

ILLNESS & PERFECT HEALTH

Compiled by Vijay from the writings of
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother



Sri Aurobindo Society

AUROPUBLICATIONS

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Yoga in Everyday Life – Booklet Series

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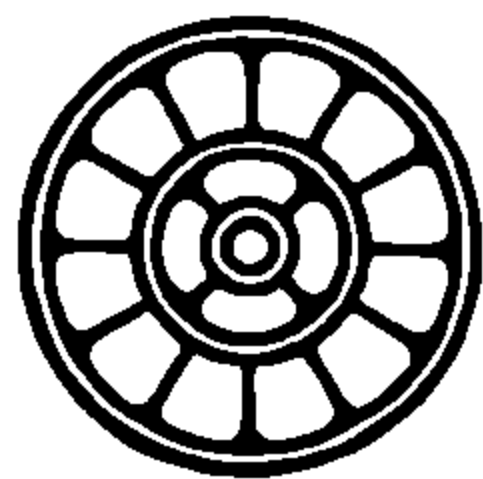
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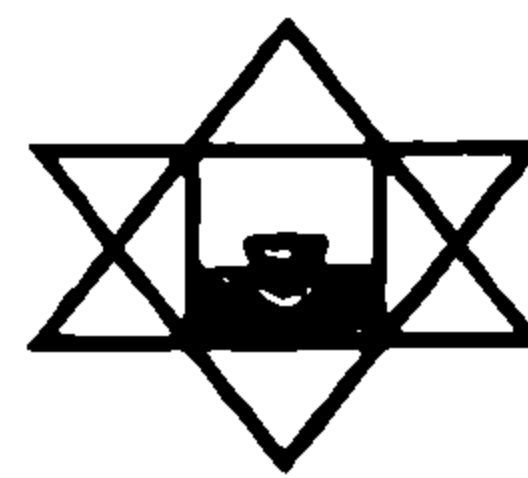
This is one in a series of thirty booklets published by the Sri Aurobindo Society under the title "Yoga in Everyday Life". Our effort is to bring together, from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, simple passages with a practical orientation on specific subjects, so that everyone may feel free to choose a book according to his inner need. The topics cover the whole field of human activity, because true spirituality is not the rejection of life but the art of perfecting life.

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, in its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to be faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We hope these booklets will inspire the readers to go to the complete works and will help them to mould their lives and their environment towards an ever greater perfection. The quotations from Sri Aurobindo are prefaced by his symbol and those from the Mother by her symbol.



The Mother's



Sri Aurobindo's

"O TRUTH, COME, MANIFEST."

“आयाहि सत्य आविर्भव”

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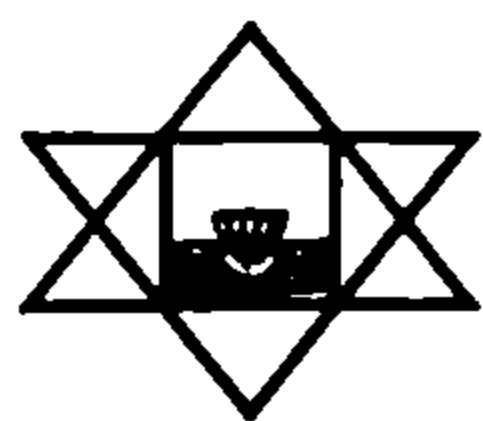
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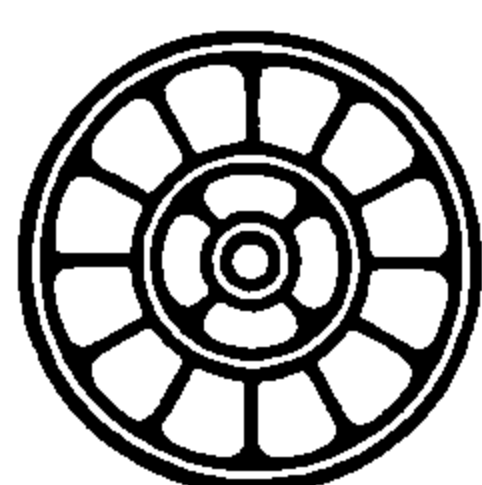
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ILLNESS AND YOGA



All disease is a means towards some new joy of health, all evil and pain a tuning of Nature for some more intense bliss and good, all death an opening on widest immortality. Why and how this should be so, is God's secret which only the soul purified of egoism can penetrate.

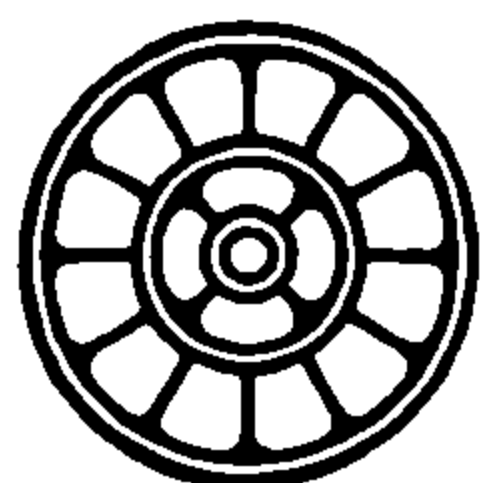
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All illnesses are attacks from adverse forces (that is what I call mischief) to test our endurance and try to break down our faith – We must answer to them by more endurance and more faith – thus they go away badly defeated and it makes a Victory for the Truth.

The more we endure the more is the Force and the Love of the Lord are with us and the greater is the joy of the Victory.

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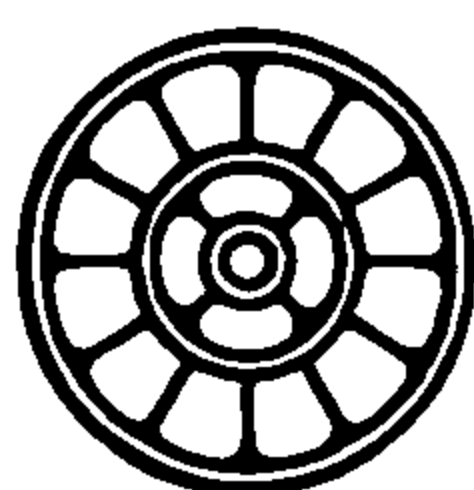
Are illnesses tests in the Yoga?

Tests? Not at all.

You are given an illness purposely to make you progress? Surely it is not like that. That is, you may turn the thing round and say that there are people whose aspiration is so constant, whose goodwill so total that whatever happens to them they take as a trial on the path to make progress. I knew people who, whenever they fell ill, took that as a proof of the Divine Grace to help them to progress. They told themselves: it is a good sign, I am going to find out the cause of my illness and I shall make the necessary progress. I knew a few of this kind and they moved on magnificently. There are others, on the contrary, who, far

from making use of the thing, let themselves fall flat on the ground. So much the worse for them. But the true attitude when one is ill, is to say: "There is something that is not all right; I am going to see what it is." You must never think that the Divine has purposely sent an illness, for that would truly be a very wicked Divine!

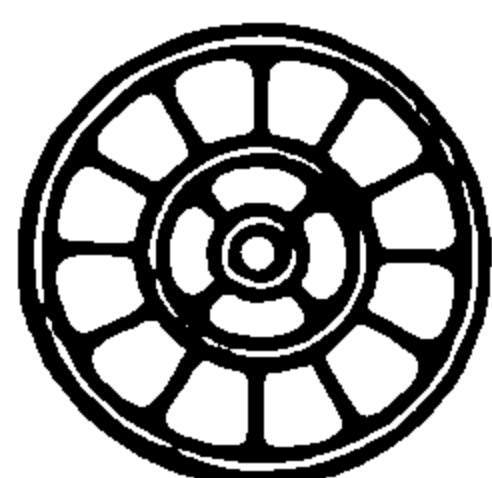
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But are not illnesses sometimes the result of microbes and not a part of the movement of the Yoga?

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

★



...if someone falls seriously ill, is this a purely physical phenomenon or is it a difficulty in his spiritual life?

That depends on the person! If it is someone who is doing yoga, it is quite obviously a difficulty in his spiritual life. If it is somebody who is not at all engaged in yoga and who lives an ordinary life in the most ordinary manner, it is an ordinary accident. It depends absolutely on the person. The outer phenomena may be similar, but the inner causes are absolutely different. No two illnesses are alike, though labels are put on diseases and attempts made to group them; but in fact every person is ill in his own way, and his way depends on what he is, on his state of consciousness and the life he leads.

We have often said that illnesses are always the result of a disturbance of equilibrium, but this disturbance can occur in completely different states of being. For the ordinary man whose consciousness is centred in the physical, outer life, it is a purely physical disturbance of equilibrium, of the functioning of the different organs. But when behind this purely superficial life, an inner life is being fashioned, the causes of illness change; they always become the expression of a disequilibrium between the different parts of the being: between the inner progress or effort and the outer resistances or conditions of one's life, one's body.

