Did you notice the distinctive smell of the room when you entered it? All these are part of the training, because any one observation through one sense nourishes and helps develop observation through the other senses. Train all five, and you will take all five to their peak.

The training of observation also includes inter-sensory connections and fine motor skills. For example, your sight provokes responses in your hearing; and the same nervous channels used in sensory training are also used in motor control and help develop the awareness of the body, nerves, muscles, balance, harmony and beauty. More on this later.

Comparison

What is the next natural step when you have observed many things? You compare them and notice similarities and differences. Noticing similarities and differences sounds so basic when I mention it. Isn’t it obvious that one would notice them? Perhaps on larger issues, but rarely in details. Training your observation to notice similarities and differences in details make an enormous difference to the effective use of your logical faculties. Without it, you can easily come to wrong logical conclusions. This is a game that is played all the time by the news media today. They pull up an event that took place 50 years ago and compare it with an event that is taking place now and draw wrong but logical-sounding conclusions. Actually there is no fair comparison because of certain differences in the situations that are ignored completely; equally, similarities in completely different situations are forgotten. So we have to develop both sides of comparison: differences and similarities. You can develop it with flash cards or visual games, or you can take a walk in the garden observing the different types of leaves. You can do it in many ways, through many fun activities.

Association

Following observation and comparison comes the faculty of association: this reminds me of that. The power of association too needs to be trained, otherwise the knowledge and experiences from the past cannot be made valuable for the present. Let us take an example of how this chain proceeds: I smell smoke; at once there is an association with other experiences of smoke including smoke from cooking and smoke from burning wood. There is a rapid filtering of associations by comparison, and finally the logical faculty eliminates some and decides whether there is any danger.



It is obvious now that observation, comparison and association are all three essential for the more abstract faculty of the intellect to come to the right conclusions. There are other faculties which we will discuss later.

Layers of the Mind

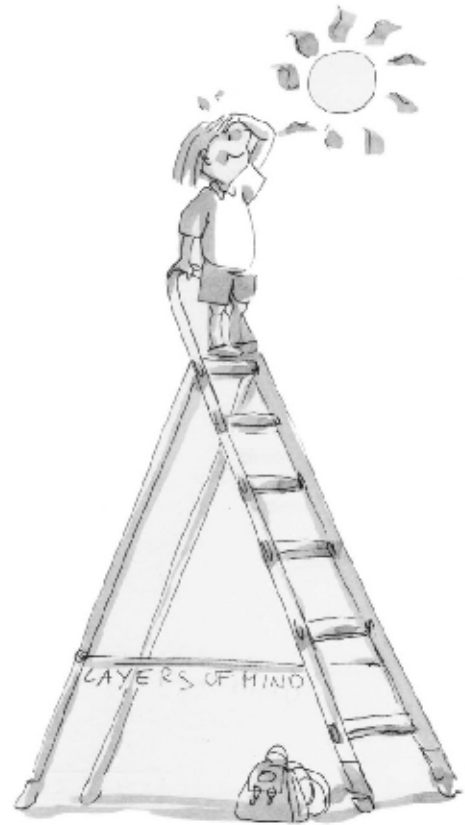
There are distinct layers of the mind which deal with these different kinds of operations, and we have specific terms to describe them. These are useful to know in order to better understand the mental training.

Chitta: the Mental Substance

The lowest layer of the mind is what we call the *chitta*, the substance of which the mental awareness is made of. It is this which holds all the impressions that come into your mind as a memory. The substance is extremely plastic. It can take impressions of all the events that happen in your life and there is an automatic subconscious memory which records everything that happens. Our problem is when our intellect tries to search for a specific memory and cannot always find it. Our conscious memory is not very effective; but our subconscious memory is automatic and perfect. If I asked you, "How many steps have you taken since you woke up this morning?" You will surely not know. But if I put you under hypnosis and ask your subconscious mind how many steps you took, it will say exactly 516 (or whatever) because every single detail of what happened to you is automatically registered in the subconscious memory of the *chitta*. When we speak of a poor memory, we mean by it the conscious memory that has to access the subconscious memory and pull out information. It depends on the clarity and calm of the *chitta*. Stilling the mind makes it more capable of observation as well as recalling precisely in detail. So it is in the *chitta* that the basic memory of observation is held.

