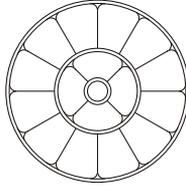


THE MOTHER

Questions and Answers
1954

Questions and Answers 1954



The Mother

Questions and Answers
1954

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

VOLUME 6
COLLECTED WORKS OF THE MOTHER

Second Edition

ISBN 81-7058-670-4

Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust 1979, 2003

Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department

Pondicherry - 605 002

Website: <http://sabda.sriaurobindoashram.org>

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

PRINTED IN INDIA



The Mother, 1954

Publisher's Note

This volume comprises talks given by the Mother in 1954 to the members of her French class. Held on Wednesday evenings at the Ashram Playground, the class was composed of sadhaks of the Ashram and students of its school. The Mother usually began by reading out a passage from one of her essays or a French translation of one of Sri Aurobindo's writings; she then commented on the passage or invited questions. During this year she discussed several of her essays on education and three small books by Sri Aurobindo: *Elements of Yoga*, *The Mother*, and *Bases of Yoga*. She spoke only in French. Further information on these talks and their publication is provided in the Note on the Text.

Contents

27 January	Does the body express one's character?	1
	Children and the psychic	4
	The power of observation	8
3 February	The senses and super-sense	10
	Children can be moulded	12
	Keeping things in order	12
	The shadow	16
10 February	Study a variety of subjects	18
	Memory	20
	Memory of past lives	21
	Getting rid of unpleasant thoughts	22
17 February	Experience expressed in different ways	24
	Origin of the psychic being	27
	Progress in sports	28
	Everything is not for the best	29
24 February	The manifestation is progressive	31
	Depression	32
	Psychic contact	33
	Liberation and humanity	34
	ABC of the transformation of the body	35
3 March	Occultism	38
	A French scientist's experiment	43
10 March	Death	46
	Death and determinism	47
	Fear	49

Contents

	The domain of death	52
	Stones falling on Sri Aurobindo's house	57
17 March	Ascetic practices	63
	Two kinds of submission	63
	The Kali of Virampatnam	64
	Kali	67
	Cruelty	70
	Rodin	72
24 March	Dreams and the condition of the stomach	74
	Tobacco and alcohol	74
	Nervousness	76
	The centres and the Kundalini	77
	Control of the senses	78
31 March	Three sources of vital energy	81
	Educating the senses	82
	A child brought up by a wolf	91
7 April	Communication without words	93
	Uneven progress	95
	Words and the Word	97
14 April	Love	100
	Can a person love another truly?	101
	Parental love	106
21 April	Physical transformation	109
	Activity and passivity	111
	The body: most capable of perfection	114
28 April	Aspiration and receptivity	115
	Resistance	116

Contents

	Purusha and Prakriti: not masculine and feminine	118
5 May	Faith, trust, confidence	120
	Insincerity and unconsciousness	125
12 May	The Purusha	128
	Surrender	129
	Distinguishing between influences	129
	Perfect sincerity	132
19 May	Affection and love	134
	Psychic vision	134
	Divine Love and receptivity	135
	Get out of the ego	136
26 May	Symbolic dreams	142
	Psychic sorrow	143
	Dreams: one is rarely conscious	147
2 June	Learning how to live	151
	Work, studies and sadhana	153
	Waste of the Energy and Consciousness	155
9 June	Dreams do not transform the nature	157
	Eating habits in the Ashram	158
	The earth and the psychic being	160
	Mother's awareness of people	164
16 June	Influences: Divine and other	168
	Adverse forces	169
	The four great Asuras	172
	Aspiration arranges circumstances	175
	Wanting only the Divine	176

Contents

23 June	Meat-eating	178
	Story of Mother's vegetable garden	181
	Faithfulness	182
	Conscious sleep	184
30 June	Occultism	189
	Religion and vital beings	193
	Mother's knowledge of what happens in the Ashram	197
	Asking questions to Mother	199
	"Drawing" on Mother	201
7 July	The inner warrior	203
	Grace and the Falsehood	205
	Opening from below	207
	Surrender and inertia	208
	Exclusive receptivity	213
	Grace and receptivity	216
14 July	The Divine and the Shakti	219
	Personal effort	220
	Speaking and thinking	222
	Doubt	224
	Self-giving, consecration and surrender	226
	Mother's use of flowers	230
	Ornaments and protection	233
21 July	Mistakes	236
	Success	238
	Asuras	240
	Mental arrogance	241
	Difficulty turned into opportunity	242
	Mother's use of flowers	244
	Conversion of men governed by adverse forces	245

Contents

28 July	Money	249
	Ego and individuality	253
	The shadow	262
4 August	Servant and worker	266
	Justification of weakness	267
	Play of the Divine	267
	Why are you here in the Ashram?	269
11 August	Division and creation	273
	The gods and human formations	274
	People carry their desires around them	279
18 August	Mahalakshmi	282
	Maheshwari	282
	Mahasaraswati	283
	Determinism and freedom	283
	Suffering and knowledge	287
	Aspects of the Mother	289
25 August	Ananda aspect of the Mother	291
	Changing conditions in the Ashram	296
	Ascetic discipline	301
	Mother's body	302
8 September	Hostile forces	305
	Substance	306
	Concentration	308
	Changing the centre of thought	310
	Peace	313
15 September	Parts of the being	316
	Thoughts and impulses	317
	The subconscious	319
	Precise vocabulary	321

Contents

	The Grace and difficulties	322
22 September	The supramental creation	327
	Rajasic eagerness	328
	Silence from above	328
	Aspiration and rejection	329
	Effort, individuality and ego	330
	Aspiration and desire	336
29 September	The right spirit	339
	The Divine comes first	341
	Finding the Divine	342
	Mistakes	342
	Rejecting impulses	343
	Making the consciousness vast	344
	Firm resolution	346
6 October	What happens is for the best	349
	Blaming oneself	350
	Experiences	350
	The vital desire-soul	355
	Creating a spiritual atmosphere	356
	Thought and Truth	358
13 October	The witness position	360
	The silent Self	361
	Experience of “All is Divine”	362
	Illness is remembered by the body	366
	Personal conflicts and the divine Will	369
20 October	Stand back	374
	Asking questions to Mother	375
	Seeing images in meditation	377
	Berlioz	379
	Music	381

Contents

	Mother's organ music	383
	Destiny	386
3 November	Body opening to the Divine	388
	Concentration in the heart	389
	The army of the Divine	389
	The knot of the ego	390
	Strengthening one's will	391
10 November	Inner experience: the basis of action	393
	Keeping open to the Force	393
	Faith through aspiration	394
	The Mother's symbol	395
	The mind and vital seize experience	396
	Degrees of sincerity	397
	Becoming conscious of the Divine Force	398
17 November	Impersonal and personal Divine	401
	Looking at oneself	402
	Faith and trust	403
	Abhimana	404
	Physical suffering	405
24 November	Aspiration mixed with desire	409
	Willing and desiring	410
	Children and desires	411
	Supermind and the higher ranges of mind	415
	Stages in the supramental manifestation	417
8 December	Cosmic consciousness	419
	"Clutching"	420
	The central will of the being	421
	Knowledge by identity	423
15 December	Many witnesses inside oneself	426

Contents

	Children in the Ashram	426
	Trance and the waking consciousness	427
	Ascetic methods	428
	Education: spontaneous effort	430
	Spiritual experience	432
22 December	Possession by hostile forces	434
	Purity and morality	438
	Faith in the final success	440
	Drawing back from the path	442
29 December	Difficulties and the world	446
	The experience the psychic being wants	447
	After death	448
	Ignorance	450
31 December	1955–1956: fourteen difficult months	453
	Human will and the divine Will	457
	Difficulties and the Divine	461
Note on the Text		465

Questions and Answers

1954

27 January 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "Physical Education".

Mother, does a person's body-formation express his character?

No. Even the character itself is not a simple affair, that is, the character of a person is not the expression of his true being but the result of many things. For example, atavism may be expressed, that is, what comes from the father, the mother, from both together which may have a different result; from the antecedents — the past history, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, etc., and then from the environment in which people have lived when they were very young and had no independence at all. That has a considerable effect on the character. And this character affects the physical formation. So, just by seeing somebody one cannot quite say what his true nature is. One may describe his tendencies, know his difficulties, his possibilities, but it is only with the growth of the consciousness and as the development becomes voluntary and organised that the body can begin to express the true character of the person.

And when the body has been deformed by illness?

That may be an accident, you know. Accidents are due to many things; in fact they are the result of a conflict of the forces in Nature, a conflict between the forces of growth and progress and the forces of destruction. When there is an accident, an accident that has lasting results, it is always the result of a more or less partial victory of the adverse forces, that is, of the forces of disintegration, disorganisation. It depends.

There are teachings, like that of theosophy for instance, which take Karma in an altogether superficial and human sense

Questions and Answers

and tell you: “Oh! You have met with this accident because in a former life you did something bad, so that comes back upon you in the form of an accident.” This is not true, not at all true. This is but human justice, it is neither the justice of Nature nor the justice of the Divine.

Naturally the formation of the body is very important in this sense that if, for instance, one is constantly under the influence of a depression, of pessimism, discouragement, a lack of faith and of trust in life, all this enters, so to say, into one’s substance, and then some people, when there is the possibility of an accident, never miss it. Every time there is a chance of something happening to them, they catch it, be it an illness or an accident. You have a whole field of observation here — it is always the same people who meet with accidents. Others do the same things, have as many chances of having an accident, but they are not touched. If you observe their character you will see that the former have a tendency to pessimism and more or less expect something unpleasant to happen to them — and it happens. Or else they are afraid. We know that fear always brings what one fears. If you fear an accident, this acts like a magnet drawing the accident towards you. In this sense, it may be said that it is the result of character. And the same thing holds for illness. There are people who can move about among the sick and in places where there are epidemics and never catch a disease. There are others — it is enough for them to spend an hour with a sick person, they catch the illness. That too depends on what they are within themselves.

And for children, is it also the same thing?

One cannot say. It is a moral question. The problem should not be judged from a moral point of view, one should not say that those who always enjoy good health and to whom nothing happens are “good children” and those who meet with accidents and suffer catastrophes are “bad”. That is not correct. For, as I

27 January 1954

was saying, the logic of Nature is not human logic and its sense of justice (if it has any) is not a human sense. For it there is very little of what we call good and bad. It could rather be said that there is what is constructive and what is destructive, what is progressive and what is retrogressive. That indeed is very important. And then there are those who are luminous, sunny, happy, smiling and those who are gloomy, dull, misanthropic, dissatisfied, who live in grey shadows. It is the latter who catch all the unpleasant things. Those who are radiant (they may be radiant without it being a spiritual radiance, they may simply radiate good sense, balance, an inner confidence, the joy of living), those who carry in themselves the joy of living, these are in harmony with Nature and, being in harmony with Nature, generally avoid accidents, they are immune from diseases and their life develops pleasantly as far as it is possible in the world as it is. And now?

“There is a prevalent belief that brilliant minds are found in weak bodies.” I haven’t understood this.

These were old ideas of the last century. They are no longer in fashion now, but at the end of the last century it was always thought that the more weak and sickly people were, the more brilliant was their mind, the more intelligent they were! Some even explained that the development of their intelligence was due to the fact that they could not draw any joy from their body — for they were quite incapable of living fully, so all their attention was turned to their mind and it was thus that their intelligence had developed. There was even a time when it was the fashion to look a little sickly. Poets, for instance, put on these airs.... An artist, he had to be a little sickly to give the impression that his mind was all afire! But that is now over. It was over even before you were born, I believe. It was the romantic age, the end of the last century. Men like Musset, for instance — I don’t know if you have ever seen a portrait of Musset, but indeed he had a sentimental and sickly look, and he added to it as much

Questions and Answers

as he could by his dress. It was thought that it gave him an artistic and poetic appearance. But now this is altogether out of fashion. People favour a good physical balance, good health, a strong body and all that is given by the physical training of children.

I read a story by a very well-known French novelist (it was a novel), which was set in prehistoric times, in the Stone Age, when man lived in caves, dressed in animal-skins and hunted in order to eat and in self-defence. Now, it happened that by some sort of accident a child was born lame or at least deformed or humpbacked or something like that. And generally, in those days (so it is narrated, I don't know), malformed children were killed because they were a burden. But for some reason or other its mother had hidden it and it had lived. And then this boy who had no means of hunting, for instance, or of doing all the work his companions were doing, had begun to develop his mind and had become the first poet, because he expressed in his words what the others did by their movements. Well, it is just ideas like these which are at the root of this feeling that in order to have a mind one must not have a body, and that the more ill one is, the more intelligent he is! Isn't that quite silly?

It is true that there is a certain independence. I think I spoke to you last time about a French poet called Sully Prudhomme who was dying of a very serious disease — a very painful and grave disease, and it was at this time that he wrote his most beautiful poems and said the most beautiful things to his friends. His mind was quite independent of his body. But still, this is not an absolute rule.

In children the psychic is always in the front, isn't it?

Not always. The psychic is more "in front" than later when they grow up and the mind develops, but it can't be said that in all children the psychic may be felt. And one cannot judge from those who are here, for the condition of admission I make when

27 January 1954

children are brought to me is this: if I see the psychic on the surface I take them, but if they are already veiled by all sorts of deformed activities, I don't take them. So, those whom we have here are an exception. It is the cream. It is a selection.

But why are there greedy children?

Oh, good heavens! Greedy, that's not a crime! There are greedy children. Perhaps they have a bad digestion and so always want to eat. They don't gain by what they eat. The whole outer being is full of difficulties of all kinds, in everybody — in children also. You would be more justified to ask me: "Why are there such cruel children?" That indeed is one of the most dreadful things.... But it is due to unconsciousness. It is because they are not even aware that they are making others suffer. And usually, if care is taken to make them understand — for instance, through experience — then they understand. Children who ill-treat animals (there are many of these) — well, that is because they don't even know that animals feel as they do. When they are made to understand that when they pinch animals or pull their hair or beat them it gives them pain, and if necessary when they are shown on their own bodies how it hurts, they don't do it any more!

There are some who are particularly wicked. These are under a pernicious influence. And at times this shows itself from their very infancy and they are like that all through their life, unless they are converted, which is not easy.

There is a sort of association between the physical and the psychic and between the mental and the vital being. A mental being is very often a very vital being. A psychic being is very often a physical being. Children — just because this psychic consciousness is in the front — live also altogether in their body. But as soon as one begins to develop the mind, the need for association also develops, with all the deformations that go with it. People who make very strict distinctions between man and woman (I

Questions and Answers

don't know why, for one is as good as the other), say that man is mental and vital and woman physical and psychic. There is some truth in it. But naturally it involves all possible exceptions and complications. These are arbitrary simplifications. In fact the physical being has a simplicity and even a goodwill (which is not always very enlightened, far from it), but still a simplicity and goodwill which put it in a closer relation with the psychic than the passions of the vital or the pretensions of the mind. And it is probably because of that also that in children the psychic can feel more at ease, being less constantly jostled by mental and vital contradictions.

How can one know whether the psychic being is in front or not?

Who? Oneself?... It is not felt, no? You don't feel it? I am not speaking of a small child, for it has no means of control and observation, it lacks the capacity of observation. But then, when one is no longer a baby, doesn't one feel it? It doesn't make a difference?... (*The child nods in assent.*) Ah!... There is not one of you who will dare to tell me that it makes no difference when the psychic is there, when one feels better within oneself, when one is full of light, hope, goodwill, generosity, compassion for the world, and sees life as a field of action, progress, realisation. Doesn't it make a difference from the days when one is bored, grumbling, when everything seems ugly, unpleasant, wicked, when one loves nobody, wants to break everything, gets angry, feels ill at ease, without strength, without energy, without any joy? That makes a difference, doesn't it?

It may make a difference, but one doesn't understand that the psychic is something else.

Naturally, if nobody has ever taught you what the psychic or the vital is, you cannot have any notion of the thing. You may say,

27 January 1954

“Today I feel good, yesterday I did not.” Till I was twenty-four I knew nothing about all these things, and yet I could distinguish very well these movements. I did not use these words because no one had taught them to me and I had never read anything, but I felt very clearly the difference at different moments and in what state of consciousness I was.

But you who are here, after all that you have heard and all that you have read and all that I have taught you, you should be aware of all the movements within you and be able to fix a little label: this is this, that is this other.

Do you know the days you are in good health and the days when you are ill? Physically. Do you know it?

Physically, yes.

Physically, quite sure? When you get up in the morning, can you say whether today the balance is good or not?

It changes from day to day.

That’s true, it changes all the time. Even during the same day. But when you have just got up, when just waking up and beginning your day, do you begin your day always in the same way?

No.

Ah! There are days when everything seems to you harmonious, and days when you are as with grinding wheels. Things grate within you, they don’t turn round. Well, it is something like that. If you observe it physically, for your body, afterwards you can observe it for your sensations, your feelings (a kind of inner impression), and then you observe your brain, if the head is clear or smoky. Yes?

Yes.

Questions and Answers

So it is the same thing.

In what part of the being does the power of observation develop?

I think the power of observation develops in all the parts of the being. You may have a mental power of observation, a vital power of observation, a physical power of observation. When you observe ideas, for instance, the train of ideas, the logic of the ideas, it is not altogether the same power of observation as when you look at a friend doing athletics and see whether he is making his movements correctly or not. That is, the capacity of attention is there in both cases, but it works in a different field. It can't be said that it is one part of the being observing the others; it is the faculty of observation developing in each part of the being — that is, the faculty of concentration and attention. For the capacity of observation must not be confused with the capacity of discernment. Discernment is an intellectual capacity. Something like a judgment already enters into it, what we call “discrimination”: you can distinguish between the origin of one thing and of another, and the reciprocal value of these things. But that ought to be founded on a correct observation. The power of observation comes first, discernment follows.

Is there a power of observation in the psychic?

More than that! There is the capacity for a direct vision of things. It is like a mirror in which all things are reflected, whatever they may be. But that is just what most children, when not deformed, have very clearly, a great sensibility — for example, to the atmosphere of those who approach them. There are children who, without any apparent reason, rush towards one person and run away in horror from another. For you both of them are equally good or not good, you make no difference. But in one instance the child is immediately attracted by the person, and in

27 January 1954

the other, try as hard as you may, it will weep, it will cry or it will run away, but it will have nothing to do with that person; and all this is a translation, in a consciousness of ignorance, of a psychic phenomenon: the vision of the psychic quality of that person.

Some people can concentrate very quickly while others can't.

Perhaps they are born like that, for some reason or other, or perhaps they have practised it even without knowing that they were doing so. Yes, there are children who, even when very young, are very attentive, and others who are always distracted. But that is how the inner constitution of different beings is. There are not two who are the same. Some are born with a great power of attention and there are others who don't have it.

Can it be increased?

One can develop it, one can, and there are no limits to the development. And it is even altogether indispensable to develop it.