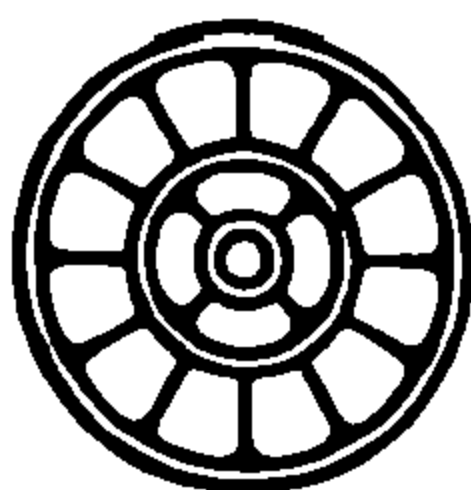
Even from the ordinary external point of view, it has been recognised for a very long time that it is a fall in the resistance of the vitality due to immediate moral causes which is always at the origin of an illness. When one is in a normal state of equilibrium and lives in a normal physical harmony, the body has a capacity of resistance, it has within it an atmosphere strong enough to resist illnesses: its most material substance emanates subtle vibrations which have the strength to resist illnesses, even diseases which are called contagious – in fact, all vibrations are contagious, but still, certain diseases are considered as especially contagious. Well, a man who, even from the purely external point of view, is in a state in which his organs function

harmoniously and an adequate psychological balance prevails, has at the same time enough resistance for the contagion not to affect him. But if for some reason or other he loses this equilibrium or is weakened by depression, dissatisfaction, moral difficulties or undue fatigue, for instance, this reduces the normal resistance of the body and he is open to the disease. But if we consider someone who is doing yoga, then it is altogether different, in the sense that the causes of disequilibrium are of a different nature and the illness usually becomes the expression of an inner difficulty which has to be overcome.

So each one should find out for himself why he is ill.

SOME SPECIFIC ILLNESSES

Digestion



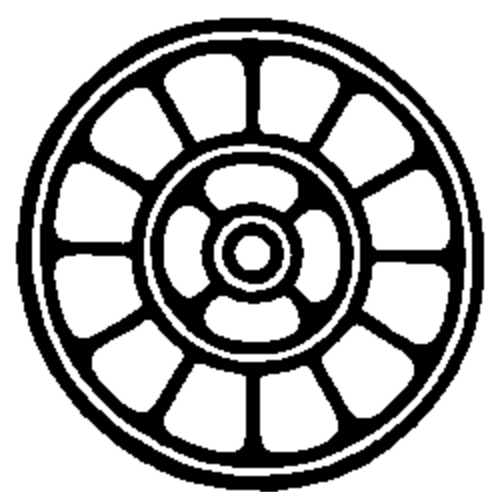
*Be benevolent if you want to have a good digestion.
(From the Dhammapada)*

One piece of advice given here is that one should always be kind. It should not be mistaken for the sort of advice people normally give. It says something interesting, even very interesting. My comment is: Always be kind and you will be free from suffering, always be contented and happy, and you will radiate your quiet happiness.

Be always kind, come out of all bitter criticism, see no more evil in everything, obstinately force yourself to see nothing but the kind Presence of the Divine Grace and you will see not only within you but around you an atmosphere of quiet joy, peaceful trust, luminous hope spreading more and more and not only will you feel happy and quiet yourself but the major part of your bodily disorders will disappear.

It is particularly noticeable that all the digestive functions are extremely sensitive to an attitude that is critical, bitter, full of ill-will, to a sour judgment. Nothing disturbs the functioning of the digestion more than that. And it is a vicious circle: the more the digestive function is disturbed, the more unkind you become, critical, dissatisfied with life and things and people. So you can't find any way out. And there is only one cure: to deliberately drop this attitude, to absolutely forbid yourself to have it and to impose upon yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness. Just try and you will see that you feel much better.

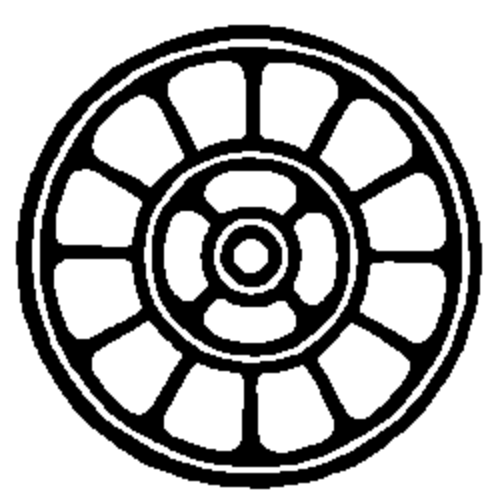
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(To someone suffering from stomach and intestinal trouble)

It is due to restlessness and agitation. What is the matter? Bring down peace, the *Divine Peace*, in your stomach and it will be all right.

Sunstroke



I have known some truly extraordinary instances. If you can at the moment... Wait, take an example which is quite concrete: sunstroke. This upsets you considerably, it is one of the things which makes you most ill – a sunstroke upsets everything, it disturbs the inner functions, it generally causes a congestion in the head and very high fever. So, if this has happened, if it has succeeded in getting through the protection and entering you, well, if you can just go into a quiet place, stretch yourself out flat, go out of your body (naturally, you must learn this; there are people who do this spontaneously, for others a long discipline is necessary), go out of your body, remain above in a way to be able to see the

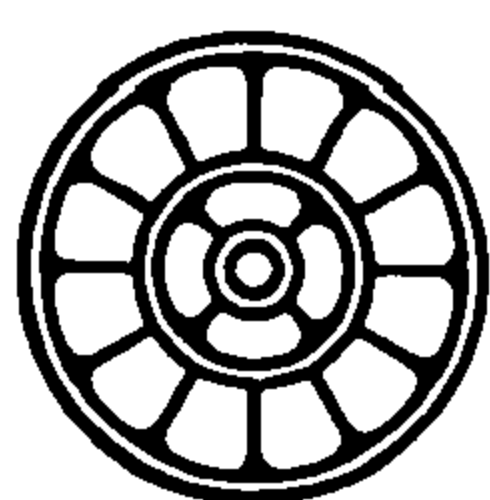
body (you know the phenomenon, seeing one's body when one is outside? this can be done at will, going out of one's body and remaining just above it), the body is stretched out on a bed, a bench, on the ground, anywhere; you are stretched just above it and from there, consciously, you pull the Force from above, and if you are used to doing it, if your aspiration is strong enough, you get the answer; and then, from there, taking care not to re-enter your body, you begin to push these forces into the body, like that, regularly, until you see the body receiving them (for the first few moments they don't enter, because the body is quite upset by the illness, it is not receptive, it is curled up), you push them gently, gently, quietly, without nervousness, very peacefully, into the body. But you must not be disturbed by anyone. If someone comes along, sees you stretched out and shakes you, it is extremely dangerous. You must do this in quiet conditions, ask people not to disturb you or better shut yourself up where they can't disturb you. But you can concentrate slowly (this takes more or less time – ten minutes, half an hour, one hour, two hours – it depends upon the seriousness of the disorder which has set in), slowly, from above, you concentrate the Force until you see that the body is receiving, that the Force is entering, the disorder is being set right and there is a relaxation in the body itself. Once that is done you can get back and you are cured. This has been done for a sunstroke, which is a fairly violent thing, and also for typhoid fever, and many other illnesses, as, for instance, for a liver which was suddenly upset somehow (not due to indigestion, but a liver which doesn't function properly for the moment); it may also be cured in the same way. There was a case of cholera which was healed like that. The cholera had just been caught, had entered, but was not yet lodged; it was completely cured. Consequently, when I say that if one masters the spiritual force and knows how to use it, there is no malady which cannot be cured, I don't say it just like that in the air; it is said from experience with the thing. Of

course, you will say you don't know how to go out of the body, draw the Force, concentrate it, have all this mastery.... It is not very frequent, but it is not impossible. And one can be sure that if one is helped... In fact, there is a much easier method, it is to call for help.

But the condition in every case – in every case – whether one does it oneself and depending only on oneself or whether one does it by asking someone to do it for one, the first condition: not to fear and to be calm. If you begin to boil and get fidgety in your body, it is finished, you can do nothing.

For everything – to live the spiritual life, heal sickness – for everything, one must be calm.

Headache and Giddiness

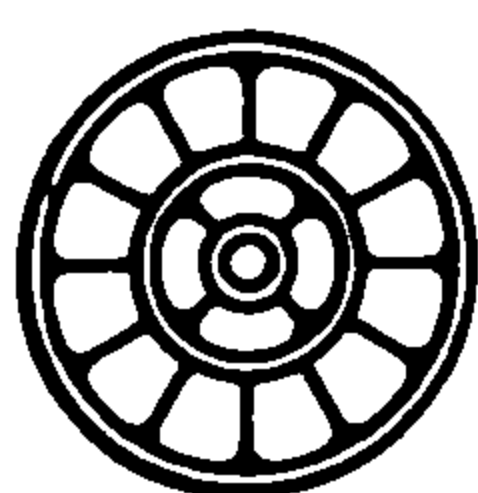


... if ever you have a headache I advise you to do this: to take the thought-force, the mental force – and even if you can draw a little of your vital force, that too – and make it come down, like this (*gesture of very slowly sliding both hands from the top of the head downwards*). Well, if you have a headache or a congestion if you have caught a touch of the sun, for instance, indeed if anything has happened to you, well, if you know how to do this and bring down the force here, like this, here (*showing the centre of the chest*) or even lower down (*showing the stomach*), well, it will disappear. It will disappear. You will be able to do this in five minutes. You can try, the next time you have a headache. . . . I hope you won't have a headache but the next time you have it, try this. Sit upright, like this (*movement showing an āsana posture*). The Japanese say you should sit on your heels – but that might disturb your meditation, sitting like that – they call it sitting at ease. The Indian fashion is like this (*gesture*), other-

wise you must sit like this (*gesture*); this is harder when you are not accustomed to it.

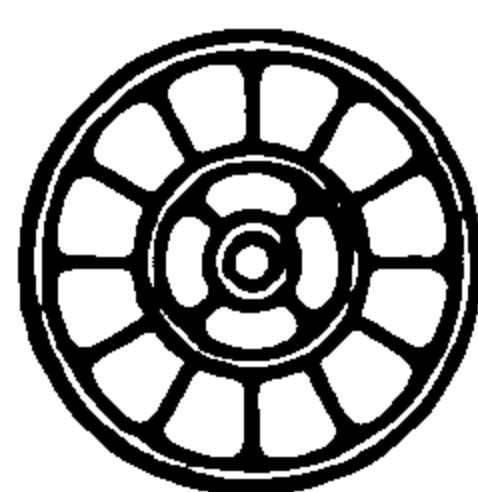
So, sit quite at ease and then take all your force as though you were taking, you see... all the energy in your head, take it and then make it come down, down, down, like this, slowly, very carefully, right down here, down to the navel. And you will see that your headache will disappear. I have made the experiment many times.... It is a very good remedy, very easy; there is no need to take pills or injections; it gets cured in this way. So there you are!