Manas: the Sense Mind

The next layer is the *manas* which is the sense mind, the mind turned to sensory experience, living by it and in it. What does it do? From the observation it makes a comparison, association, orders, and organises and even throws up sense-driven and sense-dependent thoughts. Let us follow its working as you wake up from sleep, which is the time when the sense mind is most dominant. At first you feel only sensations: you feel hot or cold. Then this throws up a sensory emotion, you are comfortable or uncomfortable. Your logic is not yet operational, just the senses throwing up an idea of discomfort. Then a crude logic comes in and asks why. It commands the senses to look and listen and concludes from their observations and related associations, "Oh, the fan has stopped! Why is that? Oh, there is a power failure!" You see how that comes later. All of this sense-based thought process takes place in the *manas*. The sensory logic of *manas* acts as a first filter taking information to the next layer of mind which does the real thinking.



Buddhi: the Intellect

This third layer of the mind is the *buddhi*, the intellect proper. This is the part of the mind which is self-aware. In the lower layers there is sensory awareness, but not self-awareness. That is why, when you wake up from sleep, at first you are not aware of yourself as a self-conscious person — you know yourself only by your sensations. The experience of "I am thinking" only happens when you are fully awake. Then you can say, "Oh, I am thinking, but my thoughts are confused right now." This is the part of the mind that can stand back from itself, observe itself, and even change itself! No other creature on earth, apart from humans, has this ability. It is this self-awareness that makes us capable of changing ourselves and exceeding our own limitations. Its development is therefore of crucial importance for us.

How do we know that other animals do not have self-awareness? By a simple experiment: place the animal in front of a mirror. Most animals think that the mirror image is someone else because they live only in the sense-mind! The more sophisticated animals recognise that it is not someone else, but an image somehow connected with them. But they cannot see themselves in it as we do. How can we test that? You put a spot on the animal's tail and then put it in front of the mirror. When it sees the spot on the image of the tail, the self-aware animal will immediately turn to look at its own tail because the sense of "I-ness" is there and it identifies the image with itself. There are only three creatures

which can do that: the chimpanzee, the dolphin and the human being. No other animal has it. This is such a precious gift. But neither the chimpanzee nor the dolphin has it to the extent that they can think for themselves, "I want to change myself. I want to learn better. I want to concentrate. My mind is not clear today, and so I am going to will myself to become more clear and concentrated." It is the *buddhi* that makes us capable of conscious and unending progress.