3 February 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "Vital Education".

"In some ancient initiations it was stated that the number of senses that man can develop is not five but seven and in certain special cases even twelve. Certain races at certain times have, out of necessity, developed more or less perfectly one or another of these supplementary senses. With a proper discipline persistently followed, they are within the reach of all who are sincerely interested in this development and it results. Among the faculties that are often mentioned, there is, for example, the ability to widen the physical consciousness, project it out of oneself so as to concentrate it on a given point and thus obtain sight, hearing, smell, taste and even touch at a distance."

What are the names of these twelve senses?

The names? In the Chaldean tradition they were in Chaldaic. In other traditions, in other languages; in Egypt they were written in hieroglyphs. Each system gave its names. I had a list of the names — not only of the names but also of what they represented, what kind of sense each represented — but it was a very long time ago, I don't remember them any longer. As I have said there, it is in the field of things seen, felt, done at a distance by a concentrated projection of consciousness. For instance, one is in a room and, due to an illness or an accident, one cannot move. Next to this room there is another; next to that there is a sort of bridge; after the bridge there are steps going down; and these steps go down to a big studio in the middle of a garden. Now, the person laid up in the room wishes to know what is

3 February 1954

going on in the studio. He concentrates his consciousness and then extends it, so to say (truly it is as though he extended it almost materially), and he goes along the whole way and reaches the studio. If he does this properly, he sees what there is in the studio, can hear what is going on, though he is not there himself: the body is lying in a bed in a room, but the consciousness is projected. It is a physical consciousness. It is not an inner state, for one sees physically, hears physically. If there are people in the room one sees them, and if they are speaking one hears them speaking. Naturally, it is not from the very first day that one succeeds; it asks for a very rigorous discipline. It corresponds a little (a little) to that capacity which was developed in the Red Indians due to the conditions of their life. I don't know how it is at present, but formerly they used to put their ear to the earth, and they had so fine an ear that they could hear steps more than a mile away. They heard the steps of those who were walking at a distance of more than two or three kilometres simply by putting their ear to the ground. Or take the dog which, if given something to smell, finds the trail of that scent again, can follow it with its nose. Well, it is one kind of super-sense, that is, a sense that has reached such a degree of intensity and refinement that it can indeed feel what the ordinary sense does not feel, can see at a distance, really see, see physically at a distance, through walls. It is said that the blind develop a sense which enables them to feel an object at a distance. They do not see, they walk in darkness as in a black night; but they have a kind of sense of touch at a distance, a material contact due to which, long before touching the object, they know; for example, if there is a piece of furniture in their way, long before knocking against it, they feel it from a distance.

In children the mind is not developed when they are small. Is this also true of the vital?

No, the vital is much more developed than the mind. You know,

Questions and Answers

I have said there that things are crystallised,¹ that is they take a form, and a more and more precise, a more and more fixed form (the more precise the form, the more fixed it is). In children it is much more like water; it is not yet in a very concrete and precise form. That is why, moreover, one can have a great influence upon them, for it is still supple, it is not crystallised; one can notice it: it has something malleable about it, as though one were moulding butter; however, as soon as they are about twenty or twenty-five, the special disposition, the turn of character is fixed and, at that moment, instead of preventing defects, it becomes necessary to mend them. That is another thing. If one wants to give an education which prevents bad habits from being formed or bad tendencies from being pursued, an education which leads children constantly into the right path (that one wants them to follow), well, when they are small it is possible, when they become bigger, it becomes hard. One cannot change the imprint easily. Even sometimes it is necessary to break things to be able to change them: as those who are not progressive, who are fixed and remain fixed, who cling with all their strength to their petty habits. While the little ones are supple, one can change their opinions, one can make them progress, give them the sense that tomorrow one must do better than today.

Are bad habits, as for instance that of not keeping things in order, due to the vital?

That depends. For example, children who have no order, who can't keep their things carefully but lose or spoil them — there

¹ "In certain cases this education will encourage the movements that express the light, in others, on the contrary, those that express the shadow. If the circumstances and the environment are favourable, the light will grow at the expense of the shadow; otherwise the opposite will happen. And in this way the individual's character will crystallise according to the whims of Nature and the determinisms of material and vital life, unless a higher element comes in in time, a conscious will which, refusing to allow Nature to follow her whimsical ways, will replace them by a logical and clear-sighted discipline. This conscious will is what we mean by a rational method of education."

3 February 1954

are three reasons for this. Most often it is a child who lacks vitality. When it is like that, when it can't keep its things carefully and all is in disorder around it, this is always a sign of a lack of vitality; it does not have sufficient vitality to take interest in these outer things. The second reason is that it lacks interest in material life, the life of things, and that it has no discipline, doesn't discipline itself. For instance, children when they undress throw their clothes all over the place; or else, when they have finished playing, they leave their toys lying about; when they have written out their homework, everything is littered all around: the fountain-pen on one side, the notebook on another, the reader on a third, and then all these get lost. Unfortunately that's how it is with the great majority of the children here at the school, they lose everything. I have found books reduced to pulp because they had spent the whole night on a flower-pot and it had rained the next morning! When they were found, they were like gruel. But that is rare. Pencils too—I have a collection of fountain-pens and pencils picked up thus, having been lost. These are absolutely undisciplined natures, those who have no method—and within themselves they don't have any method either. And moreover they despise things—so, as Sri Aurobindo says, they are not worthy of having them. People who don't know how to deal with things carefully, don't deserve to have them. Sri Aurobindo has often written on this subject in his letters. He has said that if you don't know how to take care of material things, you have no right to have them. Indeed this shows a kind of selfishness and confusion in the human being, and it is not a good sign. And then later when they grow up, some of them cannot keep a cupboard in order or a drawer in order. They may be in a room which looks very tidy and very neat outwardly, and then you open a drawer or a cupboard, it is like a battlefield! Everything is pell-mell. You find everything in a jumble; nothing is arranged. These are people with a poor little head in which ideas lie in the same state as their material objects. They have not organised their ideas. They haven't put

Questions and Answers

them in order. They live in a cerebral confusion. And that is a sure sign, I have never met an exception to this rule: people who don't know how to keep their things in order — their ideas are in disorder in their heads, always. They exist together, the most contradictory ideas are put together, and not through a higher synthesis, don't you believe it: simply because of a disorder and an incapacity to organise their ideas. You don't need to speak even for ten minutes with people if you can manage to enter their room and open the drawers of their tables and look into their cupboard. You know in what state they are, don't you?

On the other hand, there was someone (I shall tell you who afterwards) who had in his room hundreds of books, countless sheets of paper, notebooks and all sorts of things, and so you entered the room and saw books and papers everywhere — a whole pile, it was quite full. But if you made the mistake to shift a single little bit of paper from its place, he knew it immediately and asked you, "Who has touched my things?" You, when you come in, see so many things that you feel quite lost. And yet each thing had its place. And it was so consciously done, I tell you, that if one paper was displaced — for instance, a paper with notes on it or a letter or something else which was taken away from one place and placed in another with the idea of putting things in order — he used to say, "You have touched my things; you have displaced them and put my things in disorder." That of course was Sri Aurobindo! That means you must not confuse order with poverty. Naturally if you have about a dozen books and a very limited number of things, it is easier to keep them in order, but what one must succeed in doing is to put into order — and a logical, conscious, intelligent order — a countless number of things. That asks for a capacity of organisation.

Of course, if someone is very ill, has no strength to spare, then that's different. And yet even here, there are limits. I knew ill people who could tell you, "Open this drawer and in the left corner at the back you will find such and such a thing under such another"; the man could not move and take it himself, but

3 February 1954

he knew very well where it was. But apart from that, the ideal is to have some organisation, as for instance of the kind found in libraries where there are hundreds of thousands of books and where everything is classified (naturally it is not done by just one man), but it is a work in which each thing is so well classified that even if you bring a card and say "I want this book", a quarter of an hour later you have it or sometimes in five minutes. That is organisation. And yet there are rooms full of books there. But all this is the result of work perfected by a large number of men, the result of a professional organisation. Well, for oneself, one must organise one's own things — and at the same time one's own ideas — in the same way, and must know exactly where things are and be able to go straight to them, because one's organisation is logical. It is your own logic — it may not be your neighbour's logic, not necessarily, it is your own logic — but your organisation being logical, you know exactly where a thing is and, as I told you, if that thing is displaced, you know it immediately. And those who can do that are generally those who can put their ideas into order and can also organise their character and can finally control their movements. And then, if you make progress, you succeed in governing your physical life; you begin to have a control over your physical movements. If you take life in that way, truly it becomes interesting. If one lives in a confusion, a disorder, an inner and outer chaos in which everything is mixed up and one is conscious of nothing and still less is master of things, this is not living. This is not living, it is being in a sea of inconscience, being tossed about by the waves, caught by the currents, thrown against rocks, seized again by another wave and thrown against another rock; and one goes on thus with bruises and blows and bumps. And then, should one ask you, "Why is it like this?" — "I don't know." — "Why did you do that?" — "I don't know." — "Why do you think in this way?" — "I don't know." — "Why did you make that movement?" — "I don't know." All the answers are "I don't know".

Essentially there is but one single true reason for living: it is

Questions and Answers

to know oneself. We are here to learn — to learn what we are, why we are here, and what we have to do. And if we don't know that, our life is altogether empty — for ourselves and for others.

And so, generally, it is better to begin early, for there is much to learn. If one wants to learn about life as it is, the world as it is, and then really know the why and the how of life, one can begin when very young, from the time one is very, very tiny — before the age of five. And then, when one is a hundred, one will still be able to learn. So it is interesting. And all the time one can have surprises, always learn something one didn't know, meet with an experience one did not have before, find something one was ignorant of. It is surely very interesting. And the more one knows, the more aware does one become that one has everything to learn. Truly, I could say that only fools believe they know. That indeed is a sure sign, someone coming and telling you, "Oh! I know all that; oh! I know all that"; he is immediately sized up!

You have said: "Everyone possesses... two opposite tendencies of character,... which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing."²

Why are things made in this way? Can't one have only the light?

Yes, if one eliminates the shadow. But it must be eliminated. That does not happen by itself. The world as it is is a mixed

² "...Everyone possesses in a large measure, and the exceptional individual in an increasing degree of precision, two opposite tendencies of character, in almost equal proportions, which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing. Thus someone who has the capacity of being exceptionally generous will suddenly find an obstinate avarice rising up in his nature, the courageous man will be a coward in some part of his being and the good man will suddenly have wicked impulses. In this way life seems to endow everyone not only with the possibility of expressing an ideal, but also with contrary elements representing in a concrete manner the battle he has to wage and the victory he has to win for the realisation to become possible. Consequently, all life is an education pursued more or less consciously, more or less willingly."

3 February 1954

world. You cannot have an object which gets the light from one side without its casting a shadow on the other. It is like that, and indeed it is the shadows which make you see the lights. The world is like that, and to have only the light one must definitely go through the entire discipline necessary for eliminating the shadow. This is what I have explained a little farther; I have said that this shadow was like a sign of what you had to conquer in your nature in order to be able to realise what you have come to do. If you have a part to play, a mission to fulfil, you will always carry in yourself the main difficulty preventing you from realising it, so that you have within your reach the victory you must win. If you had to fight against a difficulty which is everywhere on earth, it would be very difficult (you would need to have a very vast consciousness and a very great power), while if you carry in your own nature just the shadow or defect you must conquer, well, it is there, within your reach: you see all the time the effects of this thing and can fight it directly, immediately. It is a very practical organisation.

You haven't seen in the *Bulletin* that letter of Sri Aurobindo's: the "Evil Persona"? It is in the *Bulletin*. The thing is very well explained there.³

3

The "Evil Persona"

"What you say about the "Evil Persona" interests me greatly as it answers to my consistent experience that a person greatly endowed for the work has, always or almost always, — perhaps one ought not to make a too rigid universal rule about these things — a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or, if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, be solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that seem very disconcerting on the surface."

Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1660

10 February 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "Mental Education".

What is the method of increasing the "capacities of expansion and widening"?

I say there that a great variety of subjects should be studied. I believe that is it. For instance, if you are at school, to study all the subjects possible. If you are reading at home, not to read just one kind of thing, read all sorts of different things.

But, Sweet Mother, at school it is not possible to take many subjects. We have to specialise.

Yes, yes! I have heard that, especially from your teachers. I don't agree. And I know it very well, this is being continuously repeated to me: if anything is to be done properly, one must specialise. It is the same thing for sports also. It is the same for everything in life. It is said and repeated, and there are people who will prove it: to do something well one must specialise. One must do that and concentrate. If one wants to become a good philosopher, one must learn only philosophy, if one wants to be a good chemist, one must learn chemistry only. And if one wants to become a good tennis-player, one must play only tennis. That's not what I think, that is all I can say. My experience is different. I believe there are general faculties and that it is much more important to acquire these than to specialise — unless, naturally, it be like M. and Mme. Curie who wanted to develop a certain science, find something new, then of course they were compelled to concentrate on that science. But still that was only till they had discovered it; once they had found it, nothing stopped them from widening their mind.

10 February 1954

This is something I have heard from my very childhood, and I believe our great grandparents heard the same thing, and from all time it has been preached that if you want to succeed in something you must do only that. And as for me, I was scolded all the time because I did many different things! And I was always told I would never be good at anything. I studied, I did painting, I did music, and besides was busy with other things still. And I was told my music wouldn't be up to much, my painting wouldn't be worthwhile, and my studies would be quite incomplete. Probably it is quite true, but still I have found that this had its advantages — those very advantages I am speaking about, of widening, making supple one's mind and understanding. It is true that if I had wanted to be a first-class player and to play in concerts, it would have been necessary to do what they said. And as for painting, if I had wanted to be among the great artists of the time, it would have been necessary to do that. That's quite understandable. But still, that is just one point of view. I don't see any necessity of being the greatest artist, the greatest musician. That has always seemed to me a vanity. And besides, it is a question of opinion....

There is but one instance, that's when one wants to make a discovery. Then, naturally, one must dedicate all one's effort to that. But that is not necessarily a whole lifetime's effort — unless one chooses a very difficult subject as the Curies did. There was a time they had made their discovery — they could go beyond it.

Yet spontaneously, people who wish to keep their balance rest from one activity and take up another. Examples are always cited of great performers or great artists or great scientists who have a kind of hobby, a diversion. You have perhaps heard of Ingres's violin. Ingres was a painter; he did not lack talent and when he had some free time he started playing the violin, and his violin interested him much more than his painting. It seems he did not play the violin very well but it interested him more. And his painting he did very well and it interested him less. But I believe that was quite simply because he needed balance.

Questions and Answers

Concentration on a single thing in order to attain one's aim is very necessary for the human mind in its normal functioning, but one can arrive at a different working that's more complete, more subtle. Naturally, physically one is bound to be limited, for in physical life one depends a great deal on time and space, and also it is difficult to realise great things without special concentration. But if one wants to lead a higher and deeper life, I believe one can acquire perhaps much greater capacities by other means than those of restriction and limitation. There is a considerable advantage in getting rid of one's limits, if not from the point of view of realisation in action, at least from that of spiritual realisation.

Why do we forget things?

Ah! I suppose there are several reasons. First, because one makes use of the memory to remember. Memory is a mental instrument and depends on the formation of the brain. Your brain is constantly growing, unless it begins to degenerate, but still its growth can continue for a very, very long time, much longer than that of the body. And in this growth, necessarily some things will take the place of others. And as the mental instrument develops, things which have served their term or the transitory moment in the development may be wiped out to give place to the result. So the result of all that you knew is there, living in itself, but the road traversed to reach it may be completely blurred. That is, a good functioning of the memory means remembering only the results so as to be able to have the elements for moving forward and a new construction. That is more important than just retaining things rigidly in the mind.

Now, there is another aspect also. Apart from the mental memory, which is something defective, there are states of consciousness. Each state of consciousness in which one happens to be registers the phenomena of a particular moment, whatever they may be. If your consciousness remains limpid, wide

10 February 1954

and strong, you can at any moment whatsoever, by concentrating, call into the active consciousness what you did, thought, saw, observed at any time before; all this you can remember by bringing up in yourself the same state of consciousness. And that, that is never forgotten. You could live a thousand years and you would still remember it. Consequently, if you don't want to forget, it must be your consciousness which remembers and not your mental memory. Your mental memory will be wiped out inevitably, get blurred, and new things will take the place of the old ones. But things of which you are conscious you do not forget. You have only to bring up the same state of consciousness again. And thus one can remember circumstances one has lived thousands of years ago, if one knows how to bring up the same state of consciousness. It is in this way that one can remember one's past lives. This never gets blotted out, while you don't have any more the memory of what you have done physically when you were very young. You would be told many things you no longer remember. That gets wiped off immediately. For the brain is constantly changing and certain weaker cells are replaced by others which are much stronger, and by other combinations, other cerebral organisations. And so, what was there before is effaced or deformed.

One can remember things which happened thousands of years ago!

Yes, if you go to a certain place, if you succeed in entering into contact with the place which existed thousands of years ago. And, moreover (I believe I have written this somewhere), there is the record of the earth's consciousness, and if you know how to go to that place, you can not only remember your own life but everything that happened upon earth. It is recorded there, and it is a phenomenon of consciousness.

Questions and Answers

But how does one remember, Sweet Mother, for when one changes the body, the mind...

I have just told you how, my child, you did not listen to what I said. I said that if it is a mental remembrance it will be effaced; even in your present life you cannot recall incidents which took place twenty or thirty or forty years ago. But a state of consciousness is not a mental state. It has nothing to do with the mind. Indeed, most minds are dissolved with the body, except when there is a very well-made special formation, very “cohesive”, very well organised, which can last. But that is fairly rare. These are only exceptional cases. But consciousness is something quite different. Consciousness is an eternal state. The state of consciousness is an eternal state. Creation is born through consciousness and if consciousness were withdrawn, there would be no creation any longer. And if you enter into contact with consciousness, you can discover the whole history of creation, for creation comes from consciousness. Consciousness is eternal.

Mother, at times unpleasant thoughts come and disturb us. How can we get rid of them?

There are several methods. Generally — but it depends on people — generally, the easiest way is to think of something else. That is, to concentrate one’s attention upon something that has nothing to do with that thought, has no connection with that thought, like reading or some work — generally something creative, some creative work. For instance, those who write, while they are writing (let us take simply a novelist), while he is writing, all other thoughts are gone, for he is concentrated on what he is doing. When he finishes writing, if he has no control, the other thoughts will return. But precisely when a thought assails you, one can try to do some creative work; for example, the scientist could do some research work, a special study to discover something, something that is very absorbing; that is the easiest way.

10 February 1954

Naturally, those who have begun to control their thought can make a movement of rejection, push aside the thought as one would a physical object. But that is more difficult and asks for a much greater mastery. If one can manage it, it is more active, in the sense that if you reject that movement, that thought, if you chase it off effectively and constantly or almost repeatedly, finally it does not come any more. But in the other case, it can always return. That makes two methods.

The third means is to be able to bring down a sufficiently great light from above which will be the “denial” in the deeper sense; that is, if the thought which comes is something dark (and especially if it comes from the subconscious or inconscient and is sustained by instinct), if one can bring down from above the light of a true knowledge, a higher power, and put that light upon the thought, one can manage to dissolve it or enlighten or transform it — this is the supreme method. This is still a little more difficult. But it can be done, and if one does it, one is cured — not only does the thought not come back but the very cause is removed.

