

NEW HABIT OF SELF-OBSERVATION

This book will show you some new habits that are good to develop if you are serious about preparing yourself for contact with your psychic being. Just now you have started the first one: the habit of self-observation.

A habit is something that you do often and routinely. If you want to make something a habit you must start to practice regularly. In the beginning that takes effort. Once it has become a habit you start doing it more or less automatically. A new habit needs about 40 days to really become a regular habit. So if you do it for 40 days *without fail* you should have no difficulty in keeping it up.

Here are some tips to help you to become regular in the habit of self observation.

- Make a routine that enables you to practice daily.
- Set at least 20 minutes apart for this every day.
- Fix a certain time for your daily practice.
- Choose a quiet place for your practice.
- If you know beforehand that on a particular day you cannot do your exercise at the fixed time, schedule another time for that day.
- If a day was so full of unexpected happenings that you could not do it, still do not go to sleep before practising your self-observation.
- Give yourself reminders for keeping it up. For example: put a message on your mirror saying something like “All well in the inner worlds today?” You can also attach a note to your key chain. Be creative and find out how you can remind yourself best.

EXERCISE FOR SELF-OBSERVATION

Self-observation is done in all the parts of the being. The Mother says that for a good self-awareness it is important to know where the “I” is located. What does she mean by that? Here is an example. When you say to a friend, “I love to go for long walks in a beautiful surrounding”, your “I” is most likely located in your vital. In this sentence there is enthusiasm, energy and eagerness, and these all belong to the vital.

Now say to yourself, “I think that taking long walks is good for health.” Here your “I” is located in the mind. This sentence has no enthusiasm, there is only the abstract idea in you that knows that walking is good for you. But you may do the walk

more out of duty, without pleasure; you do it because you know it is good for you. It is the mind that makes you go for a walk.

Your consciousness can connect itself with your outer or your inner body, your outer or inner vital, your outer or inner mental, with your psychic or with the Atman. If you want to observe yourself properly it is good to know where your “I” consciousness is located. For getting familiar with this The Mother recommends an exercise that makes you conscious of how you can shift around the location of the “I” in your being. She talks about this in one of her Playground talks:

“...one succeeds in entering into contact with something, something which gives you the impression of being—”Yes, that’s ‘myself’”. And this something I can move around, I can move it from my body to my vital, to my mind, I can even, if I am very... how to put it?... very practised in moving it, I can move it into other people, and it’s in this way that I can identify myself with things and people.”³

— THE MOTHER

WORKSHEET: “I”-Location

The following exercise will make you aware that in daily life you are all the time shifting the “I” around in your being.

Here are some sentences. Read them slowly one by one. Then observe for each sentence in which part of your being your “I” is located, while you are saying this to yourself.

- My feet are paining, let’s stop walking.
- I love roses, they are my favourite flowers.





- I remember a lot about this subject.
- That stupid remark makes me angry.
- I inhale the fresh morning air.
- Feeling The Mother's presence fills me with gratitude.
- I think this is the right answer.
- This wonderful music transports me into another world.

Once you are regular and familiar with observing yourself at a particular time of the day, you can begin doing the self-observation at any time of the day. There will come a time when you will be able to do it throughout the day, no matter if you are alone or with others, working or eating. When you do this during the day, you can first concentrate just on one aspect; for instance observe what you say during a day. Observe the tone of your voice and the words you are using. This is an excellent exercise in self-observation. Does your voice sound friendly or irritated? Are the remarks you make inviting or closed? Observe if you really try to understand and answer the one you are talking with or are you pushing your own ideas. All this will give you a lot of information about yourself. If you are a teacher this is even more important, because children are very sensitive to the words and tone a teacher is using. Many of us may still remember a very hurtful remark that a teacher made and that left a deep scar. In the same way, a teacher who said something comforting in a warm tone just at the time we needed it, makes us still grateful.

Before we go to the next exercise here is some more information on the “I”.

Your “I” is not always in contact with just one part of you. One part can be in the foreground, while another part may cooperate or rebel from behind.

If you are somewhat conscious you have most likely experienced that the different parts of your being are not always wanting to do the same thing; one part wants this, another part that. Here is an example: it is early morning and you would like to sleep longer, because you went to bed late the night before. But if you stay in bed, you know that you won’t finish a written assignment that you have to submit that same day. Then inside yourself a small discussion starts. If you are aware, you can follow the argument. The part that wants to sleep tries to think up reasons for not submitting the work. The part that knows you have to get up tells you it is better to get up. Which part will win? When you become more aware of yourself, you start recognising that such situations and dialogues happen all the time in you, throughout the day. If the self-observation has made you aware of the dialogues of these different parts, you can make a conscious choice about which part will win. This will give you progressively the feeling that it is possible to be in charge and that you can influence your life to grow more in harmony with your highest aim.

EXERCISE FOR SELF-OBSERVATION

Here are some suggestions that may help you to do your self-observation. Try them out. When you are more familiar with observing yourself you may find new variations that suit you better. Experiment a little, so that you find out what works best for you. Only do not experiment with skipping your practice!

Do this exercise when you have at least 20 to 30 minutes for yourself.



- Sit alone in a quiet place where you can feel relaxed.
- Make yourself comfortable.
- You may close your eyes, or you can let them rest on an object in front of you.
- To shift your concentration inside you may like to watch your breathing. Feel how you can go deeper within by sinking into the space left by the outgoing breath.
- Start observing what is going on inside yourself.
- Observe your thoughts. Observe your feelings. Does your body give any signals? Watch this as on a screen.
- Try not to interfere. Just allow everything to come and go.

After some time you may like to do the worksheet.