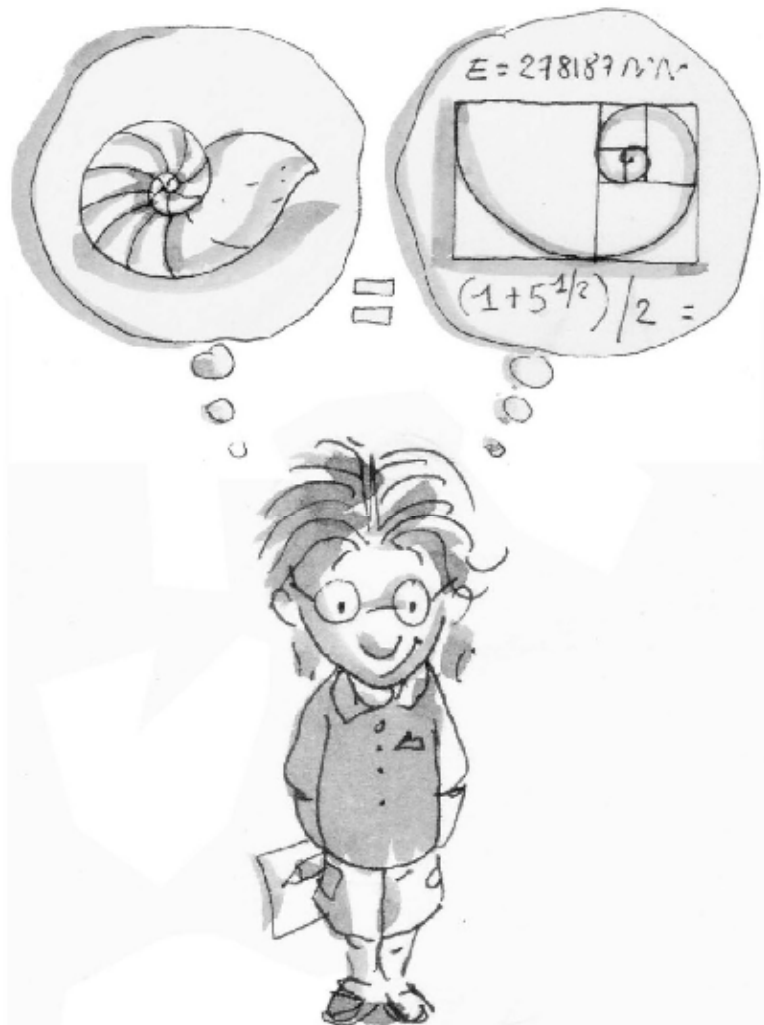
The Two Brains

The *buddhi* has two branches of faculties which are identified with the biological divisions of the left and right brains. The left brain is primarily analytic, while the right brain is primarily synthetic. The left brain handles numbers, quantities, grammar, logic, structure, information, analysis. The right brain handles meaning, feeling, understanding, intuition, comprehension, imagination, creativity, synthesis. The left brain divides information to study it. The right brain unites it all in order to understand.

Which is more important? If you do not have the power of comprehension and creativity, life will stagnate in a repetition of old information and habits. There is no question of progress. That is why the right brain is called the master of knowledge. It knows the oneness of knowledge. The left brain cuts up experiences into smaller and smaller pieces, to acquire knowledge over details.

The left brain is the one that expresses what the right brain knows. That is why it is called the servant of knowledge.

Modern education emphasises the left brain faculties almost exclusively. Naturally our knowledge will be fragmented and defective. You will find that most extraordinary people have the right brain faculties equally developed. But what happens if only the right brain is developed? I would be a great poet with great inspiration but I would not be able to express them well because my vocabulary and logical skills would be poor; I would have no clarity in the expression of my thoughts. What is the use? We want to develop both sides and harmonise



their complementary working.

Let me show you how sharply different the functioning of these two halves is. For certain kinds of epileptic patients, doctors control their illness by cutting the link between the left and the right brains, so that the two brain halves now function separately. If such a person is asked to look at a photograph in the laboratory with his right eye (connected to the left brain) and asked, "What do you see?" He says, "I see a sun, a tree, and some water." He is asked, "Do you like it? What do you feel?" He replies, "I do not know." The same person looks at the same photo with his left eye (connected to the right brain), and is once again asked: "What do you see?" His reply, "Oh! It is so beautiful!" He is asked, "What does the photo contain?" He replies, "I do not know." The two operations are so distinct! Therefore it is necessary to train both halves of the brain separately and deliberately. However, that alone is not enough. You then have to harmonise the two so that your consciousness flows seamlessly from experience to expression, from observation to insight. Right to left, left to right. The connecting bridge in between also has to be trained.

Let me tell you a secret: nature has already made that in-between bridge larger for women than for men. That is one of the reasons why women are more expressive of their emotions and are able to empathise and understand others' emotions more easily. They are also supposed to have a better functioning of intuition which we call "women's instinct" or "women's intuition". They just *know* things. Men do not have it as much to begin with. But men, having a smaller bridge between left and right brain, have far more interconnections in this link. So they tend to rationalise things much more and are less easily swept away by their emotions, but they also tend to be less spontaneously communicative of their emotions.

But with training both can acquire the full harmonisation of left and right brains. As things are, women tend to lose the rational element, which would come by limiting the bridge between the left and right brains, and men tend to lose on the emotional and rich sensory experience of life, which comes from widening that bridge. By conscious training you are able to widen the bridge and yet limit its scope at will, as needed by the situation. So train the left brain, train the right brain, and harmonise the working of both! This is necessary if you want a complete development. A genius is one who has actually done all three. And all of us can potentially do it.

This operation of the left and right brains harmonised together is what we call the *buddhi*, the intellect. In modern studies we tend to categorise the intelligence into seven different types. It is useful for our understanding and study, but I do not think the categorisation of seven is crucial, because the intellect and its intelligence is one. The so-called "types" of intelligence only represents facets of expression of the same faculty of *buddhi*, and we will discuss them in detail later.

The Fourth Layer

There is a fourth layer of mind above the *buddhi* which is the part of the mind which opens spontaneously to intuition and higher operations of knowledge. It is

from there that creative inspirations flow down. All creative people begin with an insight, a reception of some intuition from above. It is then organised, formulated and expressed by the rest of the mind. Whether you are a scientist, musician, leader, or teacher, it is this fourth layer that gives you the intuitive insight and, with a harmonised brain expressing it, makes you a genius. Therefore it is possible for each one of us to develop our higher genius potential, and take our possibilities to their extreme and even cross beyond the human limit. This is what we should all aspire to achieve. How we can proceed to develop this potential will be the theme of a later discussion.