The first step is to think of something else (but in this way, you know, it will be indefinitely repeated); the second is to fight; and the third is to transform. When one has reached the third step, not only is one cured but one has made a permanent progress.

17 February 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "Psychic Education and Spiritual Education".

Once the being has entered into contact with the psychic, why does the psychic again hide itself?

It is not the psychic that hides itself, it is the being which returns to its ordinary consciousness!... It is difficult for it to remain at its highest. One slides down, falls back. Only, the second time the discovery is easier. And each time the road is easier until one no longer falls back.

Sweet Mother, I don't understand this: "Normally this discovery [of the eternal principle in oneself] is associated with a mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is mainly the religions that have concerned themselves with this aspect of life. But it need not necessarily be so: the mystic notion of God may be replaced by the more philosophical notion of truth and still the discovery will remain essentially the same, but the road leading to it may be taken even by the most intransigent positivist."

What is it that you don't understand? I mean that what one thinks is not of much importance because thought is formed by the surroundings in which one is born and the education one has received — but that is only one way of saying things. And you can say them in all sorts of ways: they remain what they are. What is it that you don't understand?

If the mystic notion of God is replaced by the more philosophical notion....

17 February 1954

It all depends on what meaning you put into the word “God”. It is a word (I have told you this at least four or five times) to express “something” you do not know but are trying to attain. Well, if you have received a religious education, you are accustomed to call this “God”. If you have received a more positivist and also a more philosophical education, you are accustomed to call this by all sorts of names, and you may at the same time have the idea that it is the supreme truth. If one wants to speak of God and describe him, one is obliged to make use of things which are the most inaccessible to our consciousness, and to call God what is beyond anything we know and can grasp and be — all that is too far for us to be able to understand, we call God. Only some religions (there are some) give a precise form to the godhead; and sometimes they give several forms and they have several gods; sometimes they give one form and have only one God; but all this is human fabrication. There is “something”, there is a reality which is beyond all our expressions, but which we can succeed in contacting by practising a discipline. We can identify ourselves with it. Once one is identified with it one knows what it is, but one cannot express it, for words cannot say it. So, if you use one kind of vocabulary, if you have a particular mental conviction, you will use the vocabulary corresponding to that conviction. If you belong to another group which has another way of speaking, you will call it or even think about it in that way. I am telling you this to give you the true impression, that there is something there which cannot be grasped — grasped by thought — but which exists. But the name you give it matters little, that’s of no importance, it *exists*. And so the only thing to do is to enter into contact with it — not to give it a name or describe it. In fact, there is hardly any use giving it a name or describing it. One must try to enter into contact, to concentrate upon it, live it, live that reality, and whatever the name you give it is not at all important once you have the experience. The experience alone matters. And when people associate the experience with a particular expression — and in so narrow a

Questions and Answers

way, so closed up in itself that apart from this formula one can find nothing — that is an inferiority. One must be able to *live* that reality through all possible paths, all occasions, all formations; one must live it, for that indeed is true, for that is supremely good, that is all-powerful, that knows everything, that... Yes, one can live that, but one cannot speak about it. And if one does speak, all that one says about it has no great importance. It is only one way of speaking, that is all. There is an entire line of philosophers and people who have replaced the notion of God by the notion of an impersonal Absolute or by a notion of Truth or a notion of justice or even by a notion of progress — of something eternally progressive; but for one who has within him the capacity of identifying himself with that, what has been said about it hasn't much importance. Sometimes one may read a whole book of philosophy and not progress a step farther. Sometimes one may be quite a fervent devotee of a religion and not progress. There are people who have spent entire lifetimes seated in contemplation and attained nothing. There are people (we have well-known examples) who used to do the most modest of manual works, like a cobbler mending old shoes, and who had an experience. It is altogether beyond what one thinks and says of it. It is a gift, that's all. And all that is needed is to be that — to succeed in identifying oneself with it and live it. At times you read one sentence in a book and that leads you there. Sometimes you read entire books of philosophy or religion and they get you nowhere. There are people, however, whom the reading of philosophy books helps to go ahead. But all these things are secondary. There is only one thing that's important: that is a sincere and persistent will, for these things don't happen in a twinkling. So one must persevere. When someone feels that he is not advancing, he must not get discouraged; he must try to find out what it is in the nature that is opposing, and then make the necessary progress. And suddenly one goes forward. And when you reach the end you have an experience. And what is remarkable is that people who have followed altogether different

17 February 1954

paths, with altogether different mental constructions, from the greatest believer to the most unbelieving, even materialists, have arrived at that experience, it is the same for everyone. Because it is true — because it is real, because it is the sole reality. And it is quite simply *that*. I do not say anything more. This is of no importance, the way one speaks about it, what is important is to follow the path, *your* path, no matter which — yes, to go there.

I did not understand the explanation of the psychic you have given: "One could say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the supreme origin of all manifestation which, through the medium of the one and universal consciousness, takes concrete form in the law or the truth of an individual and so, by a progressive development, becomes his soul or psychic being."

It is a little philosophical.... You know the difference between what is subjective and what is objective? You know it! Well, imagine precisely this Reality we were speaking about, which is at the origin of all things, passing from the subjective to the objective state. That is, what was within becomes as though projected outside. It is the *same* thing; it is the state that changes. And so, within it there are all the possibilities of objective existence; within they are unexpressed, unmanifested; outside they are projected, as a picture is projected on the cinema-screen: we see it before us. And every element that was a possibility within, a law, becomes the law of a realisation. And every one of these possibilities becomes the reality of a being, of an individuality if you like, of something existing objectively. And it is that law which is the origin of the centre of the psychic being: it is the truth of the being or the law of the being. The Buddha called it the "law", he spoke of the *Dharma*. It is the truth of the being. It is that which binds it again indestructibly to its origin. And

Questions and Answers

that is the starting-point of the psychic being. And so, even as this develops, like the picture on the screen, it takes a more and more complex and precise form in the manifestation. But the reality of that form is one, it is bound to the One. And all the units are linked together and reproduce the One.

Is it not easier?... (*Looking at the child*) It is still more difficult! But indeed, that's what I have said here.

Sweet Mother, you have said: "Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required."

Yes, that's quite simple! It is very clear!

Yes, but if I want to progress in sports, for instance, then that would be a personal progress, wouldn't it?

Eh? What? In sports? No, the value of the will depends on your aim. If it is in order to be successful and earn a reputation for yourself and be better than others — all sorts of ideas like that — then that becomes something very egoistic, very personal and you won't be able to progress — yes, you will make progress but still it won't lead you anywhere. But if you do it with the idea of being open, even in the physical, to the divine Influence, to be a good instrument and manifest Him, then that is very good. Not clear?

Yes.

Physical things are not necessarily more egoistic than mental or emotional ones. Far from it. They are often much less so. Egoism does not lie in that, egoism lies in the inner attitude. It does not depend on the field in which you are concentrated, it depends

17 February 1954

on the attitude you have. It does not depend on what you do, it depends on the way you do it.

Sweet Mother, you say: "Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding." But, Mother, it is said one must not be pessimistic, and here you have said, "They are always a clumsy attempt..."

This means that the material world, just as it is, is very awkward at expressing the truth which is behind. That is obvious. I believe we don't need to reflect very deeply to perceive that, unless there are people... Yes, in "The Four Austerities" I speak of those who are perfectly adjusted in life and find everything wonderful, but I haven't yet met many of these who can believe it all their life through. I am speaking of optimists — one is optimistic so long as one is healthy and very young, and then, as soon as one begins to be less strong and less healthy, optimism vanishes. But still, if one has a little sense and sensibility, it is easy to see that everything is not for the best in the best possible world, for if you yourself are comfortable and have all you need, if you are getting on well and have no cares, that does not mean that there are not millions of beings in altogether hard and painful situations. Then, it may be very easy to think only of oneself. But it is not something very advisable. I knew people who were very rich and had never had the chance to come into contact with those who had nothing or hadn't enough, and for them it was something unthinkable. I knew a lady (I knew many) who lived in a very fine apartment with many servants and all possible comfort — she had always lived thus and had never known any but easy circumstances — and one day I spoke to her about someone, a person of great worth and merit but who had nothing, hadn't enough to eat — and I asked her to help that person, not with money for he would not have accepted it, but with some work

Questions and Answers

or by inviting him to pass some time with her (for she had a philosophical mind and could have helped intellectually). So I told her: “You know, he doesn’t always eat his fill.” I saw that she did not understand. I said: “Well, yes, he does not always have enough money to buy food — buy bread and what he needs to eat.” — “But surely there is always bread and food in the kitchen!” (*Laughter*) She said that so spontaneously!

24 February 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "Psychic Education and Spiritual Education".

Sweet Mother, here you have said: "From beyond the frontiers of form a new force can be evoked, a power of consciousness which is as yet unexpressed and which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and give birth to a new world." Is the force you are speaking about the Divine?

What do you call the Divine? Give me your definition of the Divine. We have already dealt with this here once.

All that is upon earth is the expression of the Divine?

No, I am asking you what you call the Divine. You have an idea of the Divine, haven't you? You say "the Divine", what do you mean by that?

The Creator.

That's but a word. The Creator!!!

Where have I said it was necessary to be identified with the Divine in us? — In the *Bulletin*, I think. Don't you remember?

In any case, I have already told you many a time that the manifestation was progressive and will always be progressive and that what manifests in a certain period is only the beginning of something that will be manifested in the following age. Therefore, if one reaches the summit of creation, one must come upon something which has not yet manifested but will manifest since there are always new elements which manifest. This is

Questions and Answers

exactly what I have said. I have said that if one attained the summit of consciousness and passed beyond the forms presently manifested, one would enter into contact with a force, a reality which is not yet manifested but will manifest. And this summit of consciousness is never the last, for what has been attained one day, what seemed to be the final consciousness will be only a step so that the next day, in the next period, the next age, there may manifest something which was beyond and not then ready to manifest, not on the point of being manifested.

How can depressions be controlled?

Oh! There's a very simple way. Depression occurs generally in the vital, and one is overpowered by depression only when one keeps the consciousness in the vital, when one remains there. The only thing to do is to get out of the vital and enter a deeper consciousness. Even the higher mind, the luminous, higher mind, the most lofty thoughts have the power to drive away depression. Even when one reaches just the highest domains of thought, usually the depression disappears. But in any case, if one seeks shelter in the psychic, then there is no longer any room for depression.

Depression may come from two causes: either from a want of vital satisfaction or from a considerable nervous fatigue in the body. Depression arising from physical fatigue is set right fairly easily: one has but to take rest. One goes to bed and sleeps until one feels well again, or else one rests, dreams, lies down. The want of vital satisfaction comes up rather easily and usually one must face it with one's reason, must ferret out the cause of the depression, what has brought about the lack of satisfaction in the vital; and then one looks at it straight in the face and asks oneself whether that indeed has anything to do with one's inner aspiration or whether it is simply quite an ordinary movement. Generally one discovers that it has nothing to do with the inner aspiration and one can quite easily overcome it and resume one's

24 February 1954

normal movement. If that is not enough, then one must go deeper and deeper until one touches the psychic reality. Then one has only to put this psychic reality in contact with the movement of depression, and instantaneously it will vanish into thin air.

As for fighting in the vital domain itself — well, some people are good fighters and love to struggle with their vital — but to tell you the truth, that is much more difficult.

Once the psychic has come to the front, can it withdraw again?

Yes. Generally one has a series of experiences of identification, very intense at first, which later gradually diminish, and then one day you find that they have disappeared. Still you must not be disturbed, for it is quite a common phenomenon. But next time — the second time — the contact is more easily obtained. And then comes a moment, which is not very far off, when as soon as one concentrates and aspires, one gets a contact. One may not have the power of keeping it all the time, but can get it at will. Then, from that moment things become very easy. When one feels a difficulty or there is a problem to be solved, when one wants to make progress or there is just a depression to conquer or an obstacle to be overcome or else simply for the joy of identification (for it is an experience that gives a very concrete joy; at the moment of identification one truly feels a very, very great joy), then, at any moment whatever, one may pause, concentrate for a while and aspire, and quite naturally the contact is established and all problems which were to be solved are solved. Simply to concentrate — to sit down and concentrate — to aspire in this way, and the contact is made, so to say, instantaneously.

There comes a time, as I said, when this does not leave you, that is, it is in the depths of the consciousness and supports all that you do, and you never lose the contact. Then many things disappear. For instance, depression is one of these things,

Questions and Answers

discontentment, revolt, fatigue, depression, all these difficulties. And if one makes it a habit to step back, as we say, in one's consciousness and see on the screen of one's psychic consciousness — see all the circumstances, all the events, all the ideas, all the knowledge, everything — at that moment one sees *that* and has an altogether sure guide for everything that one may do. But this is bound to take a very long time to come.

To escape from life and become identified with the Unmanifest, isn't it necessary not only to be free from all egoism but also not to have the ego any longer?

Naturally.

But this very attitude of wanting to become identified with the Unmanifest and letting the world suffer, isn't this selfishness?

Yes. And so what happens is very remarkable, the result is always the same: those who have done that, at the last minute, have received a sort of intimation that they had to return to the world and do their work. It is as though they reached the door and — “Ah! No, no, not yet — go back and work. When the world is ready, then this will be all right.”

Indeed this habit of escaping from the difficulty is a supreme selfishness. You are told, “Do this, and then, when all the others have done it, all will be well with the whole world”, but it is only a very small élite among men who are ready to be able to do it. And these precisely are those who can be the most useful to the earth, for they know more about things than others, they have overcome many difficulties and can be of help to others just where those others can't. But the whole human mass, the immense human mass... For when some have succeeded — even a few hundred — one may tend to think it is “humanity”, but

24 February 1954

truly speaking it is only a kind of élite of humanity, it is a selection. The immense mass, all the people living all over the earth — merely in India, the immense population — formidable — which lives in the villages, the countryside, there is no question of their making an effort for liberation, to come out of the world in order to live the spiritual life. They don't even have the time to become aware of themselves! They are just there, attached to their work like a horse to the plough. They move in a rut from which, generally, they can't get out. So they can't be told, "Do as I do and all will be well." Because "Do as I do" means nothing at all. There are perhaps a few hundred who can do the same thing, no more!

Why does the body get tired? We have more or less regular activities, but one day we are full of energy and the next day we are quite tired.

Generally this comes from a kind of inner disequilibrium. There may be many reasons for it, but it all comes to this: a sort of disequilibrium between the different parts of the being. Now, it is also possible that the day one had the energy, one spent it too much, though this is not the case with children; children spend it until they can no longer do so. One sees a child active till the moment he suddenly falls fast asleep. He was there, moving, running; and then, all of a sudden, pluff! finished, he is asleep. And it is in this way that he grows up, becomes stronger and stronger. Consequently, it is not the spending that harms you. The expenditure is made up by the necessary rest — that is set right very well. No, it is a disequilibrium: the harmony between the different parts of the being is no longer sufficient.

People think they have only to continue doing for ever what they were doing or at least remain in the same state of consciousness, day after day do their little work, and all will go well. But it is not like that. Suddenly, for some reason or other, one part of the being — either your feelings or your thoughts

Questions and Answers

or your vital — makes progress, has discovered something, received a light, progressed. It takes a leap in progress. All the rest remains behind. This brings about a disequilibrium. That is enough to make you very tired. But in fact, it is not tiredness: it is something which makes you want to keep quiet, to concentrate, remain within yourself, be like that, and build up slowly a new harmony among the different parts of the being. And it is very necessary to have, at a given moment, a sort of rest, for an assimilation of what one has learnt and a harmonisation of the different parts of the being.

Now, as you know, from the physical point of view human beings live in frightful ignorance. They cannot even say exactly... For instance, would you be able to tell exactly, at every meal, the amount of food and the kind of food your body needs? — simply that, nothing more than that: how much should be taken and when it should be taken.... You know nothing about it, there's just a vague idea of it, a sort of imagination or guesswork or deduction or... all sorts of things which have nothing to do with knowledge. But that exact knowledge: "This is what I must eat, I must eat this much" — and then it is finished. "This is what my body needs." Well, that can be done. There's a time when one knows it very well. But it asks for years of labour, and above all years of work almost without any mental control, just with a consciousness that's subtle enough to establish a connection with the elements of transformation and progress. And to know also how to determine for one's body, exactly, the amount of physical effort, of material activity, of expenditure and recuperation of energy, the proportion between what is received and what is given, the utilisation of energies to re-establish a state of equilibrium which has been broken, to make the cells which are lagging behind progress, to build conditions for the possibility of higher progress, etc... it is a formidable task. And yet, it is that which must be done if one hopes to transform one's body. First it must be put completely in harmony with the inner consciousness. And to do that, it is a work in each cell, so

24 February 1954

to say, in each little activity, in every movement of the organs. With this alone one could be busy day and night without having to do anything else.... One does not keep up the effort and, above all, the concentration, nor the inner vision.

I have put to you quite a superficial question: it seems astonishing to you that one can know the exact amount of what one should eat, and what should be eaten at a certain time, and at what time one should take one's meal, and when one is ready for another! Well, that is an altogether superficial part of the problem, yet if you enter into the combination of the cells and the inner organisation in order that all this may be ready to respond to the descending Force... First, are you conscious of your physical cells and their different characteristics, their activity, the degree of their receptivity, of what is in a healthy condition and what is not? Can you say with certainty when you are tired, why you are tired? When there's something wrong somewhere, can you say, "It is because of this that I am suffering"?... Why do people rush to the doctor? Because they are under the illusion that the doctor knows better than they how to look inside their body and find out what's going on there — which is not very reasonable, but still that's the habit! But for oneself, who can look inside himself quite positively and precisely and know exactly what is out of order, why it is disturbed, how it has been disturbed? And all this is simply a work of observation; afterwards one must do what is necessary to put it back into order again, and that is still more difficult.

Well, this is the A B C of the transformation of the body.
Voilà.

3 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It".

Sweet Mother, I did not understand the ending, the last paragraph: "There is yet another way to conquer the fear of death, but it is within the reach of so few that it is mentioned here only as a matter of information. It is to enter into the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive, and then to return from this region and re-enter the physical body, resuming the course of material existence with full knowledge. But for that one must be an initiate."

What do you want to say? You have not understood what I meant?... I am not surprised! Has anyone understood?...

This is a domain about which I have so far refrained from speaking to you, for one must be already very conscious of oneself, have a good mastery over one's reflexes and be above all fear, precisely — above all possibility of fear, in order to be able to enter upon it. It is a knowledge which in the modern world is hardly recognised as scientific, but it *is* scientific in the sense that it follows some definite processes and that if the circumstances are correctly reproduced, the same results are obtained. It is a progressive science and one can devote oneself to it, can make quite a regular progress, as logical as in all the sciences that are acknowledged as such in modern times. But this one concerns a reality or certain realities which do not belong to the most material domain. One needs special capacities and a special development to be conscious in that domain, for it escapes our ordinary senses.

