



FUTURE SCHOOL

Circular 1

For Teachers, Staff and Friends

15/08/2023

Equality and Education

Introduction: General Comments

Equality should be nurtured in schools. Mother emphasised this on several occasions. To see why this was the case requires an understanding of what is meant by Equality and its spiritual significance.

Within Integral Yoga, Equality carries connotations extending beyond standard English dictionary definitions of the word. Sri Aurobindo defined it (or rather Samata, its more subtle Sanskrit rendering) as “freedom from mental, vital, physical preferences, an even acceptance of all God’s workings within and around him.”¹ He described its establishment within oneself as a foundation of spiritual practice. This is because it allowed one to “move back from the troubled and ignorant outer consciousness.”² It was necessary to rise above human ‘gropings’ and ‘passions’ and truly see the significance of happenings in the world with a clear vision. To rise above human passions was to gain entry to a higher, spiritual, consciousness. Sri Aurobindo referred to this as the entrance to “the Kingdom of Heaven.”³ To gain entry to it required the cultivation of this essential attribute: “Equality is the chief support of the true spiritual consciousness and it is this from which the sadhak deviates when he allows a vital movement to carry him away in feeling or speech or action.”⁴

The mastery of Equality leads to a consciousness that lives in unshakeable freedom in the world, not in an indifference to it. Equality precludes “a severe ascetic insensibility, an aloof spiritual indifference or a strained rugged austerity of self-suppression.” It allows its

¹ CWSA, Vol 23-24, Synthesis of Yoga, p722

² CWSA, Vol 23-24, Synthesis of Yoga, p699

³ Later, on 12 January 1962, (Agenda (Vol 3) Mother would say, “...the Supermind can express itself through a terrestrial consciousness only when there is a constant state of perfect equality—equality arising out of spiritual identification with the Supreme: all becomes the Supreme in perfect equality. And it must be automatic, not an equality obtained through conscious will or intellectual effort or an understanding preceding the state itself—none of that. It has to be spontaneous and automatic; one must no longer react to what comes from outside as though it were coming from outside.”

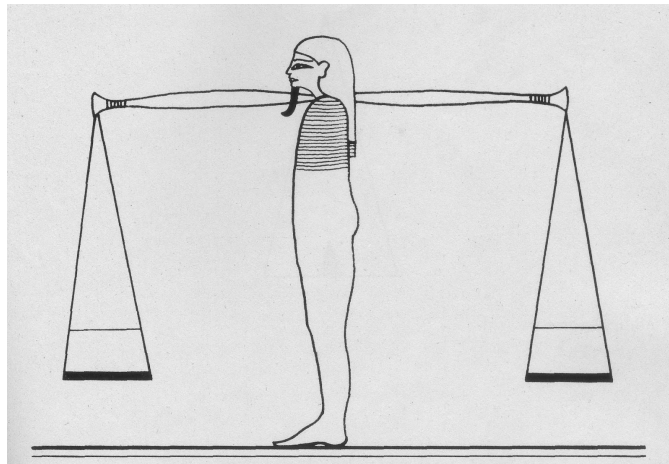
⁴ CWSA, Vol 29, p 130

possessor to act in the world with a “perfectly divine action...”⁵ In the mastery of Equality, Sri Aurobindo said, “Love will be not destroyed, but perfected.”⁶

In the usual course of events, an individual passes three distinct stages in their cultivation of this attribute:

1. **“Ordinarily we have to begin with a period of endurance;** for we must learn to confront, to suffer and to assimilate all contacts. [...] All touches we must be strong to bear, not only those that are proper and personal to us but those born of our sympathy or our conflict with the worlds around, above or below us and with their peoples. [...]
2. **There is next a period of high-seated impartiality and indifference** in which the soul becomes free from exultation and depression [...] The indifference or the impartiality that we must seek after is a calm superiority of the high-seated soul above the contacts of things [...]
3. **If we can pass through these two stages of the inner change [...] we are admitted to a greater divine equality** which is capable of a spiritual ardour and tranquil passion of delight, a rapturous, all-understanding and all-possessing equality of the perfected soul, an intense and even wideness and fullness of its being embracing all things. This is the supreme period.”⁷