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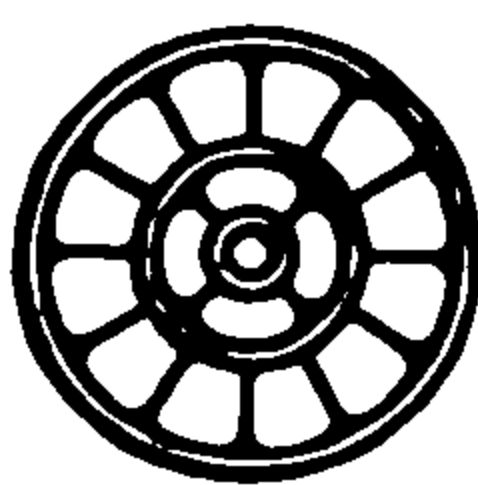
It is not very difficult to get rid of headache and giddiness. However bad your condition may be, call the light from above. Try to feel that the light is entering into you from the crown of your head bringing with it calm and peace. If you do it seriously, your headache and giddiness will disappear in no time.

Tumours and Cancer



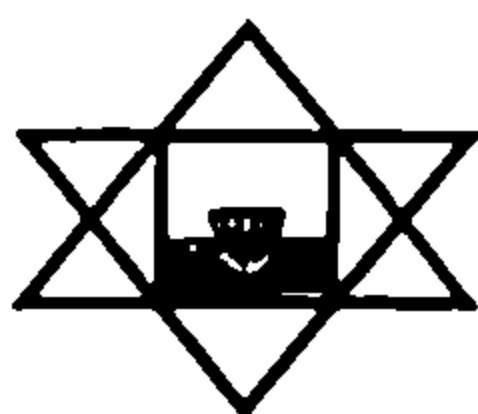
Tumours always indicate some difficulty in the nature; certain cells decide to be independent of the discipline of the body. They do not remain in harmony with the other parts and begin to grow out of all proportion. Generally this is the result of a very strong greed in the nature. It may be greed for material things or for power or any other subtle object.

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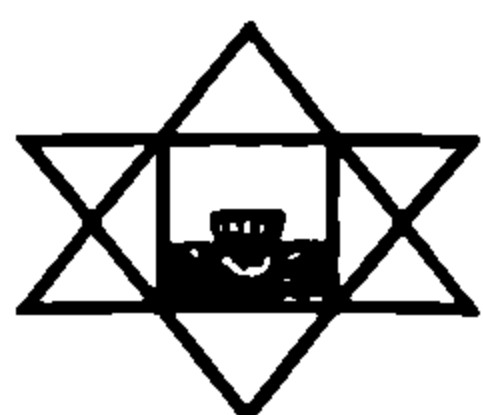
The cells of the body get the habit of increasing without cause. This is cancer. If you change the consciousness in the cells and get rid of their habit, cancer can be cured.

MEDICINES



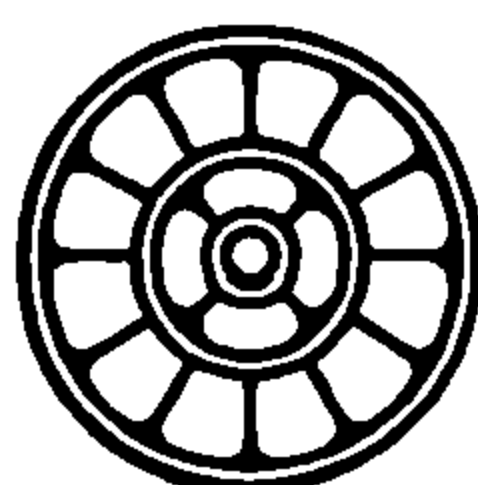
Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.

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

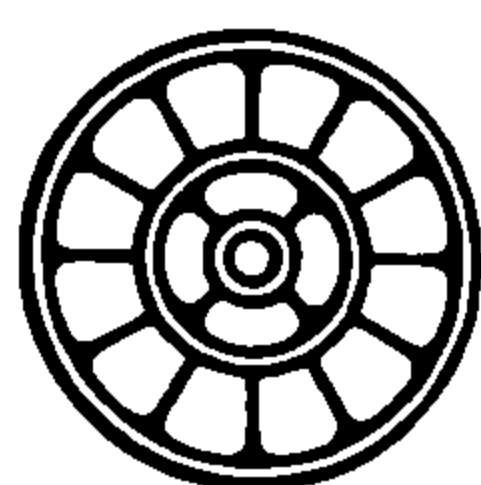
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...about medical knowledge in the world: if you have studied enough or lived long enough, that is, a fairly good number of years, you will find that with the same authority, the same certitude, the same conviction, at one time certain things are not only considered bad, but on the basis of an absolute knowledge, an unquestionable observation, they are reputed to have a certain effect, and at another time these very unquestionable observations lead to diametrically opposite results. Very often I give an example which I happened to observe, especially as regards the value of certain foods and their effects on the body, like certain fruits or vegetables: at a particular time in medical history – not so long ago, about fifty or sixty years ago – when you had a certain illness, the doctor gave you a list of things recommending to you with absolute seriousness not to touch any of these lest you become even more ill... Well, about these very same things, fifty or sixty years later, not the same doctor perhaps but another one will tell you with the same seriousness, the same unquestionable certitude

and authority that these are the very things you must eat if you want to be cured! So if you have observed things pretty well and have a slightly critical mind, you can tell yourself, "Oh! it must depend on people or perhaps on the period." And I shall tell you, as the doctor-friend I knew in France forty or fifty years ago used to tell all his patients, "Take a remedy while it is in fashion, for then it will cure you."

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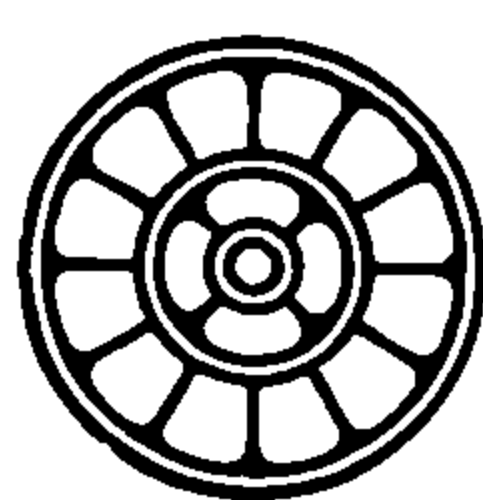
In most cases the use of medicines – within reasonable limits, that is, when one doesn't poison oneself by taking medicines – is simply to help the body to have confidence. It is the body which heals itself. When it wants to be cured, it is cured. And this is something very widely recognised now; even the most traditional doctors tell you, "Yes, our medicines help, but it is not the medicines which cure, it is the body which decides to be cured." Very well, so when the body is told, "Take this", it says to itself, "Now I am going to get better", and because it says "I am going to get better", well, it is cured!

In almost every case, there are things which help – a little – provided it is done within reasonable limits. If it is no longer within reasonable limits, you are sure to break down completely. You cure one thing but catch another which is usually worse. But still, a little help, in a way, a little something that gives confidence to your body: "Now it will be all right, now that I have taken this, it is going to be all right" – this helps it a great deal and it decides to get better and it is cured.

There too, there is a whole range of possibilities, from the yogi who is in so perfect a state of inner control that he could take poison without being poisoned to the one who at the least little scratch rushes to the doctor and needs all sorts of special

drugs to get his body to make the movement needed for its cure. There is the whole possible range, from total, supreme mastery to an equally total bondage to all external aids and all that you absorb from outside – a bondage and a perfect liberation. There is the whole range. So everything is possible. It is like a great key-board very complex and very complete, on which one can play, and the body is the instrument.

HOW TO FACE PAIN



You may have been told that certain bodily complaints will give you a great deal of pain. Things like that are often said. You then make a formation of fear and keep expecting the pain. And the pain comes even when it need not.

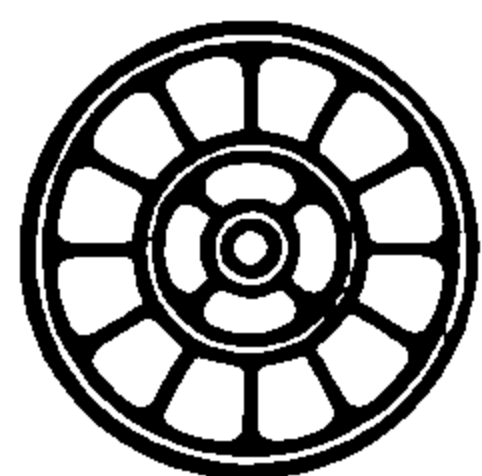
But in case it is there after all, I can tell you one thing. If the consciousness is turned upward, the pain vanishes. If it is turned downward, the pain is felt and even increases. When one experiments with the upward and the downward turnings, one sees that the bodily complaint as such has nothing to do with the pain. The body may suffer very much or not at all, although its condition is exactly the same. It is the turn of the consciousness that makes all the difference.

I say “turned upward” because to turn towards the Divine is the best method, but what can be said in general is that if the consciousness is turned away from the pain to one’s work or anything that interests one, the pain ceases.