We have subtle senses; even as we have a physical body, we have other more subtle bodies which also have senses, and

3 March 1954

much more refined senses, much more precise and much more powerful than our physical senses. But naturally, as it is not customary in modern education to work in these domains, these things generally escape our ordinary knowledge. Yet children spontaneously live a great deal in this domain. They see things which are as real for them as physical things, they speak about them — and they are usually told that they are stupid because they speak of things others don't see but which are as true for them, as tangible and real as what can be seen by everyone. Their dreams have an intensity and a capital importance in their life, and it is only with intensive mental growth that those capacities diminish. Now, there are people who are fortunate to be born with their inner senses naturally developed, and nothing can prevent them from remaining awake. If these people meet in good time someone who can help them in a methodical development, they can become very interesting instruments for the study and discovery of this occult world. In all ages there have been initiatory schools which took up these particularly talented people and educated them in this kind of science. These schools were always more or less secret or hidden, for ordinary men are quite intolerant of those capacities which are beyond them — and disturb them. But there were fine periods in human history when these schools were recognised and much appreciated and respected, as in ancient Egypt, ancient Chaldea, ancient India, and even partially in Greece and Rome. There were always schools of initiation, even in mediaeval Europe, but there they had to be very carefully hidden, for they were pursued and persecuted by the official Christian religion, and if perchance it was discovered that such and such men or women were practising these occult sciences, they were tied to the stake and burnt alive as sorcerers!... In our times this knowledge is almost lost; there are only a very few people who have it; but with mental growth the intolerance also has gone. People don't like these things very much — they are disturbed, annoyed by them — but still they are obliged to admit that these things are not crimes and

Questions and Answers

people practising occultism are no longer burnt at the stake or imprisoned. Only, there are many people who claim to know but there are very few who do know. In any case, before entering upon this study, one must have, as I told you at the beginning, a very great self-mastery, must have attained a kind of abnegation, a self-forgetfulness, an egolessness, a disinterestedness and sense of sacrifice which enables one to practise this without any danger. For, if you keep all egoistic or passionate movements, full of desires, you are sure, in the practice of this science, to meet with accidents which may have fatal consequences. As I said at the beginning, the *absolutely* indispensable condition is to have an intrepidity which does not allow any fear to enter into you. For this has been very often said, and it is quite true, that when you enter the invisible realm, the first things you meet are literally terrifying. If you have no fear, there is no danger, but the least fear puts you into danger. So, before anybody at all was allowed to practise this science, for a very long time, sometimes for years, the novice was submitted to a discipline which gave him the assurance that he could practise it without experiencing the least fear and without any danger. That is why, my children, I have never spoken to you about it. This article was not specially for you — the *Bulletin* goes to the whole world and it can reach here and there people who are prepared. But still, because it is written, I am telling you about it this evening, and I tell you that if anyone among you feels a special inclination, possesses special faculties and is ready to overcome every weakness, all egoism and all fear, I am ready to help him on the way and reveal these secrets to him. *Voilà!*

Now, you will have to be a little more mature for me to undertake this task.

When will we be ready, Sweet Mother?

That depends upon you, my children! I practised occultism when I was twelve. But I must say I had no fear, I feared nothing. One

3 March 1954

goes out of one's body, but is tied by something resembling an almost imperceptible thread; if the thread is cut, it is all over. Life also is ended. One goes out, and then can begin seeing the world he has entered. And usually the first things one sees, as I said, are terrifying. Because, for you the air is empty, there is nothing in it—you see something blue or white, there are clouds, sunbeams, and all that is very pretty—but when you have the other sight, you see that it is filled with a multitude of small formations which are all residues of desires or of mental deformation and these swarm inside it, you see, in a mass, and this is not always very pretty. At times it is extremely ugly. This assails you; it comes, presses upon you, attacks you; and if you are afraid, it takes absolutely frightful forms. Naturally, if you do not flinch, if you can look upon all that with a healthy curiosity, you perceive that it is not at all so terrifying. It may not be pretty, but it is not terrifying.

I could tell you a little story.

I knew a Danish painter who was quite talented and who wanted to learn occultism. He had come here, you know, had met Sri Aurobindo; he had even done his portrait. That was during the war, and when he came back to France, he wanted me to teach him a little of this occult science. I taught him how to go out of his body etc., and the controls, all that. And I told him that, above all, the first thing was not to have any fear. Then, one day he came to tell me that he had had a dream the night before. But it was not a dream, for, as I have told you, he knew a bit about how to go out of his body, and he had gone out consciously. And once he had gone out he was looking around seeing what was to be seen, when suddenly he saw a formidable tiger coming towards him, drawing close with the most frightful intentions.... He remembered what I had told him, that he must not be afraid. So he began to say to himself, "There is no danger, I am protected, nothing can happen to me, I am wrapped up in the power of protection", and he began looking at the tiger in that way, without any fear. And as he went on looking at

Questions and Answers

the tiger, immediately it began to grow smaller and smaller and smaller and — it became a tiny little cat! (*Laughter*)

What does the tiger represent?

It was probably... That day he had become angry with somebody, he had lost his temper and entertained bad thoughts; he had hoped that something very unpleasant would happen to this person. Now, in occultism there is the “rebound”. You send out a bad thought, it returns to you as an attack. That is exactly one of the reasons why you must have a complete control over your feelings, sensations, thoughts, for if you become angry with someone or think badly of him, or if, still worse, you wish him ill, well, in your very dream you see this person coming with an extreme violence to attack you. Then, if you do not know these things, you say, “Why, I was right in having bad thoughts against him!” But in fact, it is not at all that. It is your own thought that comes back to you. And the person may be absolutely unaware of all that has happened, for — and this is one of the commonest laws in occultism — if you make a formation, for instance a mental formation that an accident or something unpleasant should happen to a certain person and you send out this formation, if it so happens that this person is in a very high state of consciousness, does not at all wish anything bad, is quite indifferent and disinterested in the affair, the formation will come up against his atmosphere and instead of entering will rebound upon the one who has made it. In this way serious accidents have taken place. There were certain people who practised that low deformation of occultism which is called magic and they had made formations through magic against someone. But this person happened to be far above this and could not be touched by those formations. So they returned upon those people, fatally. If they had made a formation of death, it would have been they who died.

I don't know whether you remember or not the story of the

3 March 1954

stones which fell in Sri Aurobindo's house? Everybody knows it, so I won't narrate it.

*What happens to this formation once it has worked ill?
Does it continue?*

No. When a formation of this kind acts, it goes with a definite purpose. It has been made with a definite purpose. It acts and once its action is over, it disappears, it has no longer any *raison d'être*. It was a formation for a particular action. When the action is accomplished, the formation dissolves. There are many other kinds of formations with more or less durable lives. I tell you it is a science — you cannot learn chemistry in an hour! But still, in a case like that, when the formation returns and strikes the one who has made it, it is finished. Its action is accomplished and comes to an end.

Everybody doesn't know the story of the stones.... You narrated it only to the little children, Sweet Mother.

I narrated it to the little ones....

Yes, but the older ones were not there! (Laughter)

It is nine o'clock. You have no other questions? If I tell you the story...

Sweet Mother, this morning you told us you would narrate...

Look here, I had another. How many stories can I tell you!

Well, the other one is very short. It is also interesting. It is about curing oneself of fear. (Perhaps Pavitra knows the name!)... There was a French scientist who had written a book in which he narrated an experience he had had in the *Jardin des*

Questions and Answers

Plantes. He wanted to know to what extent reason can have an effect over reflexes. I don't remember now — for years I knew his name; I have forgotten it, but still the story remains. He was a well-known scientist and he has written about his experiment in a book. It is often quoted as an example. He was very much interested in knowing to what extent reason, intelligence with clear knowledge, could have an effect upon reflexes, that is, upon movements which come up spontaneously from the sub-conscious, automatic movements, and he made this experiment: he went to the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris where not only plants but animals also are kept. And among these animals there were huge snakes. There was a snake there (I knew it, that snake), which had the reputation of having a very bad temper. That is, it could be made angry very easily. It was a very large snake and was very beautiful; it was black. And the scientist had been told by the keeper that this snake was very aggressive. These snakes are enclosed in huge glass cases, the glass being sufficiently thick to prevent any accident, as you may well imagine. So, he went to the cage of this serpent just when it was hungry (it had not eaten; when they have eaten they sleep). It had not eaten, so it was active. And he stood there in front of the cage, quite close to the glass and began exciting the snake — I don't remember now what he did — until it started getting angry. Then it coiled up and shot out like a released spring against the glass, against the face of that gentleman who was on the other side, and the man — who knew very well that the glass was there and nothing could happen to him — jumped back! And he repeated the experiment several times, and not once could he control his movement of recoil. He recoiled — every time the snake jumped he recoiled! (*Laughter*)

So he has spoken of his experiment. But he lacked one element of knowledge, for he did not know that the physical movement was accompanied by a considerable vital projection of the nervous force of the snake, and that it was this that affected him. It was because of this. He tried in vain to remain

3 March 1954

stiff, to tell himself, “But after all there is no danger, nothing can happen to me, there is the glass; why do I recoil?” (*Laughter*) It was that which came and gave him a shock and he jumped back.

There you are, now *au revoir*, my children. The story of the stones for another day. It is too late now.

10 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It".

Why have you written "The Fear of Death" just now?

Because it was necessary to say this.

So far you had not said it, Mother, why do you say it now?

Ah! There are many things I have not said. One must indeed begin one day. I don't think or have the impression that there was any occasion for it so far. Perhaps it came as the result of an experience.... Why, yes, I thought later that people would see a special significance in it, but there isn't any! (*Laughter*) Perhaps within you there is something.

There is one thing I have noticed, that every time somebody dies in the Ashram, many people are seized by panic. Now, I cannot say I appreciate this very much! Perhaps it was because of that that I wrote this article. For truly it is high time we were free from these things — a sort of tremor. I remember, the first time someone died in the Ashram, there was a veritable panic. I know lots of people of this kind, whom I won't name; they came here (they were already quite old) with the idea that, because they lived here, they would not die! It was an old idea, a very long time ago. And the first time someone died, it literally caused a panic. We received heaps of letters saying: "How is it possible? But then we are not safe! I was obliged to tell them that immortal life is something acquired with much effort, and not only much effort but the renunciation of so many things that there is not one among all those who were protesting who would give up his attachments for this immortal life. That is, they would prefer to die

10 March 1954

and keep their old habits to living immortally and losing them! There are many things which must be given up.... I have just mentioned this by the way in that article, but there are yet many more. All the small personal satisfactions, generally, must disappear — satisfactions of all kinds. I remember having spoken to someone — that was a long time ago — of the possibility of physical transformation, and I told him that one of the results would be that one would no longer need to eat, that one would recuperate strength directly from the universal forces or else from the Divine. And this person in an absolute consternation said to me, “And all the fine things one eats!” (*Laughter*) So, it is like that.

If we become immortal, then creation must cease?

Which creation?

The birth of men.

Oh! Naturally. Why, even long before becoming immortal. If anyone wants in the least to transform himself, this is the first thing that must stop. I have said it elsewhere, but...

Is fear the only cause of death?

Oh, no! Not at all. That is not what I have said, besides. I said that if one wanted to conquer death it was necessary to begin by not fearing it, which is quite a different thing. But I have not said that it was fear that brought about death.

You have said: “One can neither hasten nor delay its hour.” But death comes if one stops progressing. So, if one progresses, one can put off the hour. Or does this mean that from one’s birth the day and the moment of death are predestined?

No. This is altogether something else and on another plane. I

Questions and Answers

have written elsewhere that one dies only when one consents to die — which seems to contradict what I have said here. But this is the truth. I have told you this once already, I believe; in any case, I have written it somewhere. There are two points of view. Here I have taken quite an ordinary, material point of view, that of the physical consciousness. But I have explained somewhere that there are, as it were, different “layers of determinisms” in our being. The physical existence has a determinism; the vital existence has a determinism; the mental existence has a determinism; the higher mental, the psychic have a determinism. And then the higher existences have determinisms — the supramental existence has a determinism. And the determinism of everyone comes from the combination of all these determinisms (I am sure I have written this somewhere). If, for instance, at a given moment, when the entire physical determinism must necessarily bring death, you suddenly enter into contact with an extremely high determinism, like the supramental one, for example, and you succeed in joining the two, you change your physical determinism completely at that moment: death which had been determined by the physical determinism is abolished, and the conditions change and are pushed back.

I do not speak of this in that article. I have taken a purely material point of view. I have given the example of people (and people who lived almost exclusively in their material consciousness, their physical consciousness, you understand, mental, vital and material), and who eagerly wanted to die from the time they were fifty — they lived to be eighty-seven! I have had an instance of that. I had another example the very opposite of this, of someone who ardently wanted to live very long, who felt that he had many very important things to do and that he must not die, and he took all kinds of precautions against that — and yet he died. There may be cases which seem contradictory, but that is only an appearance. There are explanations for all these things, they obey different laws. Here I have taken the purely material point of view.

10 March 1954

If you do not make a higher determinism intervene, truly you can change nothing. That is the only way of changing your physical determinism. If you remain in your physical consciousness and want to change your determinism, you cannot... During the First War I knew a boy who had been told he would die of a gunshot (you know in war one dies easily), and he had even been given an approximate date. And that caused him such agony that he had succeeded in getting a long leave. He came to Paris on leave. He was an officer and had his pistol in his pocket. He jumped from a tram and fell down, the pistol went off and he was killed on the spot. He could not escape.

I could narrate any number of such examples to you. But this belongs to a single plane, the material plane—the purely material physical, mental and vital plane. It is only a higher knowledge and a contact with the higher planes and the descent of these higher planes into the physical plane, which can change circumstances. So too, if one succeeded in bringing down the supramental plane permanently into the physical life, physical life would be transformed, that is, it would change totally. But only on this condition. I do not speak of this in that article, that's another subject.

Anything else?

Why does one feel afraid?

I have been told—and this was one of the teachings of a very old tradition—that it was the influence of the adverse forces upon earth that had created fear, for it was their way of acting on human beings. But animals also feel fear. So that takes away a little from the strength of the argument, for I don't think the adverse beings have any special interest in creating fear in animals.

Fear is a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from ignorance. One does not know the nature of a certain thing, does not know its effect or what

Questions and Answers

will happen, does not know the consequences of one's acts, one does not know so many things; and this ignorance brings fear. One fears what one does not know. Take a child, if it is brought before someone it does not know (I am not speaking of a child with an awakened inner consciousness, I am speaking of an ordinary child), — you bring it before someone it does not know, its first movement will always be one of fear. Only very rare children — and they have another consciousness — are very bold. It may also be a mixture of apprehension, a kind of instinct. When one instinctively feels that something is dangerous and hasn't the means to remedy it, when one does not know what to do to protect himself from it, then he is afraid. There are, I believe, countless reasons for fear. But it is a movement of unconsciousness, in every case.

That which knows has no fear. That which is perfectly awake, which is fully conscious and which knows, has no fear. It is always something dark that is afraid.

One of the great remedies for conquering fear is to face boldly what one fears. You are put face to face with the danger you fear and you fear it no longer. The fear disappears. From the yogic point of view, the point of view of discipline, this is the cure recommended. In the ancient initiations, especially in Egypt, in order to practise occultism, as I was telling you last time, it was necessary to abolish the fear of death completely. Well, one of the practices of those days was to lay the neophyte in a sarcophagus and leave him in there for a few days, as though he were dead. Naturally, he was not left to die, neither of hunger nor suffocation, but still he remained lying there as though he were dead. It seems that cures you of all fear.

When fear comes, if one succeeds in putting upon it consciousness, knowledge, force, light, one can cure it altogether. There is indeed the Christian religion which says that fear comes of our having eaten the apple in the Garden of Eden — that with knowledge came fear; and upon earth it is always this fear which governs all life, for all human beings. Only, here again I repeat

10 March 1954

my argument that animals also have fear — animals have not sinned, haven't eaten the apple, so they shouldn't have any fear! It is a half-consciousness mixed with a sort of ignorant instinct which stresses a danger and at the same time does not know its remedy. But certainly, the fact is that the adverse beings, beings of the vital world who fight against the divine Work, make an extensive use of fear. It is through that that they have the strongest hold on human beings. Besides, they are not the only ones: there are also all the political and religious means which are of that type. There are religions which found their power over the believers simply through the fear of death and of what will happen thereafter, and of all catastrophes which await you after death if you do not obey blindly the laws they dictate to you.

This fear may also come from an antipathy, that is, a lack of affinity with something. Some people are especially afraid of fire, some especially fear water, others have a special fear of one animal or another. It comes from a disharmony between the vital vibrations. And then it is translated in this body-unconsciousness by fear. The body is a terribly unconscious thing. How one has to work to give it just a very little consciousness! It lives automatically, by habit. It is terribly unconscious.

So, the sequel?

“The hour of death seems therefore to be inexorably fixed, except for a very few individuals who possess powers that the human race in general does not command.”

This is exactly what I have just explained. It is a very few who are capable of bringing down another determinism into the physical determinism. These can change the hour of death. This is exactly what I have just been explaining at full length. The power lies in bringing down a higher consciousness into the material consciousness, and with the higher consciousness bringing down a higher determinism which changes the material determinism.

Questions and Answers

And not many have that power. I have said a very few do. In fact it is a very, very few.

The last method, you have said, is to enter the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive....

Yes.

What is the difference between entering consciously into death and consciously going out of one's body? Many people can go out of their body, can't they?

Yes, but they don't all go into the world of death.

Is it the same method as for going out of one's body?

Yes, but that is only the beginning. One begins by learning how to go out of one's body. Many people, when they sleep, go out of their body. They do it more or less consciously — the majority unconsciously, but still there are a few who do it consciously. They go out of their body but remain in the physical domain. At the most they go into some mental region but they do not go into the domain of death.

There are some who go there, but then, for the process to be complete... you must know that when one goes out of one's body, one remains tied to the body by a certain number of links — what shall I call them? They may be vital links, links of the mind, psychic links — when one goes out, it can be all kinds of things which go out of the body. Usually what goes out is something quite subtle, like the mind or the higher vital, and much remains in the body, enough for the body not to enter into trance. Among sleepers some even move about often in their sleep: there is one part of their being which is exteriorised but the most material part of their vital being is in the body. And as

10 March 1954

long as that is there, it is altogether in the domain of life. First of all, it is not easy to detach from the body exactly that part which leaves it at the moment of death. This asks for a very rigorous discipline practised for a very long time. There is a process of exteriorisation to follow in order to succeed in making all the parts which leave at death go out; and in this case the body enters into a cataleptic state. It goes into the state in which it is found when one dies. It even becomes very rapidly completely rigid. Well, this is something one must learn to do, and it is not very easy; and if one wants to do it quite completely, somebody must always be there to watch the body so that nothing may happen. One can never do it all alone. Somebody must be there to guard the body.