WORKSHEET: SELF-OBSERVATION

- What is going on inside you?
 - Is it easy to observe?
 - If not, what makes it difficult?
 - Do you get so involved that you stop observing?
- If so, only at certain moments or constantly?
- Does something get in the way and block your observation? If so, what causes the block?
- Are you able to prompt yourself to become an observer again?



Now start with locating your consciousness in your **head**.

- Observe your thoughts.
- Are certain thoughts coming back more often than others?
- Are these positive or negative thoughts?
- Are they about you, or about others?
- Are they about things or happenings?
- Are they about the past, the present or the future?
- Do you start talking with your thoughts?
- Do feelings come up with certain thoughts?



Now locate your consciousness in your **heart**.

- Observe your feelings.
- Are most of these feelings about yourself?
- Are most of these feelings about others?
- What kind of feelings are in the foreground: irritation, happiness, jealousy, gratitude, etc?
- Do some of these feelings give rise to certain thoughts in you?
- Do you start a dialogue with some of your feelings?
- Do your thoughts have an influence on your feelings?

- Do certain feelings bring back certain memories?



Now locate the consciousness in your **body**.

- Become aware of how your body feels.
- Often your body is roped in by the mind or the vital, which make your body do certain things, like tensing muscles, making unconscious movements, etc. Can you spot any of these?
- Observe your muscles.
- Are they all relaxed?
- Are your shoulders relaxed?
- How relaxed are your arms and hands?
- Are the muscles of your neck, your jaws relaxed?
- What about the muscles in your abdomen?
- How relaxed are your legs?
- Do certain words or thoughts make you tense some muscles? Where?
- Do certain feelings make you tense some muscles? Where?
- Does your heartbeat change with certain words or feelings?
- Does your breathing change with certain words or feelings?

Self-observation leads to self-awareness. This will help you to grow consciously in the direction of your highest aim. After some weeks you will experience that your observation becomes more detailed. You will observe that very often more than one part is involved, and how especially the vital tries to take the mind along for its own purposes.

Let's take one more time the sentence, "Taking long walks is good for health". You can say this also with a lot of enthusiasm! In that case it is not just the mind, but the mind supported by the vital. You will say this with enthusiasm when you and a few friends are planning an outing and you are full of energy. There can also be a situation where you can say, "Talking long walks is good for health" with a deep sigh. The sigh is caused by the vital that wants to see a video and is not at all supporting the idea of going for a healthy walk.

TIPS

- Be careful not to put yourself in a knot, such as "I will never come out of this." Or, "Poor me, nobody understands me." You can *notice* such thoughts or feelings, but do not *believe* them. When this happens try to locate your consciousness in another part of yourself. Try to experience how you can *choose* to connect with a dark or with a light part in yourself.
- Do not start plainly criticising or judging yourself, like "Oh, again I became angry, I am really a most stupid person." If you find a fault with yourself, do not stop there but look straightaway for a solution. Just judging yourself is not helpful, it hardens the situation. Only observe that criticism is happening but

do not give importance to it. Remember that encouragement is much more effective in making you progress.

- It is best to observe yourself as you would observe a child playing in a park, in an open and relaxed manner.

With self-observation you have started the ***Science of Living***. It is an inner exploration. It is an adventure that will make you more aware of your outer nature. It will also lead you to the discovery of your inner worlds. It is the beginning of a long journey. But this journey has a very beautiful goal: discovering the living truth of your psychic being.

There is a lot of work to do. You will observe your outer nature and help it to be purified, so that it can be at the service of your psychic even if this is still behind the veil. You will discover your inner and innermost being and allow it to actively participate in your daily life. Then, in a later stage, there is the work of unification. The first stage of unification is the centering of the mind, vital and physical around your psychic being.

The next chapter will tell you more about the search for the psychic being.

THE FIRST STEPS IN THE SCIENCE OF LIVING

- Give yourself the luxury of spending at least 20 minutes a day all by yourself for self-observation.
- Help yourself to keep up your effort by posting reminders on your mirror or any other place that you are likely to see during the day.
- Look for other ways to encourage yourself to keep it up.

- Begin observing yourself also during daily activities.
- Don't judge or criticise yourself whenever some weaknesses in you show up. Do not suppress them. Live with them while trying to overcome them. Remember, nobody is without them.
- Try to be understanding to yourself, but be understanding to others as well. They have their difficulties and may be working hard to overcome them.
- When you become more aware of your strengths and your qualities, nurture them to greater perfection. Remember, everyone has something unique to share.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF MANIFESTATION

“There are two things to be considered: consciousness and the instruments through which consciousness manifests. Let us take the instruments: there is the mental being which produces thoughts, the emotional being which produces feeling, the vital being which produces the power of action and the physical being that acts.”⁴

— THE MOTHER

“If you want a more swift and visible progress, it can only be by bringing your psychic to the front through a constant self-offering.”⁵

— SRI AUROBINDO

The Mother talking to a small group of teachers:

“And if you could find, each one of you, your psychic and unite with it, all the problems would be solved. The psychic being is the representative of the Divine in the human being. That's it, you see—the Divine is not something remote and inaccessible. The Divine is in you but you are not fully conscious of it.... it acts now as an influ-

ence rather than as a Presence. It should be a conscious Presence, you should be able at each moment to ask yourself what is... how... how the Divine sees. It is like that: first how the Divine sees, and then how the Divine wills, and then how the Divine acts. And you need not go into inaccessible regions, it is right here. Only, for the moment, all the old habits and the general unconsciousness put a kind of covering which prevents us from seeing and feeling. You must... you must lift, you must lift that up.”⁶ — THE MOTHER