And not only the pain but whatever damage there may be in an organ is set right much more easily when the consciousness is taken away from the trouble and one is open to the Divine. There is the Sat aspect of the Divine – the pure supreme

Existence above or beyond or behind the cosmos. If you can keep in contact with it, all physical complaints can be removed.

★



...when one is not very much coddled, when one has a little endurance and decides within himself not to pay too much attention, quite remarkably the pain diminishes. And there are a number of illnesses or states of physical imbalance which can be cured simply by removing the effect, that is, by stopping the suffering. Usually it comes back because the cause is still there. If the cause of the illness is found and one acts directly on its cause, then one can be cured radically. But if one is not able to do that, one can make use of this influence, of this control over pain in order – by cutting off the pain or eliminating it or mastering it in oneself – to work on the illness. So this is an effect, so to say, from outside inwards; while the other is an effect from within outwards, which is much more lasting and much more complete. But the other also is effective.

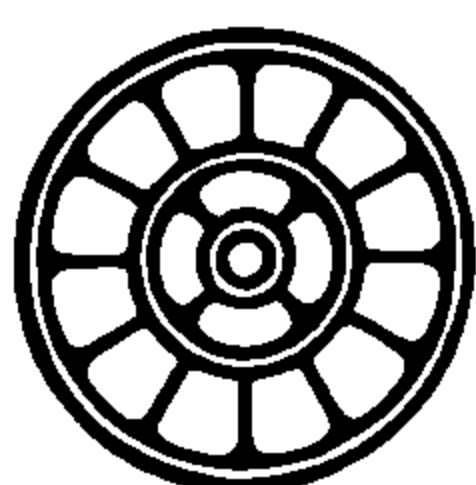
For example, you see, some people suffer from unbearable toothache. It depends above all... some people are more or less what I call “coddled”, that is, unable to resist any pain, to bear it; they immediately say, “I can’t! It is unbearable. I can’t bear any more!” Ah, this indeed changes nothing in the circumstances; it does not stop the suffering, because it is not by telling it that you don’t want it that you make it go away. But if one can do two things: either bring into oneself – for all nervous suffering, for example – bring into oneself a kind of immobility, as total as possible, at the place of pain, this has the effect of an anaesthetic. If one succeeds in bringing an inner immobility, an immobility of the inner vibration, at the spot where one is suffering, it has exactly the same effect as an anaesthetic. It cuts off the contact between the place of pain and the brain, and

once you have cut the contact, if you can keep this state long enough, the pain will disappear. You must form the habit of doing this. But you have the occasion, all the time, the opportunity to do it: you get a cut, get a knock, you see, one always gets a little hurt somewhere – especially when doing athletics, gymnastics and all that – well, these are opportunities given to us. Instead of sitting there observing the pain, trying to analyse it, concentrating upon it, which makes it increase indefinitely... There are people who think of something else but it does not last; they think of something else and then suddenly are drawn back to the place that hurts. But if one can do this... You see, since the pain is there, it proves that you are in contact with the nerve that's transmitting the pain, otherwise you wouldn't feel it. Well, once you know that you are in contact, you try to accumulate at that point as much immobility as you can, to stop the vibration of the pain; you will perceive then that it has the effect of a limb which goes to sleep when you are in an awkward position... Well, you deliberately try this kind of concentration of immobility in the painful nerve; at the painful point you bring as total an immobility as you can. Well, you will see that it works, as I told you, like an anaesthetic: it puts the thing to sleep. And then, if you can add to that a kind of inner peace and a trust that the pain will go away, well, I tell you that it will go.

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

fairly constantly, with sufficient perseverance, the sick nerve will die and you will not suffer at all any more. Because it was that which was suffering and when it is dead it does not suffer any longer. Try. I hope you never have a toothache.

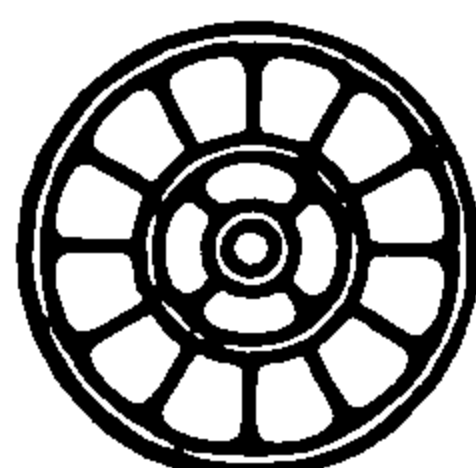
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The first thing and the most indispensable is to nullify the pain by cutting the connection. You see, one becomes conscious of the pain because it is there.

For example, you have cut your finger, there's a nerve that has been affected, and so the nerve quickly goes to tell the brain, up there, that something has happened which is wrong, here. That is what gives you the pain to awaken your attention, to tell you: "You know, there's something wrong." Then the thought immediately feels anxious: "What is wrong? Oh! how it hurts", etc. etc. – then returns to the finger and tries to arrange what is not yet destroyed. Usually one puts a small bandage. But in order not to have the pain, if it hurts very much, you must quite simply cut the connection by thought, saying to the nerve, "Now remain quiet, you have done your work, you have warned me, you don't need to say anything any longer; ploff! I am stopping you." And when you do it well, you suffer no longer, it is finished, you stop the pain completely. That is the best thing. It is infinitely preferable to telling yourself that it is painful.

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Suppose that as a result of some illness or other, there is some sort of pain at a precise spot. At that moment all will depend, as I said at the beginning, on the approach most familiar to you. But we can give an example. You are in pain, in great pain; it is hurting very much, you are suffering a lot.

First point: do not stress the pain by telling yourself, “Oh, how painful! Oh, this pain is unbearable! Oh, it is becoming worse and worse, I shall never be able to bear it”, etc., all this sort of thing. The more you go on thinking like this and feeling like this and the more your attention is concentrated on it, the pain increases amazingly.

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

Second point: as I said, it depends on your habits. If you know how to concentrate, to be quiet, and if you can bring into yourself a certain peace, of any kind – it may be a mental peace, it may be a vital peace, it may be a psychic peace; they have different values and qualities, this is an individual question – you try to realise within yourself a state of peace or attempt to enter into a conscious contact with a force of peace.... Suppose you succeed more or less completely. Then, if you can draw the peace into yourself and bring it down into the solar plexus – for we are not talking of inner states but of your physical body – and from there direct it very calmly, very slowly I might say, but very persistently, towards the place where the pain is more or less sharp, and fix it there, this is very good.

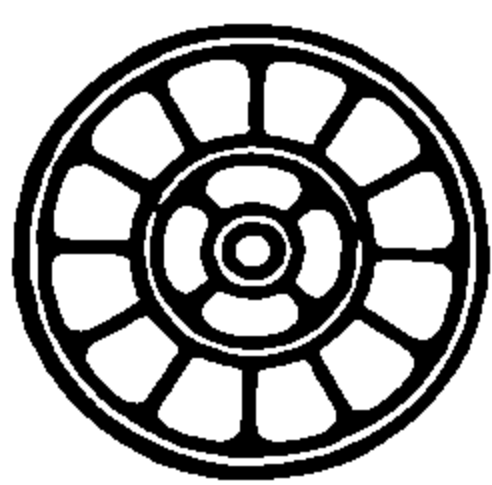
This is not always enough.

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

If you can add to that a movement of complete and trusting surrender to the grace, then I am sure that within five minutes your suffering will disappear. If you know how to do it.

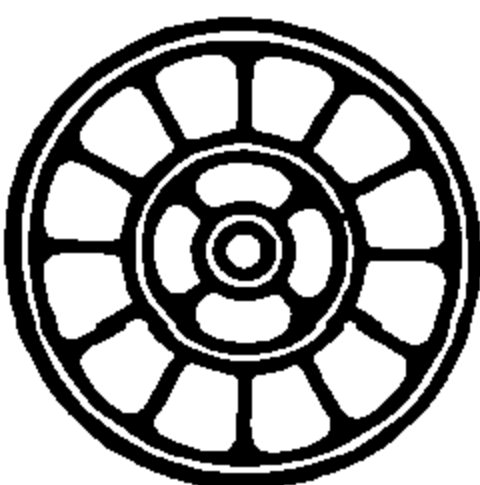
You may try and yet not succeed. But you must know how to try again and again and again, until you do succeed. But if you do those three things at the same time, well, there is no pain which can resist.

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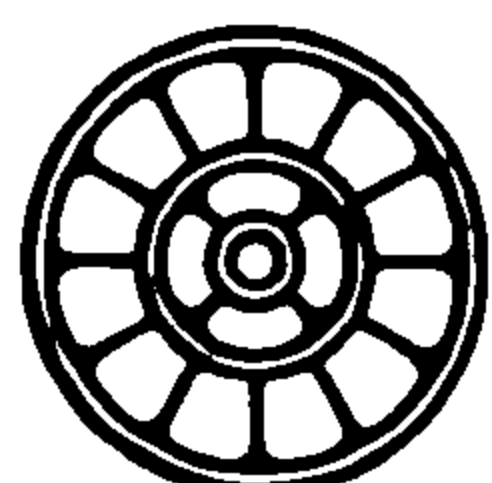
For your ill-health, do not forget to try to bring down the Divine Peace. Because no illness can resist the Peace of the Lord, and even to remember and to try will give you some relief.

★



Even the most acute physical pain, if it is faced calmly and quietly, diminishes and becomes bearable – even in agony, we can rely on the Divine and the Divine changes our agony into delight.

★



Pain is the touch of our Mother teaching us how to bear and grow in rapture. She has three stages of her schooling, endurance first, next equality of soul, last ecstasy.

Sri Aurobindo

As far as moral things are concerned, this is absolutely obvious, it is indisputable – all moral suffering moulds your character and leads you straight to ecstasy, when you know how to take it. But when it comes to the body...