But even if one does all that, that is not quite the experience I am speaking about. The experience I am speaking about is still much more difficult. Once one has gone out like that and left his body in a cataleptic state, one cuts the links. So, one is really dead; that is, the heart beats no longer. But as there is still “the life of the form”, and it is not through an accident that one has left, as it is by an act of will with knowledge and power, one can force one’s way back, re-establish the connection and come back forcibly into one’s body. It is not a comfortable business — the whole thing is difficult. Like that, on paper it seems to be nothing at all. But it is not easy.

*You have said here: “It is within the reach of so few.”
So this means there are people who have done it. Hence
they have attained immortality, but so far...*

Immortality! No, I have not said that this was immortality. I have said that they got rid of all fear of death. That is quite a different thing.

But they enter the domain of death, don’t they?

Questions and Answers

Yes, but *at that moment* the body is in a good condition. The body is in good order and one can find it again — it is not a question of remaining outside for long like that!

But they have had the experience, so when they really die they try once again the same thing?

If their body is in good condition. But usually, when one dies something has happened to the body, you know. There is something seriously out of order in the body. But still, it is not yet certain that having gone out of one's body, one cannot keep the ability to put what is disturbed back into order unless it is something very serious like a stab in the heart or when the head's cut off! That is grave enough but still if the body remains intact, if it is only a disequilibrium, it can be re-established.

Mother, what happens if the links are broken?

If the links are broken? — One dies.

But the part that has gone out of the body?

That, if it is conscious, remains absolutely conscious. It has its own independent life, it remains absolutely conscious. Cut off or not, that changes nothing in its life. It does not give it more consciousness, does not take away any from it — the consciousness it has, the knowledge it has, the power it has, these it keeps. One who is able to do this does not depend upon the body. That is, in order to be conscious, one does not depend at all — at all — upon the body. He has an altogether independent consciousness.

“Domain of death” means what?

Every religion has spoken about it differently. The Greeks had their “Elysium”, one crossed over in a “boat”. There are all the paradises, all the hells.

10 March 1954

No, not religions.

Generally, “domain of death” is the name given to a certain region of the most material vital into which one is projected at the moment one leaves one’s body. The part — how to put it? — of one’s life that’s usually the most conscious is projected there at the moment of death. Well, that region, that material vital world is very dark, it is full of adverse formations having desires at their centre or even adverse wills, and these are very, very elemental entities which have a very fragmentary life and are like vampires, in the sense that they feed on all that is thrown out from human beings. And so, at that moment, from the shock of death — for very few die without a shock, go out consciously, in full knowledge of the thing, there are not many such — usually it is an accident: a last accident; well, at that shock of death, those entities rush in upon this, upon this vitality that goes out, and feed upon it. So long as a person is alive, they cannot touch him. For, you have all had the experience of a nightmare in which, when the situation becomes really very dangerous, suddenly you wake up — you come back into your body, for the body is your protection. In the physical they can do nothing to you but when you are completely outside the physical (and even this link I spoke about serves as a protection to a certain extent when you go out), but if the links are broken and you are entirely without a body, well, unless you take advantage of special circumstances... as for instance when a person is much loved by others who are yet alive; if at that moment these people who love him concentrate their thought and love on the departed one, he finds a refuge therein, and this protects him completely against those entities; but one who passes away without anyone’s having a special attachment for him, either because he is surrounded by people he has harmed and who do not love him or by people who are in a terribly unconscious state — he is like a prey delivered to these forces. And that indeed is an experience that’s difficult to bear. They cannot touch anything

Questions and Answers

else except what belongs to their own domain, that is, the most material vital—the higher vital escapes them altogether, they can do nothing there. And so, this material vital goes out but the other remains; and this higher vital is attacked by other dangers, simply that. And if it also disappears, the mind remains. But behind all this is the psychic being which nothing can touch, which is above all possible attacks, and it indeed is free to go where it wants. Usually—unless it has a special opportunity and has reached a state of complete development—it goes to rest in the psychic worlds. There it enters into a kind of beatific contemplation in which it remains, and this is an assimilation of all its experiences, and when it has finished assimilating them and resting, well, it starts preparing to come down again for a new life. That being nothing can touch. But so very few are conscious of their psychic that one can hardly say that it is such and such a person whom one has known, for people as we know them are made of what?—of all their physical experiences, all their vital reactions, all their mental formations—that is, the body, the character, the thought—and with these we have a human being! Well, all that cannot persist after death unless it is organised and centralised around the psychic being and to the extent it is perfectly unified with the psychic. Otherwise all this mixture is dissolved and the psychic being alone remains, at times just as a flame, at times as a completely conscious being.

This of course is the general law. Now there are bridges, as it were, “protected passages” which have been built in the vital world in order to cross over all these dangers. There are atmospheres which receive people leaving their body, give them shelter, give them protection. There are all kinds of other conditions; what I have told you just now is the normal state of those who die, of ordinary human beings, but as soon as we come to a little higher type of humanity, all these conditions change. The general law remains unless there is a special higher development within the being. There are people with so total a cohesion in

10 March 1954

their being that they no longer depend upon the body — not at all — whether it be there or not there.

But all this development does not come about just like that, simply by thinking about it from time to time, desiring it still less often and forgetting it most of the time — no, it is not like that that it can happen. These are disciplines, I may say, at least as arduous as the strictest spiritual disciplines.... Essentially it is for this that we are on the earth. Truly speaking, human beings were made for this purpose, to do that work, and it is perhaps because they refuse to do it that there is so much chaos in the world. If they did it truly, things would go much better.

My children, it is 9.20; if you have a very interesting question to ask, ask it!

You had said you would tell us the story of the stones.

That is quite another domain. That's not the domain of death; it is a domain of the material vital, the most material vital, that which controls the physical, is just behind the physical — the material vital.

There was a time we were living in the Guest House.¹ Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor, in the room right at the end which is now the meditation-room of the children's boarding. I believe there are two rooms side by side, one used to be a bathroom but is now an ordinary room, and a room next to it which was mine — the bathroom and another room. Sri Aurobindo was on one side.

How many of us were there in that house?... Amrita was there (*turning to the disciple*), weren't you, Amrita, do you remember that day? (*Laughter*) We had a cook called Vatel. This cook was rather bad-tempered and didn't like being reproved

¹ Sri Aurobindo lived in the Guest House (41 rue François Martin) between 1913 and September 1922. The incident related by Mother here occurred in 1921, sometime in the middle of December.

Questions and Answers

about his work. Moreover, he was in contact with some Muslims who had it seems, magical powers — they had a book of magic and the ability to practise magic. One day, this cook had done something very bad and had been scolded — I don't know if any of you knew Datta, it was Datta who had scolded him — and he was furious. He had threatened us, saying, “You will see, you will be compelled to leave this house.” We had taken no notice of it.

Two or three days later, I think, someone came and told me that stones had fallen in the courtyard — a few stones, three or four: bits of brick. We wondered who was throwing stones from the next house. We did exactly what we forbid children to do: we went round on the walls and roofs to see if we could find someone or the stones or something — we found nothing.

That happened, I believe, between four and five in the afternoon. As the day declined, the number of stones increased. The next day, there were still more. They started striking specially the door of the kitchen and one of them struck Datta's arm as she was going across the courtyard. The number increased very much. The interest was growing. And as the interest grew, it produced a kind of effect of multiplication! And the stones began falling in several directions at the same time, in places where there were neither doors nor windows; there was a staircase, but it had no opening in those days: there was only a small bull's-eye. And the stones were falling on the staircase this way (*vertical gesture*); if they had come through the bull's-eye, they would have come like this (*slantwise movement*), but they were falling straight down. So, I think everyone started to become truly interested. I must tell you that this Vatel had informed us that he was ill and for the last two days — since the stones had started falling — he hadn't come. But he had left with us his under-cook, a young boy of about thirteen or fourteen, quite fat, somewhat lifeless and a little quiet, perhaps a little stupid. And we noticed that when this boy moved around, wherever he went the stones increased. The young men who were there

10 March 1954

— Amrita among them — shut the boy up in a room, with all the doors and windows closed; they started making experiments like the spiritists (*laughing*): “Close all the doors, close all the windows.” And there was the boy sitting there inside and the stones began falling, with all the doors and windows closed! And more and more fell, and finally the boy was wounded in the leg. Then they started feeling the thing was going too far.

I was with Sri Aurobindo: quietly we were working, meditating together. The boys cast a furtive glance to see what was going on and began warning us, for it was perhaps time to tell us that the thing was taking pretty serious proportions. I understood immediately what the matter was.

I must tell you that we had made an attempt earlier to exhaust all possibilities of an ordinary, physical explanation. We had called in the police, informed them that there was somebody throwing stones at us, and they wanted very much to come and see what was happening. So a policeman — who was a fine good fellow — immediately told us, “Oh! You have Vatel as your cook. Yes, yes, we know what it is!” He had a loaded pistol and stood waiting there in the courtyard — not a stone! I was on the terrace with Sri Aurobindo; I said to Sri Aurobindo, “That’s a bit too bad, we call the police and just then the stones stop falling! But that is very annoying, in this way he will think we haven’t told the truth, for no stones are falling.” Instantaneously the stones began falling again. (*Laughter*)

You should note that the stones were falling quite a long way off from the terrace and not one of them came anywhere near us.

So the policeman said, “It’s not worthwhile, my staying here, I know what it is, it is Vatel who has done this against you, I am going.”

It was after this that we made the experiment of shutting up the boy, and the stones began to fall in the closed room and I was informed that the boy had been wounded. Then I said, “All right, send the boy out of the house immediately. Send him to another

Questions and Answers

house, anywhere, and let him be looked after, but don't keep him here, and then, that's all. Keep quiet and don't be afraid." I was in the room with Sri Aurobindo and I thought, "We'll see what it is." I went into meditation and gave a little call. I said, "Let us see, who is throwing stones at us now? You must come and tell us who is throwing stones."... I saw three little entities of the vital, those small entities which have no strength and just enough consciousness confined to one action — it is nothing at all; but these entities are at the service of people who practise magic. When people practise magic, they order them to come and they are compelled to obey. There are signs, there are words. So, they came, they were frightened — they were terribly frightened! I said, "But why do you fling stones like that? What does it mean, this bad joke?" They replied, "We are compelled, we are compelled... (*Laughter*) It is not our fault, we have been ordered to do it, it is not our fault."

I really felt so much like laughing but still I kept a serious face and told them, "Well, you must stop this, you understand!" Then they told me, "Don't you want to keep us? We shall do all that you ask." "Ah!" I thought, "Let us see, this is perhaps going to be interesting." I said to them, "But what can you do?" — "We know how to throw stones." (*Laughter*) — "That doesn't interest me at all, I don't want to throw stones at anyone... but could you perchance bring me flowers? Can you bring me some roses?" Then they looked at one another in great dismay and answered, "No, we are not made for that, we don't know how to do it." I said, "I don't need you, go away, and take care specially never to come back, for otherwise it will be disastrous!" They ran away and never came back.

There was one thing I had noticed: it was only at the level of the roof that the stones were seen — from the roof downwards, we saw the stones; just till the roof, above it there were no stones. This meant that it was like an automatic formation. In the air nothing could be seen: they materialised in the atmosphere of the house and fell.

10 March 1954

And to complete the movement, the next morning — all this happened in the evening — the next morning I came down to pay a visit to the kitchen — there were pillars in the kitchen — and upon one of the pillars I found some signs with numbers as though made with a bit of charcoal, very roughly drawn — I don't remember the signs now — and also words in Tamil. Then I rubbed out everything carefully and made an invocation, and so it was finished, the comedy was over.

However, not quite. Vatel's daughter was *ayah* in the house, the maid-servant. She came early in the afternoon in a state of intense fright saying, "My father is in the hospital, he is dying; this morning something happened to him; suddenly he felt very ill and he is dying, he has been taken to the hospital, I am terribly frightened." I knew what it was. I went to Sri Aurobindo and said to him, "You know, Vatel is in the hospital, he is dying." Then Sri Aurobindo looked at me, he smiled: "Oh, just for a few stones!" (*Laughter*)

That very evening Vatel was cured. But he never started anything again.

How could the stones be seen?

That's what is remarkable. There are beings that have the power of dematerialising and rematerialising objects. These were quite ordinary pieces of bricks, but these pieces materialised only in the field where the magic acted. The magic was practised for this house, especially for its courtyard, and the action of vital forces worked only there. That was why when I sent away the boy and he went to another house, not a single stone hit him any more. The magical formation was made specially for this house, and the stones materialised in the courtyard. And as it was something specially directed against Datta, she was hit on her arm.

There was yet something else.... Ah, yes! We came to know later to which magician Vatel had gone. He had gone to a

Questions and Answers

magician who, it seems, is very well known here and he had said that he wanted definitely to make us leave that house — I don't know why. He was furious. And so he asked the magician to make stones fall there. The magician told him, "But that's the house Sri Aurobindo lives in!" He said, "Yes." — "Ah! No, I am not going to meddle in this business; you manage it, I am not getting involved." Then Vatel insisted very much; he even promised him a greater reward, a little more money. The magician said, "Well, look here; we are going to make a rule: in a circle of twenty-five metres around Sri Aurobindo" — I think he said twenty or twenty-five metres — "the stones will not fall. Always there will have to be twenty-five metres' distance between the stones and Sri Aurobindo." And he arranged his order of magic in this way. And that was why never did a single stone come anywhere near us, never. They fell at the other end of the courtyard.

They know how to do all that, it is written in their books. These are words and ceremonies having a certain power. Naturally, those who do that must have a vital force. A vital force is necessary — a little mental force also, not much, even very little — but quite a strong vital power to control these little entities, govern them. And these people rule them precisely through fear, for they have the power to dissolve them, so these entities fear this very much. But upon all these formations, all these entities, it is enough to put simply one drop of the true, pure light, the pure white light — the true, pure light which is the supreme light of construction — you put one drop upon them: they dissolve as though there had been nothing at all there. And yet this is not a force of destruction; it is a force of construction but it is so alien to their nature that they disappear. It is this they feared, for I had called them by showing them this white light; I had told them, "Look, here is this! Come." But their offer was touching: "Oh! We shall do everything you want." I said, "Good, what can you do?" — "Throw stones!" (*Laughter*)

17 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part I.

Here you have said: "The avowed purpose of such [ascetic] practices is to abolish all sensation so that the body may no longer stand in the way of one's flight towards the Spirit."

In the old spiritual doctrines, the body was always considered incapable of being transformed and only as something inert and useless obstructing the path — the spirit had to be made to go out of its body so that, free, it could have all possible experiences. And so they ill-treated the body as much as they could to take away from it its vitality and strength, to keep it very quiet like something utterly useless.

The physical consciousness was for them something to be done away with.

That was it. I am speaking as they themselves spoke. I am putting myself in their place.

Last time, in the text it was said: "They [those who have faith in a God, their God] belong to him integrally; all the events of their lives are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely with calm submission but with gratitude, for they are convinced that whatever happens to them is always for their own good."

What is the difference between a calm and a grateful submission?

A calm and a grateful submission?... When you receive an order, you may carry it out with resignation because you

Questions and Answers

have resolved to submit; so you carry out this order without any joy or pleasure, just very drily and superficially, and you tell yourself, "I was told to do this and I am doing it." This means that you do not try to understand and make no effort to adhere willingly to what is asked. This is resigned submission. You accept your fate and if you do not complain it is because you have determined not to complain, it is because of this determination, otherwise you would complain.

The other instance is of understanding why an order was given, of grasping its inner value and wanting to express what has been asked with all one's strength, with the knowledge and joy that it is something that's bound to bring the Divine closer and give you full satisfaction. Then you are happy, you are satisfied and you collaborate. That makes quite a considerable difference.

In a calm submission, doesn't one feel happy?

Usually one is very proud of oneself! One becomes vain, tells oneself that one is doing something remarkable. One doesn't question, doesn't try to understand: one obeys, and besides is resigned. One doesn't even ask oneself if it is good or not: one is too superior! One is puffed up with pride. There are many people of this kind here.

So it is not a true submission, is it?

I think the other one is better. At least here one has the satisfaction of understanding why he does things; one does them with joy and feels strengthened through the very fact of doing them, while in the first instance one bends the head lower and lower and feels as though one were a poor victim of some despotic authority crushing one with its omnipotence.

17 March 1954

In the temples people offer animals to the Divine. In this case can it be called cruelty?

This comes much closer to ignorance and unconsciousness than to cruelty. They don't do it because they are cruel — there are exceptions — but still, generally speaking, it is not that they feel a special pleasure in killing but they are afraid of a particular god and think that by such killing they will win his favour.

Close by here, near the seashore, there is a fishermen's temple — Virampatnam, I think; when you go as far as Ariancouppam and from there turn to the left and go towards the sea, at the end of the road there is a temple. It is the temple of a strange godhead... it is one of the Kalis. Well, extraordinary stories are told about this Kali, but in any case, the custom is to kill a fairly large number of chickens every year in her honour. I happened to go down there — I believe it was the day after the festival had been celebrated: one could still see all the feathers scattered on the sands — and, above all, there was in that place an atmosphere of creepy dread and total ignorance, and also (I don't know the practice — who eats the chickens? whether it is the one who kills them or the priests — but here truly there were too many! If the priests ate all that they would be quite sick! So it must probably have been also the people who had killed the chickens), there was that atmosphere of greed, not only greed but of gluttony, of people who think about eating. And there was that Kali who was particularly satisfied with all the vital forces of all those poor little chickens; they had been killed off by hundreds and each one had a little vital force which escaped when its throat was cut, and so that Kali was feeding upon all that: she was very happy. And there was evidently — I don't know if it could be called cruelty, it was rather greed, — greed of vital forces, of a very unconscious vital force, for these poor chickens don't have anything very conscious. And the whole thing created a very low, very heavy, very unconscious and painful atmosphere, yet not of the intensity of cruelty. So it

Questions and Answers

can't be said that this practice is due to cruelty, I don't think so. Perhaps some of these people, had they to sacrifice a little kid, a little lamb they loved, perhaps they would even find this a little sad. It is rather a great unconsciousness and a great fear. Oh, fear! In religions there is so much fear! Fear: "If I don't do this or that, if I don't cut the throat of a dozen chickens, disastrous things will happen to me all my life through or at least the whole of this year. My children will be ill, I shall lose my job, I won't be able to earn my living; very, very unpleasant things will happen to me."... And so, let us sacrifice the dozen chickens. But it is not from the desire to kill. It can't be said that it's through cruelty: it's through unconsciousness.

What did that Kali do when you went to see her?

You know the story, don't you?... I did not know the place, but there is a bit of a road between Ariancouppam and this temple. And so, half-way, I was seated quietly in my car knowing nothing—I knew nothing, neither the story of that Kali nor of the chickens nor anything—I was seated in my car when suddenly I saw a black being coming, with hair all dishevelled, who asked me to make a pact. And she assumed a tone of great supplication and told me, "Ah! If you wish, if you wish to adopt me and come to help me, how many people would come, how very glorious this place would become." She was a funny little creature. She was black, dishevelled, quite thin, she didn't seem to be flourishing much! Later I was told—I don't know the story exactly, I can't say—that some misfortune had befallen her: her head had been cut off, wasn't that it? Something like that. (*Turning to a disciple*) Amrita, do you know the story of the Kali of Virampatnam?... No, you don't? Someone had related it to me, anyway it was not very interesting, it was an unfortunate Kali. I told her to remain quiet and that I did not understand what she wanted of me, that I came... that if she had a sincere aspiration, well, there would be a response to her aspiration. The

17 March 1954

next moment we reached the temple; then I began to understand that this was the person for whom the temple had been built. Later we went to walk on the seashore under the casuarina trees, and there we saw all the feathers and drops of blood and the remains of the fire — the fire on which, evidently, people had cooked their chickens. And we asked for the story. And I knew then the story of that Kali and how, for that festival, chickens were massacred in great numbers.