The Mother later commented on the passing nature of a state of indifference (Sri Aurobindo’s stage 2 above). She said, “Indifference is a stage of development which must lead to a perfect equality of soul.”⁸ Even in this stage of indifference, there is a need to strive for a different method of functioning that allows one to see the thing that needs to be done. In such a state, “mental activity is replaced by an intuitive activity of a much higher kind.”⁹



⁵ CWSA, Vol 23-24, Synthesis of Yoga, p692

⁶ CWSA, Vol 23-24, Synthesis of Yoga, p704

⁷ CWSA, Vol 23-24, Synthesis of Yoga, p 226-228

⁸ CWM Vol 16, p171

⁹ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p398

Equality/Samata: Comments specific to education

Given the importance of Equality in spiritual life, the Mother insisted that it be one of the qualities cultivated in education. There are several key points to consider:

a. Teachers and students should cultivate Equality:

The Mother, stressed the importance of Equality (sometimes using the word “equanimity”¹⁰) for both teachers and students:

1. Equality is important for the teacher to cultivate: Talking about the qualifications essential for a teacher in the Ashram, the Mother said, “The ideal to attain is an unflinching equality of soul and conduct, a patience that never fails and, of course, the absence of any preference or desire. It is obvious that for one who teaches, the essential condition for the proper fulfilment of his task is the absence of all egoism; and no human being is exempt from the necessity of this effort.”¹¹
2. Equality is equally important for the student to cultivate: The Mother said of an ideal child, “He keeps equanimity in success as well as in failure.”¹²

b. The teacher should be an example of Equality to the student:

It was the duty of the teacher to help their students cultivate Equality.¹³ How was this meant to be done? By modelling the behaviour the teacher wished to see their students develop. The Mother said, “Example is the most powerful instructor. Never demand from a child an effort of discipline that you do not make yourself. Calm, equanimity, order, method, absence of useless words, ought to be constantly practised by the teacher if he wants to instil them into his pupils. [...] These are elementary and preliminary things which ought to be practised in all schools without exception.”¹⁴

She said Sri Aurobindo spoke of the “invariable good humour one must have in all circumstances, this self-forgetfulness: not to throw one’s own little troubles on others; when one is tired or uncomfortable, not to become unpleasant, impatient. This asks for quite some perfection, a self-control which is a great step on the path of realisation. If one fulfilled the conditions needed to be a true leader, even if only a leader of a small group of children, well, one would already be far advanced in the discipline needed for the accomplishment of the yoga.”¹⁵

c. Boys and girls should be treated equally:

¹⁰ Although in the Agenda (Vol 2), she would stress that Equality should be distinguished from Equanimity: “The first sign is perfect equality as Sri Aurobindo has described it (you must know it, there’s a whole chapter on equality, *samatā*, in *The Synthesis of Yoga*)—exactly as he described it with such wonderful precision! But this equality (which is not ‘equanimity’) is a particular STATE where one relates to all things, outer and inner, and to each individual thing, in the same way”: 25 February 1961.

¹¹ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p359

¹² CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p150.

¹³ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p152

¹⁴ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p193

¹⁵ CWM Vol 9, p81

A key aspect of the Mother's ideal of Equality was highly practical: Students from both sexes were to be treated equally. She said, "the best that can be done for the progress of the present human race is to treat both sexes on a footing of perfect equality, to give them the same education and training and to teach them to find, through a constant contact with a Divine Reality that is above all sexual differentiation, the source of all possibilities and harmonies."¹⁶

d. The atmosphere of the classroom: "The children must be educated in an atmosphere of love and gentleness."

Sri Aurobindo gave the spiritual rationale for the equality of treatment towards people (which naturally has application in the classroom). He said, "one tries to practise ... [Samata] to all people and all things, because the Divine is everywhere."¹⁷ If the perfection of Equality is part of a process of seeing the Divine everywhere – and in everyone – then the Mother's comments on the need for a loving school environment are self-evident. She said, "The children must be educated in an atmosphere of love and gentleness. No violence, never. No scolding, never. Always a gentle kindness and the teacher must be the living example of the virtues the child must acquire. The children must be happy to go to school, happy to learn, and the teacher must be their best friend who gives them the example of the qualities they must acquire."¹⁸ A teacher must possess an "equality of temper which makes children free from fear."¹⁹

¹⁶ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p106

¹⁷ CWSA, Vol 35, p 703

¹⁸ CWM, Vol 12, On Education, p194

¹⁹ CWM Vol 9, p81