It is true that doctors have said that if one can teach the body to

bear pain, it becomes more and more resilient and less easily disrupted – this is a concrete result. In the case of people who know how to avoid getting completely upset as soon as they have a pain somewhere, who are able to bear it quietly, to keep their balance, it seems that the body's capacity to bear the disorder without going to pieces increases. This is a great achievement. I had asked myself this question from the purely practical, external standpoint and it seems to be like this. Inwardly, I had been told this many times – told and shown by small experiences – that the body can bear much more than we think, if no fear or anxiety is added to the pain. If we eliminate the mental factor, the body, left to itself, has neither fear nor apprehension nor anxiety about what is going to happen – no anguish – and it can bear a great deal.

The second step is when the body has decided to bear it – you see, it takes the decision to bear it: immediately, the acute-ness, what is acute in the pain disappears. I am speaking absolutely materially.

And if you are calm – here, another factor comes in, the need for inner calm – if you have the inner calm, then the pain changes into an almost pleasant sensation – not “pleasant” in the ordinary sense, but an almost comfortable feeling comes. Again, I am speaking purely physically, materially.

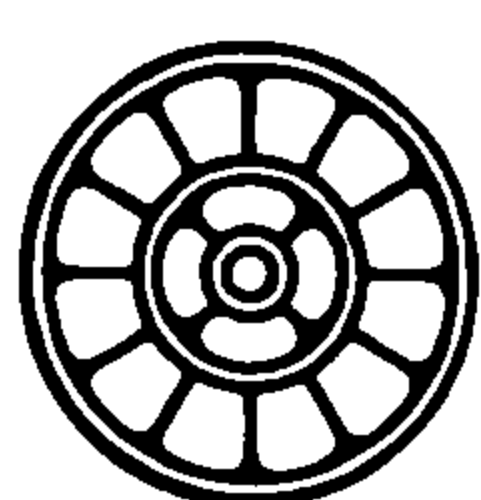
And the last stage, when the cells have faith in the divine Presence and in the sovereign divine Will, when they have this trust that all is for the good, then ecstasy comes – the cells open, like this, become luminous and ecstatic.

That makes four stages – only three are mentioned here.

The last one is probably not within everyone's reach, but the first

three are quite evident – *I know* it is like that. The only thing that used to worry me was that it was not a purely psychological experience and that there was some wear in the body by the fact of enduring suffering. But I have asked doctors and I was told that if the body is taught to bear pain when it is very young, its capacity to endure increases so much that it can really resist disease; that is, the disease does not follow its normal course, it is arrested. That is precious.

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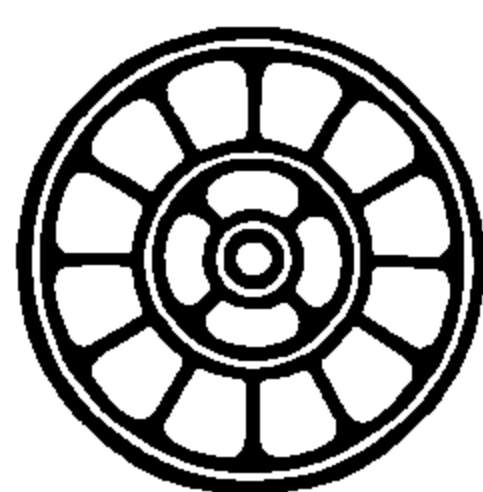
How can one increase the receptivity of the body?

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

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

water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass. Others make an effort to identify themselves with the sky and the stars, so they widen, widen themselves, identifying themselves more and more with the sky. Others again don't need these pictures; they can become conscious of their consciousness, enlarge their consciousness more and more until it becomes unlimited. One can enlarge it till it becomes vast as the earth and even the universe. When one does that one becomes really receptive. As I have said, it is a question of training. In any case, from an immediate point of view, when something comes and one feels that it is too strong, that it gives a headache, that one can't bear it, the method is just the same, you must act upon the contraction. One can act through thought, by calling the peace, tranquillity (the feeling of peace takes away much of the difficulty) like this: "Peace, peace, peace... tranquillity... calm." Many discomforts, even physical, like all these contractions of the solar plexus, which are so unpleasant and give you at times nausea, the sensation of being suffocated, of not being able to breathe again, can disappear thus. It is the nervous centre which is affected, it gets affected very easily. As soon as there is something which affects the solar plexus, you must say, "Calm... calm... calm", become more and more calm until the tension is destroyed.

★



...When pain comes, it comes to teach us something. The quicker we learn it, the more the need for pain diminishes, and when we know the secret, it will no longer be possible to suffer, for that secret reveals to us the reason, the cause, the origin of suffering, and the way to pass beyond it.

The secret is to emerge from the ego, get out of its prison, unite

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

There is no illness, no disorder which can resist the discovery of this secret and the putting of it into practice, not only in the higher parts of the being but in the cells of the body.

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

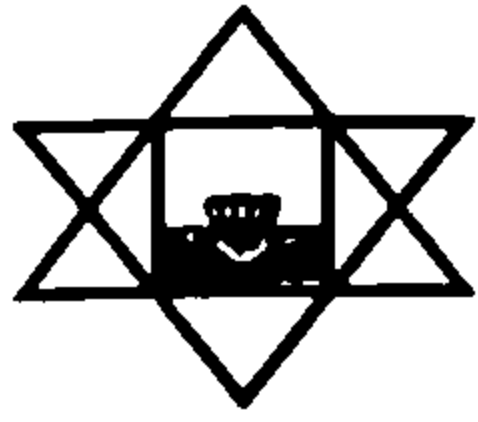
But for that one must be neither cowardly nor fearful. When the physical disorder comes, one must not be afraid; one must not run away from it, must face it with courage, calmness, confidence, with the certitude that illness is a *falsehood* and that if one turns entirely, in full confidence, with a complete quietude to the divine Grace, It will settle in these cells as It is established in the depths of the being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.

DOCTORS



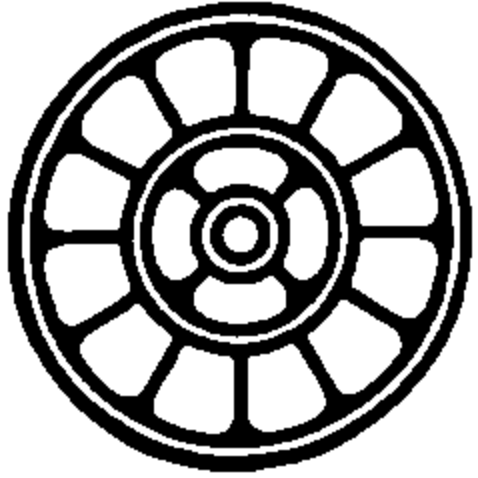
God within is infinite and self-fulfilling Will. Unaffected by the fear of death canst thou leave to Him, not as an experiment, but with a calm and entire faith thy ailments? Thou shalt find that in the end He exceeds the skill of a million doctors.

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The spirit within us is the only all-efficient doctor and submission of the body to it the one true panacea.

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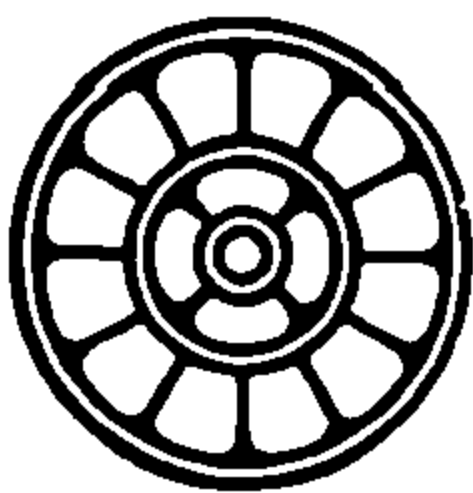


Medicines have little effect; it is the faith in medicines that cures.

Get treated by the doctor whom you trust and take only the medicines that inspire trust in you.

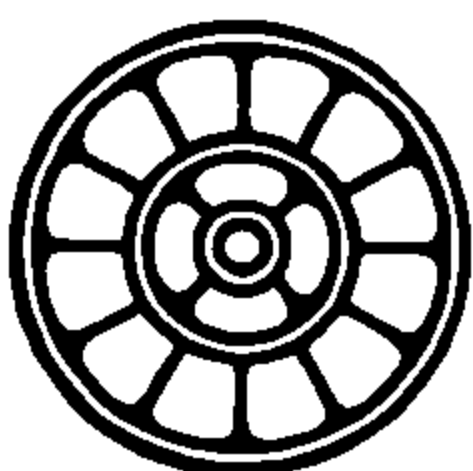
The body only has trust in material methods and that is why you have to give it medicines – but medicines have an effect only if the Force acts through them.

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

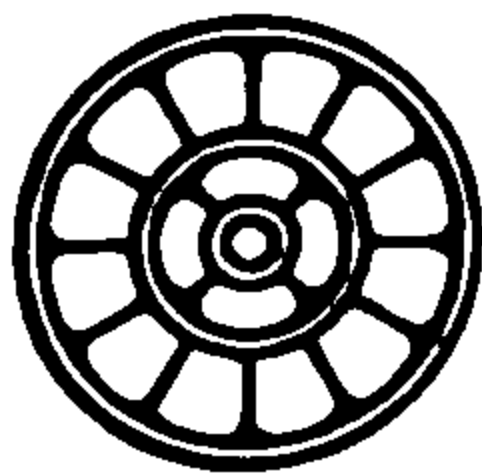
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After all, an illness is only a wrong attitude taken by some part of the body.