So, that's it. I don't suppose that creature felt any considerable satisfaction in seeing the chickens killed — I know nothing about it. As I said, all the profit she could get out of it was the absorption of some vital forces coming out of the chicken. But it was evident that she felt an enormous satisfaction in seeing a large crowd — the more people came there and the more chickens were killed, the greater was the sign of success. This proved that she had become a person of considerable importance! And so in her ingenuousness she came to ask my help, telling me that if I wanted to help her and give her something of my vital force and vital presence, there would be still more people and more chickens! Then that would be a very great success. I replied that as things stood it was quite enough, that she should remain quiet.

To what plane did she belong, Mother?

The most material vital.

Why is she called Kali?

I don't know. It is one of the Kalis — I have a vague impression that her head was cut off or that she was buried up to the neck or I don't know what. Something like that. There is a story of a head which comes out of the sand, buried up to the neck. But that, anyone in this country will tell you the story, I don't remember it. It is a form of Kali — there are countless forms

Questions and Answers

of Kali. Each believer has his image, has his particular relation with a certain Kali. Sometimes it is their own Kali: there are family Kalis — lots of family Kalis. I knew families who had very dangerous Kalis. If what they wanted was not done, always some misfortune befell the family members. There was a very strong formation. I suppose it was the family members who were still more responsible than their Kali. And I knew people who, when the misfortune came, a real misfortune in the family — someone's death — took the image of Kali and went and threw it into the Ganges.

This Kali has no connection with Mahakali, has she?

No. She has a very close connection with the human mind. I believe these are almost exclusively constructions of the human mind.... But I have found that there is really a Ganapati — something I didn't believe. I used to think it was a purely human formation, that story of the elephant head — but there is a being like that. I saw it, it is quite alive, and it is not a formation. So too there is a black Kali with her garland of skulls and her huge hanging tongue. I have seen her. I saw her entering my room with her eyes wide open. So I am sure she exists. And it was not a human formation: it was a being — a real being. Now, it is possible that some of the details may have been added by human thought. But still the being was a real being, it was not purely a formation.

What does that black Kali do?

Well, I believe she does fairly bad things! It is obvious that she takes a great pleasure in destruction.

That one — it was at the time of the First World War, the early days of the First War. I was here. I was staying in the house on Duplex Street, Duplex House. From the terrace of that house could be seen Sri Aurobindo's room, the one in the Guest

17 March 1954

House. Sri Aurobindo was staying there. He had two rooms and the small terrace. And from the terrace of Duplex House the terrace of the Guest House could be seen. I don't know if it can still be seen; that depends on the houses in between, but at that time it could. And I used to sit on the terrace to meditate every morning, facing Sri Aurobindo's room. That day I was in my room, but looking at Sri Aurobindo's room through a small window. I was in meditation but my eyes were open. I saw this Kali entering through my door; I asked her, "What do you want?" And she was dancing, a truly savage dance. She told me, "Paris is taken, Paris will be destroyed." We used to have no news, it was just at the beginning of the war. I was in meditation. I turned towards her and told her, "No, Paris will not be taken, Paris will be saved", quietly, just like this, but with a certain force. She made a face and went away. And the next day, we received the "dispatch". In those days there were no radios yet, we had telegraph messages, "dispatches", which were proclaimed, posted on the gate of the Government House. We got the news that the Germans had been marching upon Paris, that Paris was not defended; the way was quite open, they had to advance only a few kilometres more and they would have entered the city. But when they saw that the road was clear, that there was nobody to oppose them, they felt convinced that it was an ambush, that a trap had been set for them. So they turned round and went back! (*Laughter*) And when the French armies saw that, naturally they gave chase and caught them, and there was a battle. It was the decisive battle: they were stopped. Well, evidently it was that. It took this form: When I said to Kali, "No", they were panic-stricken. They turned back. Otherwise, if they had continued to advance it would have been all over.

What is Mahakali like?

Well, my children, when you see her, you can tell me! She is not like that Kali. All I can tell you is that she is not black, she

Questions and Answers

doesn't stick out a big tongue, and she doesn't wear a necklace of human heads!

Here you have said: "The sadhu's recourse to the bed of nails or the Christian anchorite's resort to the whip and the hair shirt are the result of a more or less veiled sadistic tendency, unavowed and unavowable; it is an unhealthy seeking or a subconscious need for violent sensations."

Ah! You know there are ascetics who sleep on nails. Have you never seen them? I have seen some photographs myself. This sort of thing is done; they sleep upon a nail-bed. Even quite recently I saw a photograph like that. Well, they do that for... I don't know if it is to prove their saintliness. You know, when they do this in public, one always suspects that it is a bit of histrionics. But still there are those who can do it sincerely, in the sense that they don't do it for display. And so these, if they are asked why they do it, say that it is to prove to themselves that they are detached from the body. And there are others who go still farther: they say that the body must be made to suffer in order to liberate the spirit. Well, if you ask me, I would say that behind this there is a vital taste for suffering which imposes suffering on the body because the vital takes a very perverse pleasure in suffering. I have known children who had hurt themselves somewhere or other and who pressed as hard as they could on the injury to make it hurt still more! And they took pleasure in it. I have known grown-ups also. Morally, it is a very well-known fact. I spend my time telling people, "If you are unhappy, it is because you want to be. If you suffer, it is because you like suffering, otherwise you would not suffer." This sort of thing I call unhealthy, for it is against harmony and beauty, it is a kind of morbid need for strong sensations.

I don't know if you know that China is a country where the most frightful tortures have been invented, unthinkable things.

17 March 1954

When I was in Japan I asked a Japanese, who liked the Chinese very much (which is very rare) and always spoke very highly about China, why this was so. He told me, "It is because all the peoples of the Far East, including the Japanese themselves, have a very blunted sensitivity. They feel very little; unless the suffering is extremely strong, they feel nothing. And so this has compelled them to use their intelligence to invent extremely acute sufferings." Well, all these people who are unconscious, the more unconscious they are, the more tamasic they are; the more blunted their sensibility, the more do they need strong sensations to feel something. And usually this is what makes people cruel, for cruelty gives very strong sensations. That kind of nervous tension obtained through suffering imposed upon somebody, that gives a sensation, and they need it in order to feel; otherwise they feel nothing. And that is why entire races are particularly cruel. They are very unconscious — vitally unconscious. They may not be unconscious mentally or otherwise, but they are unconscious vitally or physically — above all, physically.

Can those who have a sense of beauty also become cruel?

That's a psychological problem. It depends on where their sense of beauty is located. One may have a physical sense of beauty, a vital sense of beauty, a mental sense of beauty. If one has a moral sense of beauty — a sense of moral beauty and nobility — one will never be cruel. One will always be generous and magnanimous in all circumstances. But as men are made of many different pieces... For instance, I was thinking about all the artists I knew — I knew all the greatest artists of the last century or the beginning of this century, and they truly had a sense of beauty, but morally, some of them were very cruel. When the artist was seen at his work, he lived in a magnificent beauty but when you saw the gentleman at home, he had only a very limited contact with the artist in himself and usually he became someone very vulgar, very ordinary. Many of them did,

Questions and Answers

I am sure of it. But those who were unified, in the sense that they truly lived their art — those, no; they were generous and good.

I remember a very amusing story that Rodin told me. You know Rodin — not the man but what he has done? Rodin put a question to me one day; he asked me, “How can one prevent two women from being jealous of each other?” (*Laughter*) I said to him, “Ah, here’s a problem indeed! But won’t you please tell me why?” Then he told me, “It’s like this: most of my work I do in clay, at least much of it, before sculpting it in stone or casting it in bronze. And so this is what happens: at times I go away for a day or two or more. I leave my clay models covered with wet cloth because if it dries up it cracks and all the work is lost, I have to do it over again.” All sculptors know this. And this is what happened to that poor man: he had a wife, and he had his favourite model who was quite... very intimate in the house, she came in when she liked — she was the model he used for his sculptures. Now, the wife wanted to be the wife. And when Rodin was absent, she came early every morning to the studio and sprinkled water on all the cloths, all the heads or bodies, everything. It was all covered up, wrapped in wet cloth. Water is sprinkled upon it as on plants. So she came and sprayed them. And then, after a while, two or three hours later, there came the model who had the key to the studio. She opened the studio and she sprayed them. She saw very well that it was all wet, but she had the privilege of looking after the sculpture of her sculptor — and so she sprayed it. “And so,” said Rodin to me, “the result is that when I return from my travels, all my sculpture is melting and nothing of what I had done is any longer there!”

He was an old man, already old at that time. He was magnificent. He had a faun’s head, like a Greek faun. He was short, quite thick-set, solid; he had shrewd eyes. He was remarkably ironical and a little... He laughed at it, but still he would have preferred to find his sculpture intact!

And what was your reply? (Laughter)

17 March 1954

I don't remember now. (*Laughter*) Perhaps I answered by a joke. No, I remember one thing, I asked him, "But why don't you say: this one will sprinkle the water?" He then pulled at the little hair that was left on his head and said, "But that would be a fight with knives." (*Laughter*)

Voilà, good night.

24 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part I.

If one eats a heavy meal, why is the sleep disturbed by nightmares?

Because there is a very close connection between dreams and the condition of the stomach. Observations have been made and it has been noticed that in accordance with what is eaten, dreams are of one kind or another, and that if the digestion is difficult, the dream always turns into a nightmare — those nightmares which have no reality but still are nightmares all the same and very unpleasant — seeing tigers, cats, etc.... Or else you experience things like... for instance, you are facing a great danger and must hurry up, get dressed quickly and go out, and then you can't dress, try as you will, you can't put on your things, you don't find your things any more, and if you want to put on your shoes they never fit you, and if you want to go somewhere very fast, the legs don't move any longer, they are paralysed and you are stuck there making formidable efforts to advance, and you can't move. It is this kind of nightmare that comes from a disordered stomach.

Why do tobacco and alcohol destroy the memory and will?

Why? Because they do so. There is no moral reason. It is a fact. There is a poison in alcohol, there is a poison in tobacco; and this poison goes into the cells and damages them. Alcohol is never expelled, so to say; it accumulates in a certain part of the brain, and then, after the accumulation, these cells no longer

24 March 1954

function at all — some people even go mad because of it, that is what is called *delirium tremens*, the result of having swallowed too much alcohol which is not absorbed but remains in this way concentrated in the brain. And it is so radical even that... There is a province in France, for instance, which produces wine, a wine with a very low percentage of alcohol: I believe it is four or five per cent, a very low percentage, you understand; and these people, because they make it, drink wine as one drinks water. They drink it neat, and after some time they become ill. They have cerebral disorders. I knew people of this kind, the brain was disordered, didn't function any more. And tobacco — nicotine is a very serious poison. It is a poison that destroys the cells. I have said that it is a slow poison because one doesn't feel it immediately except when one smokes for the first time and it makes one very ill. And this should make you understand that it ought not to be done. Only, people are so stupid that they think it is a weakness and so continue until they get used to the poison. And the body no longer reacts, it allows itself to be destroyed without reacting: you get rid of the reaction.

It is the same thing physically as morally. When you do something you ought not to do and your psychic tells you in its still small voice not to do it, then if you do it in spite of that, after a while it will no longer tell you anything, and you will no longer have any inner reactions at all to your bad actions, because you have refused to listen to the voice when it spoke to you. And then, naturally, you go from bad to worse and tumble into the hole. Well, for tobacco it is the same thing: the first time the body reacts violently, it vomits, it tells you, "I don't want it at any cost." You compel it with your mental and vital stupidity, you force it to do so; it doesn't react any longer and so lets itself be poisoned gradually until it decomposes. The functioning deteriorates; it is the nerves that are affected; they no longer transmit the will because they are affected, they are poisoned. They no longer have the strength to transmit the will. And finally people begin to tremble, they have nervous

Questions and Answers

movements. There are quite a few, one doesn't need to go very far to find them. And they are like that only because they have committed excesses: they drank and smoked. And when they lift an object, their hands shake (*gesture*.) That's what one gets by doing this.

Some people have a well-developed body but in spite of that they are very nervous. Then...?

Usually it is... Perhaps they have a very weak vital build: their nerves may be weak, they may have a weak nervous system; perhaps it is that, perhaps it is a birth defect. But it could also be a mental weakness, because while it is true that a healthy body gives strong nerves, it is still more important to have healthy thoughts in order to have solid nerves. If your thought is not healthy, if your feelings and thoughts are bad so to speak, your nerves become very bad, still worse. For instance, those who entertain all kinds of unhealthy fancies, those who like unhealthy reading, unhealthy conversations — there are many of this kind, there is a large number of them — well, they may lose all control over their nerves, they may become extremely nervous and yet have a body that's in a fine condition and very healthy. Unhealthy conversations and reading — I can tell you that there's nothing worse than that, and when you do sadhana truly, when you are really trying to progress, you notice that when you say useless words, no matter how few they are, immediately there is a terrible uneasiness which gets hold of you; you feel as though all the nerves of the head were being pulled and there is also something churning here (*gesture*) which hurts you, and you feel a great emptiness within and have heartburn, as though you had eaten something very bad — all this only because of some uselessly spoken words. Besides, it is a sure indication: as soon as the uneasiness begins, one knows one must stop: "Now it is finished." Only, most people are so unconscious that they don't even notice it, and with their warped will they compel their

24 March 1954

system to do what it should not. So, the system is more or less docile, obeys and continues to deteriorate slowly, in this way, without even showing visible reactions.

I did not understand this passage from the text: "Continence is therefore the rule for all those who aspire for progress. But especially for those who want to prepare themselves for the supramental manifestation, this continence must be replaced by a total abstinence, achieved not by coercion and suppression but by a kind of inner alchemy, as a result of which the energies that are normally used in the act of procreation are transmuted into energies for progress and integral transformation."

This is quite well known in yogic disciplines in India, when one begins to become conscious of one's energies and have control over them. You know, don't you, the theory of the different "centres" where the energies are concentrated? Generally, it is said that there are five. But the true number is seven or even twelve. Anyway, these centres are centres of accumulation of energy, energies which control certain activities. Thus, there is an accumulation of energy at the sex-centre, a great accumulation of energy, and those who have control over these energies succeed in mastering them and raising them up, and they place them here (*Mother points to the centre of the chest*). And here is the centre of the energies of progress. This is what is called the seat of *Agni*, but it is the energies of progress, the will to progress, that are here. So the energies concentrated in the sex-centre are pulled upwards and placed here. And they increase considerably, so that the sex-centre becomes absolutely calm, peaceful, immobile.

The ordinary practice for controlling these energies is to manage to "uncoil" the Kundalini which is coiled up at the base of the spine and raise the energies through the spinal column to the different centres, and awaken the centres, open them, wake

Questions and Answers

them up and set them in motion one after another right up to the top of the head, and then, go out from up there. And when one has succeeded in doing this (this is the first practice), when one has uncoiled the Kundalini, next to master it, guide and develop it, to guide it to all the centres, awaken all these centres. Once that has been done, one is master of the functioning. Once one is master of the functioning, instead of leaving the energies in places where they are not wanted, one pulls them up and puts them in places where they are useful, and uses them in this way for progress, for transformation.

All this is the result of enlightened, assiduous, very patient practice; this is not done *just like that*, while thinking of other things or playing about. These are disciplines. Naturally, once one is master of the working, it becomes very interesting. But this is not done in a flash without one's doing what is necessary.

Once you said that human love was distorted and disfigured by men. What was love in its origin?

What?

Human love.

Human? Why, haven't I said it? It is Love. When it becomes human love, it is as I have described it. Love in its origin is divine love. Love in man, that is, love grown human, is distorted, deformed; it is only divine love which is pure.

How can the senses be used for self-development?

Developing through sensations? It is very much in fashion.

It is much in fashion. Now in the schools certain disciplines are invented to develop children's power of observation, the quickness of decision, of choice, the capacity to reckon with the

24 March 1954

eyes, appreciation, all that. All kinds of games are made for children now, to teach them all that. The sense of hearing can also be developed, the sense of smell, the sense of sight — all these can be methodically developed. If, instead of merely living in one's sensations — this is “pleasant or unpleasant”, this is “pleasing or displeasing” and all kinds of things which are perfectly useless — one succeeds in calculating, measuring, comparing, noting, studying in detail all the vibrations.... You see, human beings live like blind men, constantly, absolutely unconscious, and they plunge into sensations and reactions, all the impulses, and so it is pleasant, it is unpleasant, it is pleasing, it is displeasing, all that. What is all that, then? What's the sense in it? — None at all. One ought to be able to appreciate, calculate, judge, compare, note, know exactly and scientifically the full value of the vibrations, the relations between things, study everything, everything — for instance, study all sensations in connection with the reactions they produce, follow the movement from the sensation to the brain, and then follow the movement of response from the brain to the sensations. And in this way one succeeds in controlling one's will, one's sensations completely, to such an extent that if there is something one does not want to feel, it is enough, with one's will, to cut it off: one feels it no longer. There are many disciplines of this kind. Some of them keep you busy for a lifetime, and if they are well followed, you don't waste a moment and are altogether interested. You no longer have time for impulses, this takes away all impulses. When you become scientific in these studies, you are no longer like a cork: one wave sending you here, another sending you there! There is a passing movement of Nature. Nature, oh how she plays with men! Good heavens, when you see how it is, oh! Truly it is enough to make you revolt. I don't understand how they do not revolt.... She sends round a wave of desire, and they are all like sheep running after their desires; she sends round a wave of violence, they are once again like other sheep living in violence, and so on, for everything. Anger — she just does “poof”, and

Questions and Answers

everybody gets into a rage. She has but to make a gesture — a gesture of her caprice — and the human mobs follow. Or else it passes from one to another, just like that; they don't know why. They are asked, "Why?" — "Well, suddenly I felt angry. Suddenly I was seized by desire." Oh! It is shameful.

Good night.

31 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part I.

"...the vital has three sources of subsistence. The one most easily accessible to it comes from below, from the physical energies through the sensations.

"The second is on its own plane, when it is sufficiently vast and receptive, by contact with the universal vital forces.

"The third, to which it usually opens only in a great aspiration for progress, comes to it from above by the infusion and absorption of spiritual forces and inspiration."

Sweet Mother, here I have not understood. You have said: "... a great aspiration for progress comes to it from above by the infusion and absorption of spiritual forces and inspiration."

What haven't you understood?

The meaning, Sweet Mother.