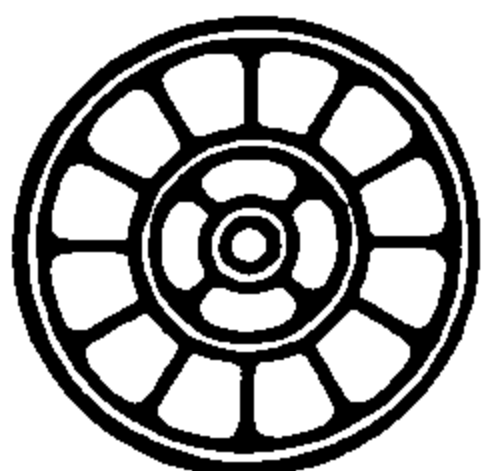
The chief role of the doctor is, by various means, to induce the body to recover its trust in the Supreme Grace.

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A broad mind, a generous heart, an unflinching will, a quiet steady determination, an inexhaustible energy and a total trust in one's mission – this makes a perfect doctor.

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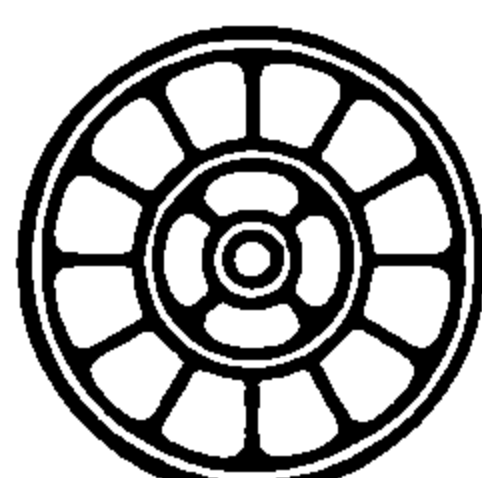


Truth is supreme harmony and supreme delight.

All disorder, all suffering is falsehood.

Thus it can be said that illnesses are falsehoods of the body and, consequently, doctors are soldiers of the great and noble army fighting in the world for the conquest of Truth.

★



In all religious and particularly in occult initiations, the ritual of the different ceremonies is prescribed in every detail; each word uttered, each gesture made has its importance and the least infraction of the rule, the least mistake committed can have disastrous consequences. It is the same with the material life, and if one were initiated into the true way of living, one would be able to transform physical existence.

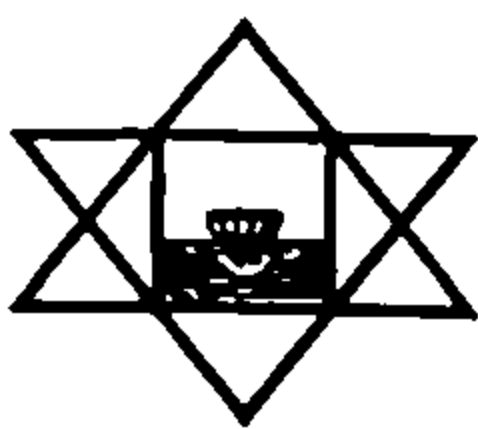
If the body is considered as the tabernacle of the Lord, then medical science, for example, becomes the initiatory ritual for service of the temple and doctors of all categories are the priests who officiate in the different rituals of the worship. Thus, medicine is truly a priesthood and should be treated as such.

The same thing may be said of physical culture and of all the sciences dealing with the body and its working. And if the material universe is regarded as the external robe and manifestation of the Supreme, then it can be said, generally, that all the physical sciences are rituals of worship.

So we always come back to the same thing: the absolute necessity of a perfect sincerity, a perfect honesty, and a sense of the dignity of what one does, so that one does it as it should be done.

If one could know all the details truly, perfectly, all the details of the ceremony of life, of the worship of the Lord in physical life, it would be wonderful – to know and not to make more mistakes, never make any more mistakes. One performs the ceremony with the perfection of an initiation.

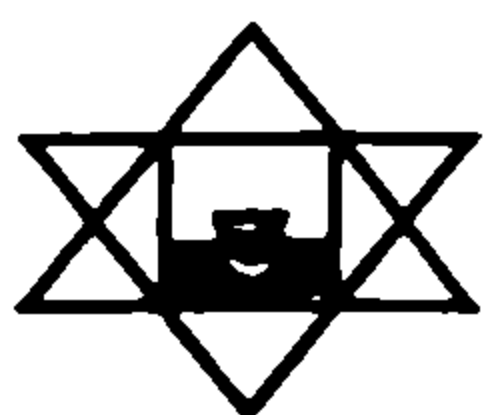
THE PREVENTION OF ILLNESS



Attacks of illness are attacks of the lower nature or of adverse forces taking advantage of some weakness, opening or response in the nature, – like all other things that come and have got to be thrown away, they come from outside. If one can feel them so coming and get the strength and the habit to throw them away before they can enter the body, then one can remain free from illness. Even when the attack seems to rise from within, that means only that it has not been detected before it entered the subconscious; once in the subconscious, the force that brought it rouses it from there sooner or later and it invades the system. When you feel it just after it has entered, it is because though it came direct and not through the subconscious, yet you could not detect it while it was still outside. Very often it arrives like that frontally or more often tangentially from the side direct, forcing its way through the subtle vital envelope which is our main armour of defence, but it can be stopped there in the envelope itself before it penetrates the material body. Then one may feel some effect, e.g., feverishness or a tendency to cold, but there is not the full invasion of the malady. If it can be stopped earlier or if the vital envelope of itself resists and remains strong, vigorous and

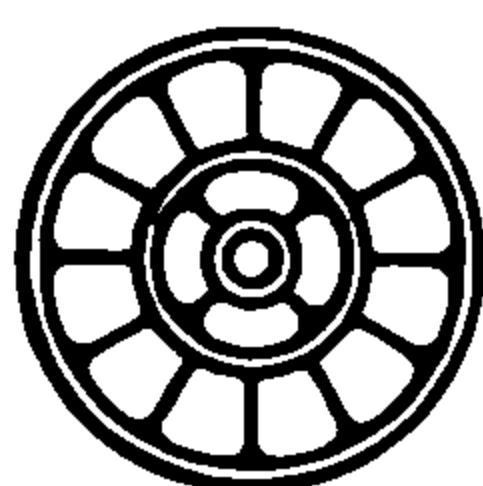
intact, then there is no illness; the attack produces no physical effect and leaves no traces.

★



There is a sort of protection round the body which we call the nervous envelope – if this remains strong and refuses entrance to the illness force, then one can remain well even in the midst of plague or other epidemics – if the envelope is pierced or weak, then the illness can come in.

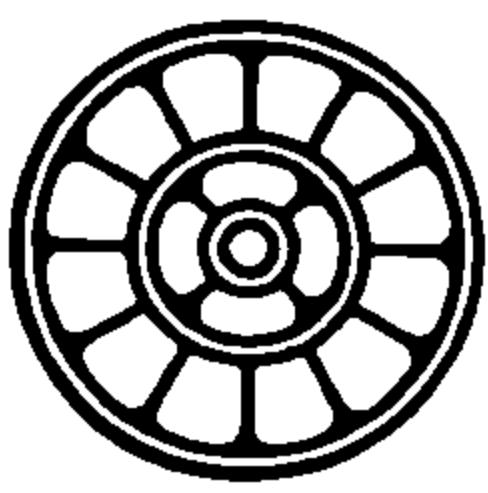
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To whatever cause an illness may be due, material or mental, external or internal, it must, before it can affect the physical body, touch another layer of the being that surrounds and protects it. This subtler layer is called in different teachings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

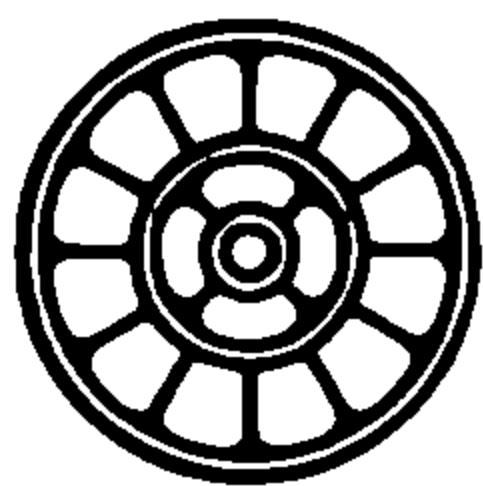
It is a very sensitive medium with facile and quick reactions; it readily takes in all kinds of suggestions and these can rapidly change and almost remould its condition. A bad suggestion acts very strongly upon it; a good suggestion operates in the contrary sense with the same force. Depression and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

★



The vital body surrounds the physical body with a kind of envelope which has almost the same density as the vibrations of heat observable when the day is very hot. And it is this which is the intermediary between the subtle body and the most material vital body. It is this which protects the body from all contagion, fatigue, exhaustion and even from accidents. Therefore if this envelope is wholly intact, it protects you from everything, but a little too strong an emotion, a little fatigue, some dissatisfaction or any shock whatsoever is sufficient to scratch it as it were and the slightest scratch allows any kind of intrusion. Medical science also now recognises that if you are in perfect vital equilibrium, you do not catch illness or in any case you have a kind of immunity from contagion. If you have this equilibrium, this inner harmony which keeps the envelope intact, it protects you from everything. There are people who lead quite an ordinary life, who know how to sleep as one should, eat as one should, and their nervous envelope is so intact that they pass through all dangers as though unconcerned. It is a capacity one can cultivate in oneself. If one becomes aware of the weak spot in one's envelope, a few minutes' concentration, a call to the force, an inner peace is sufficient for it to be all right, get cured, and for the untoward thing to vanish.

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Illnesses enter through the subtle body, don't they? How can they be stopped?

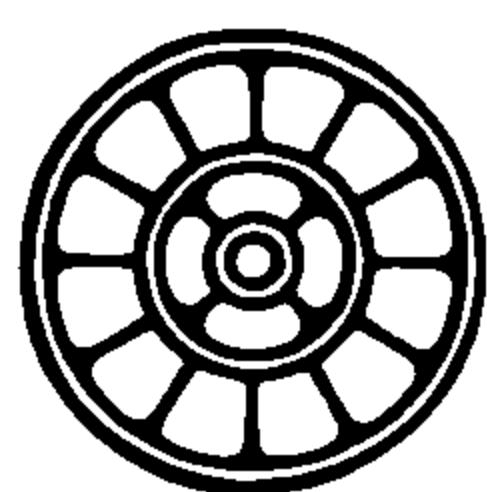
Ah! here we are.... If one is very sensitive, very sensitive – one must be very sensitive – the moment they touch the subtle body and try to pass through, one feels it. It is not like something touching the body, it is a sort of feeling. If you are able to perceive it at that moment, you have still the power to say “no”, and it goes away. But for this one must be extremely sensitive. However, that develops. All these things can be developed methodically by the will. You can become quite conscious of this envelope, and if you develop it sufficiently, you don't even need to look and see, you feel that something has touched you. I can give you an instance of this, there are many similar ones.

Someone was seeking to establish a constant and conscious contact – absolutely constant and conscious – with the inner Godhead, not only with the psychic being but the divine Presence in the psychic being, and she had decided that she would be like this, that she would busy herself with nothing else, that is to say, whatever she might be doing, her concentration was upon this, and even when she went out walking in the street, her concentration was upon this. She lived in a big city where there was much traffic: buses, tramways, etc., many things, and to cross the street one had to be considerably careful, wide-awake and attentive, otherwise one could get run over, but this person had resolved that she would not come out of her concentration. One day when she was crossing one of the big avenues with all its cars and its tramways, still deep in her concentration, in her inner seeking, she suddenly felt at about an arm's length a little shock, like this; she jumped back and a car passed just by her side. If she had not jumped back she would have been run over.... This is an extreme point, but

without going so far one can very easily feel a kind of little discomfort (it is not something which is imposed with a great force), a little uneasiness coming near you from anywhere at all: front, behind, above, below. If at that moment you are sufficiently alert, you say “no”, as though you were cutting off the contact with great strength, and it is finished. If you are not conscious at that moment, the next minute or a few minutes later you get a queer sick feeling inside, a cold in the back, a little uneasiness, the beginning of some disharmony; you feel a maladjustment somewhere, as though the general harmony had been disturbed. Then you must concentrate all the more and with a great strength of will keep the faith that nothing can do you harm, nothing can touch you. This suffices, you can throw off the illness at that moment. But you must do this immediately, you understand, you must not wait five minutes, it must be done at once. If you wait too long and begin to feel really an uneasiness somewhere, and something begins to get quite disturbed, then it is good to sit down, concentrate and call the Force, concentrate it on the place which is getting disturbed, that is to say, which is beginning to become ill. But if you don’t do anything at all, an illness indeed gets lodged somewhere; and all this, because you were not sufficiently alert. And sometimes one is obliged to follow the entire curve to find the favourable moment again and get rid of the business. I have said somewhere that in the physical domain all is a question of method – a method is necessary for realising everything. And if the illness has succeeded in touching the physical-physical, well, you must follow the procedure needed to get rid of it. This is what medical science calls “the course of the illness”. One can hasten the course with the help of spiritual forces, but all the same the procedure must be followed. There are some four different stages. The very first is instantaneous. The second can be done in some minutes, the third may take several hours and the fourth several days. And then, once the thing is lodged

there, all will depend not only on the receptivity of the body but still more on the willingness of the part which is the cause of the disorder. You know, when the thing comes from outside it is in affinity with something inside. If it manages to pass through, to enter without one's being aware of it, it means there is some affinity somewhere, and the part of the being which has responded must be convinced.

TREATMENT DEPENDS ON LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS



I have often been asked this question, “Why, after having posited as an ideal principle that when we deal with our body we ought to do it with the knowledge that it is only a result and an instrument of the supreme Reality of the universe and of the truth of our being, – why, after having taught this and shown that this is the truth to be realised, do we have in the organisation of our Ashram, doctors, dispensaries, a physical education of the body based on modern theories accepted everywhere?” And why, when some of you go for a picnic do I forbid you to drink water from just anywhere and tell you to take filtered water with you? Why do I have the fruit you eat disinfected, etc.?

All this seems contradictory, but this evening I intend to explain something to you which, I hope, will put an end to this feeling of a contradiction in you. In fact, I have told you many a time that when two ideas or principles apparently seem to contradict one another, you must rise a little higher in your thought and find the point where the contradictions meet in a comprehensive synthesis.

Here, it is very easy if we know one thing, that the method we use to deal with our body, maintain it, keep it fit, improve it and

keep it in good health, depends *exclusively* on the state of consciousness we are in; for our body is an instrument of our consciousness and this consciousness can act directly on it and obtain what it wants from it.

So, if you are in an ordinary physical consciousness, if you see things with the eyes of the ordinary physical consciousness, if you think of them with the ordinary physical consciousness, it will be ordinary physical means you will have to use to act on your body. These ordinary physical means make up the whole science which has accumulated through thousands of years of human existence. This science is very complex, its processes innumerable, complicated, uncertain, often contradictory, always progressive and almost absolutely relative! Still, very precise results have been achieved; ever since physical culture has become a serious preoccupation, a certain number of experiments, studies, observations have accumulated, which enable us to regulate diet, activities, exercise, the whole outer organisation of life, and provide an adequate basis so that those who make the effort to study and conform strictly to these things have a chance to maintain their body in good health, correct the defects it may have and improve its general condition, and even achieve results which are sometimes quite remarkable.

I may add, moreover, that this intellectual human science, such as it is at present, in its very sincere effort to find the truth, is, surprisingly enough, drawing closer and closer to the essential truth of the Spirit. It is not impossible to foresee the movement where the two will unite in a very deep and very close understanding of the essential truth.

So, for all those who live on the physical plane, in the physical consciousness, it is physical means and processes which have to be used in dealing with the body. And as the vast majority of

human beings, even in the Ashram, live in a consciousness which, if not exclusively physical, is at least predominantly physical, it is quite natural for them to follow and obey all the principles laid down by physical science for the care of the body.

Now, according to what Sri Aurobindo teaches us, this is not a final realisation, nor is it the ideal to which we want to rise. There is a higher state than this, in which the consciousness, though it still remains principally mental or partially mental in its functioning, is already open to higher regions in an aspiration for the spiritual life, and open to the supramental influence.

As soon as this opening occurs, one passes beyond the state in which life is purely physical – when I say “physical” I include the whole mental and intellectual life and all human achievements, even the most remarkable; I am speaking of a physical which is the summit of human capacities, of an earthly and material life in which man can express values of a higher order from the mental and intellectual point of view – one can go beyond that state, open oneself to the supramental force which is now acting on earth and enter a transitional zone where the two influences meet and interpenetrate, where the consciousness is still mental and intellectual in its functioning, but sufficiently imbued with the supramental strength and force to become the instrument of a higher truth.

At present this state can be realised on earth by those who have prepared themselves to receive the supramental force which is manifesting. And in that state, in that state of consciousness, the body can benefit from a much better condition than the one it was in before. It can be put into direct contact with the essential truth of its being, to the extent that, *spontaneously*, at every moment it knows instinctively, or intuitively, what is to be done and that it can do it.

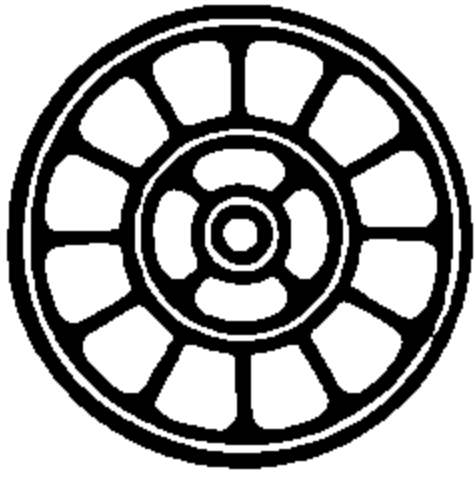
As I say, this state can now be realised by all those who take the trouble of preparing themselves to receive the supramental force, to assimilate it and obey it.

Of course, there is a higher state than this, the state Sri Aurobindo speaks of as the ideal to be fulfilled: the divine life in a divine body. But he himself tells us that this will take time; it is an integral transformation which cannot be achieved in a moment. It will even take quite a long time. But when it is accomplished, when the consciousness has become a supramental consciousness, then action will no longer be determined at every moment by a mental choice or be dependent on the physical capacity: the entire body will spontaneously, integrally, be the perfect expression of the inner truth.

This is the ideal we must keep before us, for the realisation of which we must strive; but we must not delude ourselves and think that it can be a rapid transformation, miraculous, immediate, marvellous, without effort and without labour.

However, it is no longer only a possibility, it is no longer even only a promise for a far-off future: it is something which is in the making. And already one can not only foresee but feel the moment when the body will be able to repeat integrally the experience of the most spiritual part of the being, as the inner spirit has already done, and will itself be able to stand in its bodily consciousness before the supreme Reality, turn to it integrally and say in all sincerity, in a total self-giving of all its cells: "To be Thyself – exclusively, perfectly – Thyself, infinitely, eternally... very simply."

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE ILL



“Without conscious occult powers, is it possible to help or protect from a distance somebody who is ill, or in difficulty or danger? If so, what is the practical procedure?” “What can thought do?”

We are not going to speak of occult processes at all; although, to tell the truth, everything that happens in the invisible world is occult, by definition. But still, practically, there are two processes which do not exclude but complete each other, but which may be used separately according to one's preference.