You are breaking up the sentence wrongly. (*Mother looks at the text.*)

There are three sources, you know. The third source is usually closed to people; it comes to them only in moments of great aspiration. When they have a very great aspiration and rise towards higher forces, at that time the vital can receive these higher forces into itself; and then this becomes a source of considerable energy for it. But in its ordinary, habitual life it is not in contact with these forces — unless, of course, it is

Questions and Answers

transformed; but I am speaking of the ordinary vital in ordinary life. It is not open to this source of higher forces, and for it this is even altogether non-existent. In the immense majority of people all their vital force comes to them from below, from the earth, from food, from all the sensations. From food... they draw vital energy out of food, and they... it is by seeing, hearing, touching, feeling that they contact the energies contained in matter. They draw them in this way. This is their customary food.

Now, some people have a very developed vital which they have subjected to a discipline — and they have a sense of immensity and are in contact with the world and the movements of world-forces. And so they can receive... if they aspire and call... they can receive the universal vital forces which enter them and renew the amount of energy they need.

There are others, very rare ones — or maybe in very rare moments of their individual life — who have an aspiration for the higher consciousness, higher force, higher knowledge, and who, by this call, draw to themselves the forces of higher domains. Then this also renews in them very special energies, of a special value.

But unless one is practising yoga, a regular discipline, usually one does not often contact this source; one draws from the same level or from below.

You have said: “Sensations are an excellent instrument for knowledge and education.” How?

How? But it is through sensations that you learn: by seeing, observing, hearing. Classes develop your sensations, studies develop your sensations, the mind receives things through sensations. By the education of the senses the growth of one's general education is aided; if you learn to see well, exactly, precisely; if you learn to hear well; if you learn through touch to know the nature of things; if you learn through the sense of smell to distinguish between different odours — all these are a powerful

31 March 1954

means of education. In fact, they should be used for this, as instruments of observation, control and knowledge. If one is sufficiently developed, one can know the nature of things through sight; through the sense of smell one may also know the value, the different nature of things; by touch one can recognise things. It is a question of education; that is, one must work for it.

For example, there is a considerable difference between the vision of ordinary people and that of artists. Their way of seeing things is much more conscious and complete than that of ordinary people. When one has not trained one's vision, one sees vaguely, imprecisely, and has impressions rather than an exact vision. An artist, when he sees something and has learnt to use his eyes — for instance, when he sees a figure, instead of seeing just a form, like that, you know, a form, the general effect of a form, of which he can vaguely say that this person resembles or doesn't much resemble what he sees — sees the exact structure of the figure, the proportions of the different parts, whether the figure is harmonious or not, and why; and also of what kind or type or form it is; all sorts of things at one glance, you understand, in a single vision, as one sees the relations between different forms.

When you have trained your eyes to see things with exactness, you can do so; it is an exercise you can quite easily do. For example, you have to put something, an object or a number of things, into a box. An ordinary person will need to take the tape-measure and measure the box to find out precisely what is needed. The man who has trained his eyes will see the things which are to be put in and at a glance will see which box is required; or perhaps, if there is a liquid to be poured, he will know the exact size of the bottle, because his eye is used to measuring things and he can, by seeing the thing, know its exact size. For instance, see another example: you have to put a ring on someone's finger. Ordinary people are obliged to take the rings and try them on one after another till they find one of the right size. He who has trained his eyes looks at the finger and

Questions and Answers

then at the rings; he won't be deceived and will immediately pick up the ring which fits exactly, without making a mistake. Well, this kind of training for the eyes can also be given to hearing, in order to distinguish sounds and all the qualities of sound. It can be given to the sense of smell, to distinguish odours and the different qualities of odours; for taste, the same thing.

And if you approach things with this idea — of studying, of wanting to develop exactitude of perception and the relation between things — then, instead of living in sensations for sensations' sake (that is, “Oh, this is pleasant” or “this is unpleasant”, “I like this, I don't like that” and all this kind of foolishness), you know the quality of things, their use and their interrelations through this study of the senses. This puts you in contact with the world in a completely conscious way. For everything, the least detail...

For example, you are obliged to cook and want to prepare a good dish. Well, if you have not trained your senses you will have to try out a little of this and a little of that and then taste it and again correct, arrange. If you have trained your taste you know very well — the taste and smell at the same time, these two are very close and must complement each other — you know what kind of food you are cooking, you get the smell of the thing you are cooking and then, because of the smell and the nature of the thing you will know exactly what more you can put in to complete the taste, what you must add of this thing or that, all kinds of ingredients, you see, to combine things; combine the different vegetables, for instance, or the different tastes of things, in such a way that they make a homogeneous whole. And then you will have a dish without needing to taste it every three minutes to find out if you have put enough salt or pepper, enough butter or... You will know exactly what should be done and will do it without a mistake.

It is the same thing for smell. If you have trained your sense of smell, for instance, you can mix things in exact proportions, know the nature... the nature of a perfume, for example, know

31 March 1954

with which other perfume... Take flowers; you smell them. Well, there are smells which do not harmonise. If you put them together it makes something that grates, that has no... harmony, unity. But if you have cultivated your sense of smell, when you get one particular odour you know exactly what kind of smells can go harmoniously with it. And you will be able to bring close things made to go together.

With colours it is the same thing. The education in colours is tremendous — in both detail and complexity. If you learn how to distinguish all the colours, to know to what family of colours each belongs, what kind of harmony it can bring about — you can know, it is the same thing. You can keep the memory of the colour as you keep the memory of the form. You want to match all your things... for example, you want to match two things: you want to match a cloak with a skirt or a... well, anything at all... or maybe one kind of cloth with another. Usually you are obliged to take one and then go and compare it with the others; and finally, after many trials, if you are not too clumsy, you finish by finding it. But if you have the training in colour, you look at the colour once and go straight to what matches with it, without any hesitation, because you remember exactly the nature of this colour and go to a colour that can harmonise with it.

But you see, in order to educate yourself you can make lots and lots of... almost games, can't you? You have a whole series of things, take anything you like: bits of cloth, anything at all, bits of ribbons, little bits of paper, many different colours. And then you arrange them to make a scale, and you see in what order they have to be put. By the side of this one, which should go? By the side of this other, which should go? And so on. And you make an uninterrupted scale in such a way that nothing shouts and you can go from one extreme of colour to the other.

There are countless opportunities for doing things like that. One doesn't use them. But if you look at the problem from the point of view of education, you have constantly an opportunity

Questions and Answers

for educating yourself, constantly. It seems people make terrible mistakes in taste; if you knew, from the point of view of artistic harmony, you simply live in a chaos! Take just the relations of colours — there are many other things, there is the relation of forms which is more complicated still — but the relation of colours: you take a colour and put it beside another; and it happens that these groups of colours don't go together. Then, if you have no training, sometimes you are not even aware of it. Sometimes you say, "Oh, it is not very pretty." But you don't know why, you are not at all conscious of the reason. But when you are trained, when you have trained your eye, first of all you never make a mistake like this, you never bring together two things which don't go together; and if by chance, on someone else you see things which are not at all made to go together, you don't have that vague kind of feeling which says, "Oh, it is not pretty, oh, it is not good", a kind of vague thing... you don't know why it isn't pretty, it isn't pleasant. And it is precisely because one colour belongs to one class and the other to another class of colours, and if you bring together these two different classes without some intermediary colours to harmonise them, they shriek. You can immediately find the remedy because you know where the fault lies.

Well, from the point of view of forms it is the same thing, you know. You arrange a room. You place anything at all anywhere at all and then, when entering, someone who has a sense of harmony feels uneasy. He feels he is entering a chaos. But if you have the sense of colour and form, you must add to it the sense of order and organisation; but still, even without this utilitarian sense of order and organisation, if you have the true sense of form — of forms which can complement and harmonise with one another, and of colours which can complement and harmonise with one another — when you have to arrange a room, even if you have just three pieces of furniture, you will put them in the right place. But most people do not know, it makes no difference to them. They think only of one thing: "Oh, it will be

31 March 1954

more convenient to have this here and more convenient to have that there!” And then, sometimes they don’t even think of this, they put things anywhere at all.

But when they enter their room, the place where they have to live for several hours of the day, they enter a confusion and disorder; and if they are not sensitive they do not become aware of it, they do not feel uneasy. However, this does not help to bring about an inner harmony while if one has... You have a room like that; in this room which has certain dimensions, you have to put a given number of articles of furniture, not more, not less; and you must arrange them in a particular order. For example, there is a harmony of lines, you see; and if you place things without considering this harmony of lines, immediately you get the impression of something jarring. But if you know where a curve is required, where an angle, where something small is needed and where something large, and you put things in order... Take just four articles of furniture: you can put them in the right place or the wrong one; and it happens that if you truly have good taste and are well trained, your organisation is not only harmonious but the most practical. Some people, you know, pile up a considerable number of things in one small place and put them so clumsily that they can’t even move without knocking against something.

I know people of this kind. They enter their room and spend their time bumping against this and that; and so they have to go round about and make all kinds of extraordinary movements in order to be able to use the things they need. And they don’t give it a thought, they don’t give it a thought, it happened like that.... Most people are so unconscious that when they are asked, “Why is it like that?” — “It happened like that, it is like that.” It happened like that, you see, by chance! And they live all their life “by chance”, things happen like that.... Well, this is indeed a lack of the education of the senses. If you really train them in the true way, first of all you escape immediately from this unbearable thing: “It is pleasant, it is unpleasant, this pleases, that

Questions and Answers

displeases.... Oh, what an unpleasant sensation!” One doesn’t know why, besides, it is just this. And then, suddenly, “Ah, how pleasant it is!”

And then again, you eat too much of something because you find it good, and you make yourself ill. Or again you can’t take a remedy because it is not pleasant and so... you don’t even have a remedy — I mean something that does you good! Many times I have to tell people, “But why don’t you take this?” — “Oh, it is so bad!” But if it does good, it should not seem bad to you. If you are conscious, you ought to feel the good it does and that prevents you from finding it bad.

It is the ignorance of the senses which betrays you to this feeling. You see, you can begin the training when quite small, quite small, and you can continue for more than a hundred years. And then, truly, within yourself to begin with, you never grow old because it is always interesting and always you make progress; and finally, after some time, not very long, something like about twenty years — that’s not much — you succeed in using your senses in a logical, rational, useful way and this helps you to enter into contact with the world consciously. Otherwise you go like half-blind people groping in the darkness there, like this (*gesture*), trying to find your way and at every step bumping into something. Or maybe, you mistake the road and then you must begin again. You make a mistake, you must correct it. And I tell you, it is like a small exercise you can do, which can be done during any... “Why is it like that? Why have you done that?” — “I don’t know.” — “Why have you arranged this in this way?” — “I don’t know.” If you are honest to yourself, you will be obliged to say to yourself a hundred times a day, “I don’t know.”

I don’t think there’s one in a hundred who does things consciously and deliberately and who is in tune with an inner principle of taste or sense of harmony. There are people like that, but not many, not very many. And even those who have an innate taste (there are people with an innate taste, whose senses

31 March 1954

are refined from birth — they should show some gratefulness to their parents always, for it is something very rare and they must have been born under a lucky star), even these can reach through education an extraordinary perfection. To develop the faculty of observation, nowadays they do — it is in fashion — they do exercises. I think... I don't know, perhaps you are made to do them also, all kinds of exercises of all types; as for example, putting a certain number of objects on a table, like that. And then the students are called in — certain objects are put in certain places: they come in, stay for a few seconds and go out again. And then they are asked what was on the table. Now it is interesting to see who has observed. They know, of course, that they have to see something; they are informed beforehand, not even taken by surprise. They are informed, they are told, "You are to look."

And so, those who can tell exactly how many objects there were and where they were, these are first-class ones. But you can do it for yourself as an exercise, it is very interesting. You go somewhere... you go to a friend's and then come out after a while and ask yourself, "Where was the furniture? How was it arranged? What were the objects on the table?" You will see whether you can remember and have observed clearly or not. What was the colour of the curtains? What was the colour of the cushions? All kinds of things; it is a boundless field of experience.

When one of the organs fails?

Well, you must train it.

I mean when it is not very good.

Well, you develop it, you *can* develop it. Everything can be developed, methodically. This is again something else, this kind of submission to fate. "Oh, my eyes are bad! Oh, my nose does not work! Oh, my ears are of no use!" And what's more, one spends his time repeating, "My eyes are bad", so this becomes

Questions and Answers

worse and worse. Unless there is, you see — yes, of course, there can be people who from their birth have no eyes at all. But then that is hopeless, one cannot mend them. But those who have just... most people have one organ which is bad because they did not know how to use it, because from their very childhood they have not made good use of it; and in every case one can improve it so much — by education — so much that it becomes quite sufficient.

Of course you will tell me there are people who don't have legs and others who don't have fingers or who... This may happen; but to these I won't say, "Use your legs or your fingers!" I am not so unreasonable. But I think that if children are taken very young, there are very few who cannot be set right so much so that they become normal — if not exceptional at least normal. Naturally, there can be accidents, that is something else. But even with an accident one can lessen its importance and its consequences through an appropriate education at the proper time. You see, it is exactly the same thing as the woodland or virgin forest and the cultivated garden. Obviously, the woodland or virgin forest can have its beauty but in any case it is a chaos: it is the beauty of chaos. On the other hand, say you have a cultivated garden: you can in a given space have all kinds of flowers, for example, and produce the maximum number of things. Well, a human body is like that. If it grows up like that, as it wants, it is a woodland or a virgin forest, a jungle. But if you take it very young and take great care of it, well, it can become a very beautiful garden; and yet the elements are the same. You are not asked to change the nature of the ground, you are told to cultivate it, instead of letting it go its own way in disorder.

Some people, of course, will tell you, "Oh, the woodland is beautiful, it is more beautiful than a garden!" It depends on how one sees things; but then we shall not speak about education any longer, it is not worthwhile. We shall no longer speak of self-mastery, it is not worthwhile. We won't speak of discipline any more, we won't speak of yoga any more, we shall leave Nature

31 March 1954

to go her own way as she wants. It amuses her but doesn't amuse certain people. So these prefer to do otherwise. Those who are amused by it can continue if they like, but those who are not must have the power to do otherwise. There are some who find that everything is all right. They feel this until something fairly unpleasant happens to them; then, at that time the little ego says, "Oh, yes! It is no longer as good as I thought." Yet for a time some people say, "Why! But I have no fault to find with the world. It is quite charming." Let them enjoy their world. But otherwise, if we want to make something of it, well, we must cultivate our garden. Here we are!

Sweet Mother, many people tell us to ask questions in the class. Mother, if the questions are not ours, what should we do?

Well, you can ask one... If I find it interesting I shall reply, if not we shall leave it. What is it? Give me a sample.

Not today, Sweet Mother.

(Another child) Very often this happens.

(Another child) In North India a child was brought up by a wolf.

What, what?

Brought up by a wolf.

Ah, yes. I saw the photographs, yes.

How did it happen?

How did it happen? But I don't know about it. I know nothing about this adventure. I saw a photograph, that's all; and I did not

Questions and Answers

find it at all interesting and thought a lot of noise was being made about something quite uninteresting. The child was hideous. A little monstrosity. That's all.

The psychic being which incarnated in it before its birth wanted to have some experience, didn't it? But this accident from its birth... what will happen?

Perhaps it wanted this accident, what do you know about it? It could have just this desire to have an experience of this kind. I don't know. I saw the photograph... there didn't seem to be much of a psychic being there! (*Laughter*) It was rather a rudimentary something, a possibility which will be realised after centuries and centuries. Still, even if it was a conscious psychic being which wanted an experience, perhaps it wanted this one, perhaps it asked itself: "What kind of sensations does one have if nursed by a wolf instead of a woman?" This should not be very thrilling; still perhaps it was someone who had been struck by the history of the foundation of Rome and wanted to see how it felt, if it was true; but in any case it did not succeed. Kipling's story is finer than this real history. The little child there was nursed by a wolf... his name was... Mowgli, wasn't it? But at least he was good, he was nice; while this child is a horror. It is something... it is not interesting. Are these the kind of questions people ask you? This type?

Not always.

Something better than this?

Yes.

But you don't have these for today? No? Then we shall stop. *Au revoir.*

7 April 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part II.

"When a thought is expressed in speech, the vibration of the sound has a considerable power to bring the most material substance into contact with the thought, thus giving it a concrete and effective reality. That is why one must never speak ill of people or things or say things which go against the progress of the divine realisation in the world. This is an absolute general rule. And yet it has one exception. You should not criticise anything unless at the same time you have the conscious power and active will to dissolve or transform the movements or things you criticise. For this conscious power and active will have the capacity of infusing Matter with the possibility to react and refuse the bad vibration and ultimately to correct it so that it becomes impossible for it to go on expressing itself on the physical plane.

This can be done without risk or danger only by one who moves in the gnostic realms and possesses in his mental faculties the light of the spirit and the power of the truth."

What is the "the gnostic realm"?

It is just another way of speaking about the Supermind. Gnostic—it means Knowledge, but the true knowledge. It is the knowledge aspect of the supramental realms.

"...cultivate the habit of not externalising yourself constantly by speaking aloud, and you will notice that little

Questions and Answers

by little an inner understanding is established between yourself and others; you will then be able to communicate among yourselves with a minimum of words or even without any words at all.”

Can an inner understanding be established in every instance between two people, even in material things?

Um!... And so? What do you want to know?

Whether this inner understanding can be established.

Yes, words serve merely as a means of communication between one mind and another. That is their only justification. But if the mind is clear and powerful enough to communicate without using words, it communicates much better, much more clearly and precisely and much more exactly. And then words are not needed.

Even in altogether material things?

Yes, one may try an experiment. For instance, when two people have attuned their minds, if one thinks, “Why, that object ought to be here instead of being there”, the other goes quite naturally looking for the object and puts it in its place. He understands quite clearly, he doesn’t need to be told. Or else one thinks, “It is time to go out”, or else, “I need such and such a thing”, the other will understand perfectly well and does not need to be told. Before reaching so far, something happens very frequently — I am speaking of those who exercise a control over themselves and are conscious, people living together — one answers a question that the other has not spoken. He had it in his mind, and the other answers: “Why, yes, that’s how it is; no, that was not done.” The other person has not asked but he has heard, has understood, received the message. That happens

7 April 1954

often, doesn't it? And then, even in things where it is necessary to say something, well, instead of saying ten words you may say one, and it is sufficient, the rest is understood, known. And this direct communication is an experience which one may have very easily. If you speak with another person and don't have a sufficient mental contact with him, he will use words which you are accustomed to use in a particular sense and you won't understand him at all, it is as though you did not speak the same language. After a while, if you meet several times and are attuned mentally, you begin to understand each other.

Indeed, words serve only as a vehicle for something that is beyond words and can be expressed without words for those who have a sufficiently developed and precise instrument. When one is truly in the realm of thought, words diminish the meaning. They reduce it, make it narrow, limited, they take away its power. Thought which is projected directly is much more powerful than that expressed through words. Words reduce, limit, harden, take away the suppleness and true strength — the life. It is simply because men's apparatus is ill-adjusted that we can't have telegraphy without words. If the sets were very well tuned in, one would not have to say even ten words in the whole day, and yet be understood all the while.