It is obvious that thought forms a part of one of the methods, quite an important part. I have already told you several times that if one thinks clearly and powerfully, one makes a mental formation, and that every mental formation is an entity independent of its fashioner, having its own life and tending to realise itself in the mental world – I don't mean that you see your formation with your physical eyes, but it exists in the mental world, it has its own particular independent existence. If you have made a formation with a definite aim, its whole life will tend to the realisation of this aim. Therefore, if you want to help someone at a distance, you have only to formulate very clearly, very precisely and strongly the kind of help you want to give and the result you wish to obtain. That will have its effect. I cannot say that it will be all-powerful, for the mental world is full of innumerable formations of this kind and naturally they clash and contradict one another; hence the strongest and the most persistent will have the best of it.

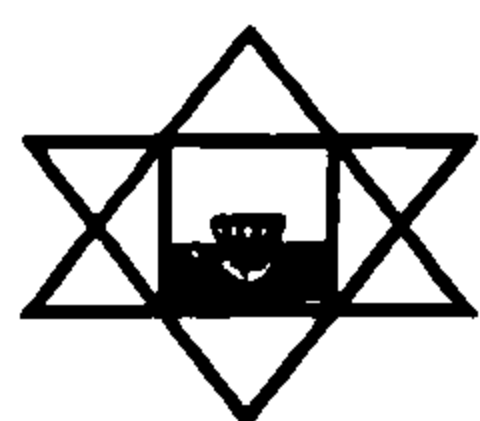
Now, what is it that gives strength and persistence to mental formations? – It is emotion and will. If you know how to add to your mental formation an emotion, affection, tenderness, love,

and an intensity of will, a dynamism, it will have a much greater chance of success. That is the first method. It is within the scope of all those who know how to think, and even more of those who know how to love. But as I said, the power is limited and there is great competition in that world.

Therefore, even if one has no knowledge at all but has trust in the divine Grace, if one has the faith that there is something in the world like the divine Grace, and that this something can answer a prayer, an aspiration, an invocation, then, after making one's mental formation, if one offers it to the Grace and puts one's trust in it, asks it to intervene and has the faith that it will intervene, then indeed one has a chance of success.

Try, and you will surely see the result.

HEALTH AND CONQUEST OF ILLNESS

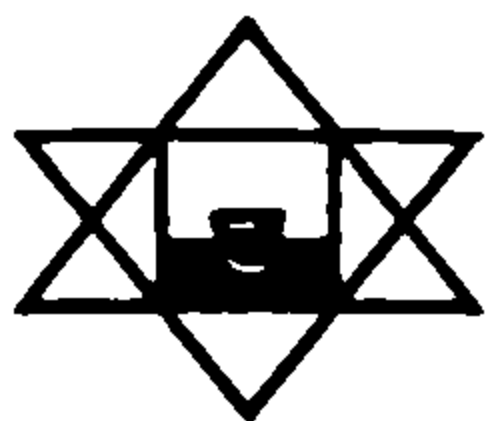


All illnesses pass through the nervous or vital-physical sheath of the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious of the subtle body or with the subtle consciousness, one can stop an illness on its way and prevent it from entering the physical body. But it may have come without one's noticing, or when one is asleep or through the subconscious, or in a sudden rush when one is off one's guard; then there is nothing to do but to fight it out from a hold already gained on the body. Self-defence by these inner means may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many yogis are. Still this "practically" does not mean "absolutely". The absolute immunity can only come with the supramental change. For below the supramental it is the result of an action of a Force among many forces and can be disturbed by a disruption of the equilibrium established – in the supramental it

is a law of the nature; in a supramentalised body immunity from illness would be automatic, inherent in its new nature.

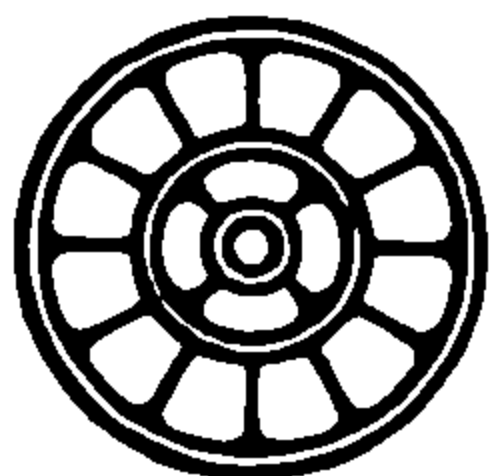
There is a difference between yogic Force on the mental and inferior planes and the supramental Nature. What is acquired and held by the yoga-Force in the mind-and-body consciousness is in the supramental inherent and exists not by achievement but by nature – it is self-existent and absolute.

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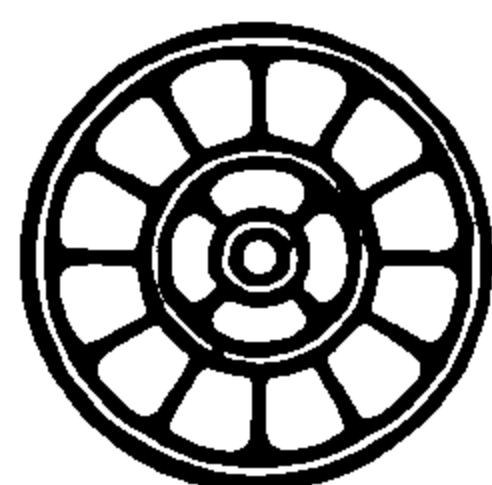
For nearly forty years I suffered constantly from the smaller and the greater ailments, behind the wholly good I was weakly in constitution and mistook their cure for a burden that Nature had laid upon me. When I renounced the aid of medicines, then they began to depart from me like disappointed parasites.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

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Health is the outer expression of a deep harmony, one must be proud of it and not despise it.

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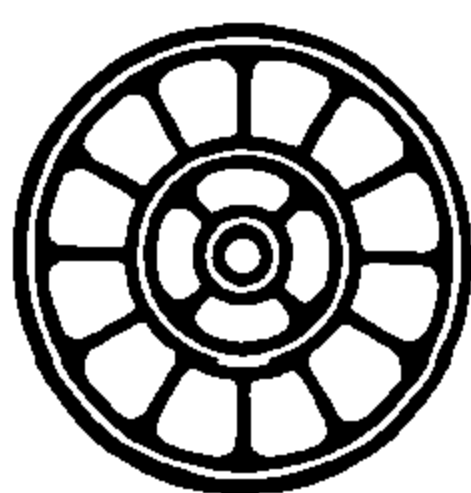
What is it that you call “the basis of equanimity in the external being”?

It is good health, a solid body, well poised; when one does not have the nerves of a little girl that are shaken by the least thing; when one sleeps well, eats well.... When one is quite calm, well balanced, very quiet, one has a solid basis and can receive a large number of forces.

If anyone among you has received spiritual forces, forces of the Divine Ananda, for example, he knows from experience that unless he is in good health he cannot contain them, keep them. He begins to weep and cry, gets restless to expend what he has received. He must laugh and talk and gesticulate, otherwise he cannot keep them, he feels stifled. And so by laughing, weeping, moving about he throws out what he has received.

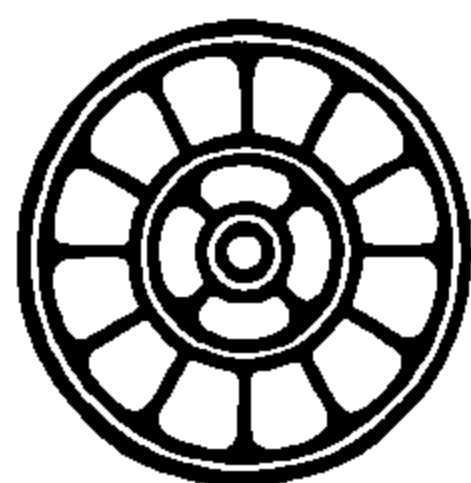
To be well balanced, to be able to absorb what one receives, one must be very quiet, very calm. One must have a solid basis, good health. One must have a very solid basis. That is very important.

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...only when humanity is cured of its mental aberrations will it be able to manifest the supramental consciousness and recover the natural health which the mind has lost for it.

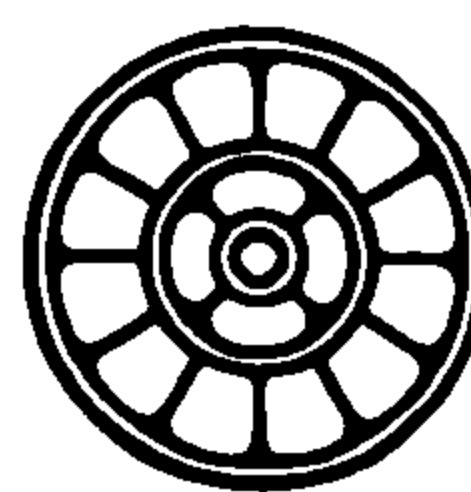
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The sovereignty of mind has made humanity the slave of doctors and their remedies. And the result is that illnesses are increasing in number and seriousness.

The only true salvation for men is to escape from mental domination by opening to the Divine Influence which they will obtain through a total surrender.

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We cannot counteract the harm done by mental faith in the need for drugs by any external measures. Only by escaping from the mental prison and

emerging consciously into the light of the spirit, by a conscious union with the Divine, can we enable Him to give back to us the balance and health we have lost.

The supramental transformation is the only true remedy.

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b: CWM Vol. 15, p. 151	d: CWM Vol. 15, p. 155
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8a: CWM Vol. 15, p. 163	c: CWM Vol. 15, p. 354
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N.B. Abbreviations: CWSA – The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo
CWM – Collected Works of the Mother

The quotation in the last line of the introduction is from 'White Roses'.