I don't understand this: you have said, "Even here, into the abode of ideas and knowledge, man has brought the violence of his convictions, the intolerance of his sectarianism, the passion of his preferences."

Yes, what is there in this that cannot be understood? It's a constant fact!

No other questions? You don't have courage?

Yes, I have courage, but I don't have questions!

(Another child) *Sweet Mother, can it happen that though*

Questions and Answers

*a person does not move forward very much he doesn't
move backward either?*¹

I have only said that one cannot remain still. You say, “does not move forward much” — one may go forward just a very little! And that is enough for not moving backward. But if one is not very careful all the time, as one is made up of a lot of pieces, if he doesn't have the habit of dragging along those parts which lag behind, he may advance on one side and go backward on another. That happens. And then the sum total is not very, very satisfactory.

In ordinary life, with ordinary people, this happens all the time. For instance, take someone who is studying, working — a scientist making discoveries. He progresses in his studies, he knows more and more. But as he does not take any care of his inner life or private life or outward life, he may become more and more backward or unconscious or even full of nasty defects; even though he progresses from the scientific point of view, as a man he may become an absolutely regrettable being. That's quite a frequent occurrence. And for oneself, if one does not take good care, one may have a part which is progressing and another that's going backward. If one does not keep a close watch, if one does not control one's outer movements, if one does not take a special care not to allow the vital to go according to its own fancy, well, he will suddenly realise that he has formed very bad habits and is following a very nasty road though the mental part of the being was full of aspiration and progressing in knowledge and even in the spiritual life. If one does not pay attention, things slide very easily into a hole: one takes a false step, then slips and suddenly bumps against the bottom of the hole. Then one asks oneself, “But how did this come about? What happened?” Simply a false step: you did not take care, you allowed that part of the being

¹ “In Nature everything is in movement; thus whatever does not move forward is bound to fall back.”

7 April 1954

to draw you into its own field; because you did not pull it out of its way, did not compel it to follow you, it now drags you back instead.

If one wants to lead the spiritual life, one must not be three-fourths asleep. It is necessary to be wide awake and very attentive, otherwise you are like a little boat upon a river or a great sea with terrible currents, and if you are not alert, if you do not pay close heed to these currents, if you relax, relax your vigilance, all of a sudden you find that you are at the other end from where you wanted to go! You are carried away, just like that, quite naturally. “Why, yes, I wanted to go there and I find myself here!”

That’s how it is.

In ordinary life this happens all the time. Only, you know, in ordinary life one says, “It is circumstances, it is fate, it’s my bad luck, it is their fault”, or else, “I have no luck.” That is very, very, very convenient. One veils everything and expects... yes, one has happy moments and then bad ones, and finally — ah, well, finally one falls into a hole, for everybody tumbles over, and expects to, sooner or later. So, one does not worry, or worries all the time — which comes to the same thing. That is, one is unconscious, one lives unconsciously and puts all the blame for what happens on others and on the circumstances but never tells oneself: “Why! It is my own fault.”... It needs a sufficiently vast consciousness to begin. Even among those who profess to be conscious, there are not many who see clearly enough to become aware that all that happens to them comes from what they are and from nothing else. They always say, “He is wrong; circumstances are unfavourable; oh! Why was that done?” — If you were not what you are, it would not happen in this way. It would happen differently.

Often we express in words our real sensations, our feelings, emotions and goodwill. But is it truly necessary to express oneself in words when it is not asked of us?

Questions and Answers

No, it is not at all necessary, not at all. It is just one of the bad habits. Why, on the 1st of January this year I wrote something like that: “Do not boast, do not boast about anything. Let your acts speak for themselves.”² It is exactly that. It is not worthwhile saying, “Oh! I have so great a goodwill for you and I want to do so much and I...” Do it. That’s all.

Mother, when we think, when we are following an idea, we speak within ourselves, not aloud; but does this mean that thinking necessitates the inner word? Does thought exist without words?

This means that one has not yet touched the true domain of the idea. In the domain of the idea there are no words: there are states of consciousness.

What does the Word mean?

That’s something else. The Word — it is not pronounced speech and words. There are old traditions which speak of “Let there be light and there was light.” The Word is the Mantra. But it is something quite exceptional, it is when the will formulated in the spirit wants to come down into matter and act directly upon matter that it makes use of the sound — not only of the word but of the sound, the vibration of the sound — to act directly upon matter itself, in matter. It is the opposite movement. You are in the region of thought formulated in words, then from there you may rise higher and get an expression of the silent idea; again from there you may rise yet higher and have the Force: the Force is the Consciousness which is the very source of that thought. And so it becomes a total consciousness instead of something formulated — expressed and formulated. That is, you

² New Year Message of 1954: “My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for this year: ‘Never boast about anything, let your acts speak for you.’ ”

7 April 1954

climb right back to the source. From there, once you possess this light in itself, this consciousness in itself and want to act upon matter to produce a result, this will come down from plane to plane, and as it becomes more and more material, it defines itself clearly in words or even in a single word, and when it touches matter, instead of its being a silent word, it becomes a word articulated with sounds: a vibration that will act directly upon matter. But one must first have gone high up above in order to be able to come down again. One must have reached the silent consciousness to be able to descend and do this. It must come from above, the source of this word must be up there, not in any intermediary domain. That then is the Word. And one must do what I have said — it is not an easy thing.

What I have said there (*Mother shows "The Four Austerities"*) is that one must keep the right attitude and be mentally silent: an attitude not expressed through words or through formulated thoughts, but through a living state of consciousness. An attitude of aspiration, you understand. I am obliged to put it in words because it must be printed on paper (this is why all this loses three-fourths of its force), but still otherwise it would not be acceptable at all; if I gave you a blank sheet, you would not know exactly what I have put there! I am obliged to put it into words.

An aspiration for all that is essentially true, real, perfect. And this aspiration must be free from words, simply a silent attitude, but extremely intense and unvacillating. Not a word must be allowed the right to enter there and disturb it. It must be like a column of vibrations of aspiration which nothing can touch — and in total silence — and therein, if something comes down, what descends (and will be clothed in words in your mind and in sounds in your mouth) will be the Word. But nothing less than this will do.

There we are. *Au revoir*, my children, good night.

14 April 1954

This talk is based upon Mother's essay "The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations", Part III.

Sweet Mother, I did not understand this: "At the beginning of this manifestation, in the purity of its origin, love is composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the urge towards complete oneness. On the one hand there is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need for absolute self-giving."

There is nothing to understand; it is a fact. You don't know what "the power of attraction" means? You don't know what "the need for self-giving" means?... Well, you put them face to face and when they unite, that creates love. It is as simple as that. If you wish, it is like the obverse and reverse of the same medal; but it is not the obverse and reverse. These two things are destined to unite by their very nature and it is through this meeting that love in its external manifestation is born.

After that you have said: "No other movement could have better bridged the abyss that was created when in the individual being consciousness was separated from its origin and became unconsciousness."

Yes, because the moment the individual consciousness broke off from the divine Consciousness, from its divine source, it created the sense of separation. The moment the individual consciousness ceased to follow, did not remain identified with the movement of the divine Consciousness, this produced a separation. The divine Consciousness follows its own movement, and if the individual consciousness does not remain united and

14 April 1954

does not follow or changes the course or slows down on the way, this creates a separation. And it is this separation that is the cause of all misery. All the miseries in the universe are the result of this separation of the individual consciousness which, for some reason or other, did not remain identified with the primal Consciousness, its origin, and separated from it. Separated... it did not deliberately separate itself, but it did not remain identified. So, not remaining identified, while the divine Consciousness followed one particular movement, it followed another, and naturally this caused them to move farther and farther away from each other. Let us take an illustration: one goes forward with a certain movement, a certain speed, and the other, not having remained united, is unable to follow and consequently, little by little, falls farther and farther behind, far, far, very far; the first one goes ahead and the other is left behind. It goes limping along while the first one flies; it takes one step while the other leaps. So this brings about a greater and greater separation. And it is this separation which has created all other separations, and it is all these separations which have caused universal misery — or in any case the misery on earth, the one we know. It began by a separation of consciousness and finished with a separation of worlds and of the elements of matter. It began by a division of consciousness and ended with the kind of division we see (*Mother points at those around her*). There are thousands of things all separated from one another and it is the cause of all these miseries. If they had remained united in consciousness, there would have been no misery. But as the consciousness was separated, this separation of consciousness caused the separation of forms and the separation of forms produced all the miseries.

If the sense of unity were re-established, the miseries would disappear.

Before our nature is transformed, can a person love another truly?

Questions and Answers

Love another? I have said there that it is impossible. I have said that if one wants to know what love is, one must love the Divine. Then there is a chance of knowing what love is. I have said that one grows into the likeness of what one loves. So if one loves the Divine, gradually, through this effort of love, one grows more and more like the Divine, and then one can be identified with the divine love and know what it is, otherwise one can't.

Inevitably, love between two human beings, whatever it may be, is always made of ignorance, lack of understanding, weakness and that terrible sense of separation. It is as though one wanted to enter the presence of a unique Splendour and that the first thing one did was to put a curtain, two curtains, three curtains between oneself and that Splendour, and one is quite surprised to have only a vague impression and not at all the thing itself. The first thing to do is to remove the curtains, to take them all away, to go through and find oneself in the presence of the Splendour. And then you will know what that Splendour is. But if you put veil after veil between it and yourself, you will never see it. You may have a sort of vague feeling like "Oh! There is something", but that is all.

Naturally, there are all those who don't care for the Splendour, who turn their back upon it and live in their instincts, who are just animals, a little perfected. Let us not speak of these. We have only to let them do what they like, that is of no importance at all. They don't affect us. It is not for them that I have written these things.

In order to know how to love truly, should the nature be transformed?

The quality of the love is in proportion to the transformation of your consciousness.

I don't understand.

14 April 1954

It is childishly simple. If you have the consciousness of an animal, you will love like an animal. If you have the consciousness of an ordinary man, you will love like an ordinary man. If you have the consciousness of an élite being, you will love like an élite being, and if you have a god's consciousness, you will love like a god. It is simple! That's what I have said. And so, if by an effort for progress and inner transformation, by aspiration and growth, you pass from one consciousness to the other and your consciousness becomes vaster and vaster, well, the love you experience will be vaster and vaster. That is quite clear!

You take the purest water, water from the crystalline rocks, you collect it in a fairly large vase, and then, in this vase there is a little mud, or much, or a huge quantity of mud. And you could not say it is the same water which came down, yet it is the same, only you have mixed it with so many things in your vase that it no longer resembles it at all! Well, love in its essence is an absolutely pure, crystalline, perfect thing. In the human consciousness it gets mixed with a fairly considerable amount of mud. So it becomes more and more muddy in proportion to the amount of mud.

It has been said that the tiger's need for devouring is one of the first expressions of love in the world. I think that long before the tiger, there must have been primitive creatures in the depths of the sea which had only this one function: a stomach. They existed only as stomachs. And so they swallowed — that was their one occupation. Evidently that was one of the first results of the Power of Love infiltrating into Matter, for before this there was nothing: there was perfect inconscience, complete immobility, nothing stirred. With Love movement began: the awakening of consciousness and the movement of transformation. Well, the first forms, it may be said, were the first expression of Love in Matter. So we can go from the need of swallowing which is the only consciousness — a need of swallowing, of uniting — right up to... Excuse me, we say that Love is the power of the world — it is a primitive way of uniting with things, but it is a very direct

Questions and Answers

way: one swallows and absorbs the thing; well, the tiger indeed takes a great joy in it. So there is a joy already, it is already quite a high form of love. You may go higher and end up with one of the highest expressions of love in human beings: the total self-giving to what is loved, that is, to die for one's country or to give one's life to defend somebody, and things like that. That indeed is already... fairly high. It is still mixed with some mud. It is not the highest form but it is already something. And you see all the steps, don't you? Well, from this one has still to climb a good deal to reach the true expression, to reach what I have described, which is at the summit of the ascent — I would not like to travesty my own words (*Mother takes her copy of "The Four Austerities" and reads:*)

"Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity; it finds its expression in the bliss of union."

At first, before the emanation of love, there is something which we may express very clumsily by "the joy of identity". That indeed is very difficult to conceive, for human thought cannot conceive of things except by their opposites, while the final stage is when love has gone full circle in the universe in order to go back to its origin; then it has the result of all that experience it gained and it returns to its starting-point. It goes back to its starting-point with something *more* which it did not have before starting: the experience of the universe. And fundamentally, that is the very *raison d'être* of creation. It is because the consciousness would not be what it is if it had not expressed itself in a creation. Well, the return from creation — which, mark it, is not something that takes place in time — is very difficult to conceive, for we conceive time and space and for us things are successive, one thing follows another, but if it were possible to conceive a total movement which would englobe everything and be at once the beginning and the end, and which would contain everything, well, this return, which would not be a return in time, which

14 April 1954

would be a return in consciousness — how shall I explain that to you? — the return of love to its origin, instead of being simply the joy of identity, becomes the ecstasy of union — and obviously, if one sees from the pure psychological point of view, there is an enriching of consciousness which comes from the experience gained in the universe; that is, there is a richness of content and a plenitude of consciousness which would not be there if there had been no manifested universe. And that obviously is the most logical explanation, the most logical reason for the creation.

What does this sentence mean, Sweet Mother: “Each time an individual breaks the narrow limitations in which he is imprisoned by his ego and emerges into the open air, through self-giving, whether for the sake of another human being or his family, his country or his faith, he finds in this self-forgetfulness a foretaste of the marvellous delight of love, and this gives him the impression that he has come into contact with the Divine. But most often it is only a fleeting contact, for in the human being love is immediately mixed with lower egoistic movements which debase it and rob it of its power of purity. But even if it remained pure, this contact with the divine existence could not last for ever, for love is only one aspect of the Divine, an aspect which here on earth has suffered the same distortions as the others.”

What is it, what haven't you understood? That the universe and the world as it is, are a deformation of the Divine? The world as it is, in the state of consciousness in which it is, is a deformation of the Divine, and love here also is a deformation of the Divine. So, even if your love remained as pure as it can be in the manifested world, it could not keep you in constant contact with the Divine unless all the rest was transformed. For it is deformed in the same way as the rest. For it should be said,

Questions and Answers

surely, that purity as conceived on earth has nothing to do with divine purity. At the best it is an approximation.

Haven't understood? It will come one day.

Sweet Mother, what kind of love do parents have for their children?

What kind? A human love, don't they? Like all human loves: frightfully mixed, with all sorts of things. The need of possession, a formidable egoism. At first, I must tell you that a wonderful picture has been painted... many books written, wonderful things said about a mother's love for her children. I assure you that except for the capacity of speaking about the subject in flowery phrases, the love of the higher animals like the... well, the mammals for their children is exactly of the same nature: the same devotion, the same self-forgetfulness, the same self-denial, the same care for education, the same patience, the same... I have seen absolutely marvellous things, and if they had been written down and applied to a woman instead of to a cat, superb novels would have been made, people would have said: "What a person! How marvellously devoted are these women in their maternal love!" Exactly the same thing. Only, cats could not use flowery language. That's all. They could not write books and make speeches, that is the only difference. But I have seen absolutely astonishing things. And that kind of self-giving and self-oblivion — as soon as there is the beginning of love, it comes. But men... I sincerely believe, from all that I have studied, that there is perhaps a greater purity in animals for they do not think, while human beings with their mental power, their capacity of reflecting, reasoning, analysing, studying, all that, oh! They spoil the most lovely movement. They begin to calculate, reason, doubt, organise.

Take, for instance, parents. At the risk of removing many illusions in your consciousness, I must tell you something about the source of a mother's love for her child. It is because this child

14 April 1954

is made of her very own substance, and for quite a long time, relatively long, the material link, the link of substance, between mother and child is *extremely* close — it is as though a bit of her flesh had been taken out and put apart at a distance — and it is only much later that the tie between the two is completely cut. There is a kind of tie, of subtle sensation, such that the mother feels exactly what the child feels, as she would feel it in herself. That then is the material basis of the mother's attachment for the child. It is a basis of material identity, nothing else but that. Feeling comes much later (it may come earlier, that depends on people), but I am speaking of the majority: feeling comes only long afterwards, and it is conditioned. There are all kinds of things.... I could speak to you for hours on the subject. But still this must not be mixed up with love. It is a material identification which makes the mother feel intimately, feel quite concretely and tangibly what the child is feeling: if the child receives a shock, well, the mother feels it. This lasts at least for two months.

This is the basis. The rest comes from people's nature, their state of development, their consciousness, education and capacity for feeling. This is added to the first. And then there are all the collective suggestions that make up all sorts of stories — for people are wonderful at constructing stories. They write novels about everything. They have used their minds to build up their imaginations which go round in the atmosphere and then are caught just like that. So some catch a certain type of these, others another kind, and then, as imagination is a force of propulsion, with it one begins to act, and then finally one makes a novel of one's life, if he is in the least imaginative.... This has absolutely nothing to do with the true consciousness, with the psychic being, nothing at all, but people come and talk to you in flowery language and tell you stories — all these are wandering imaginations. If one could see, that is, if *you* could see this mental atmosphere, that of the physical mind, which is circulating everywhere, making you move, making you feel, making you think, making you act, oh, good heavens! You would lose many

Questions and Answers

of your illusions about your personality. But indeed it is like that. Whether one knows it or not, it is like that.

There are many souls upon earth, human beings.... Obviously, those who have a certain culture, a certain development, a certain individualisation come together usually: instinctively they get together, form groups. And so one can find in space and time a number — not considerable but still sufficiently large — of cultured people who are united, but one must not believe that this gives the exact measure of the culture and development of human beings. It is only like a kind of foam that has been brought up and is on the surface. But even among those people who are already a selection, there is hardly one in a thousand who is a truly individualised being, conscious of himself, united with his psychic being, governed by his inner law and, consequently, almost if not totally free from external influences; for, being conscious, when these influences come, he sees them: those that seem to him to harmonise with his inner development and normal growth he accepts; those which are opposed he refuses. And so, instead of being a chaos — or in any case a frightful mixture — they are organised beings, individual, conscious of themselves, walking through life knowing where and how they want to go.

Of these, if you like, we may say that they are men. That is, they are what Nature may produce of the best as far as men go — they are still men. But this is the summit of man. They are ready to become something else. But unless one is *that*, one is still to a great extent an animal and a very slight beginning of a man. Only *that* can be called man. So there you are, you have only to look into yourselves and know... whether you are men or not.

Au revoir.

I am saying this in the hope that you will become that.

21 April 1954

On this date Mother began the reading of *Elements of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo. The book contains his answers to elementary questions about Yoga which were asked during the years 1933 to 1936.

The following talk is based upon Chapter 1, “The Call and Fitness” and Chapter 2, “The Foundation”.

You have asked some questions. Now you are going to put questions on your questions. Yes?

Mother, here it is written: “In our Yoga our aim is to be united [with the Divine] in the physical consciousness and on the supramental plane”; then, when the physical consciousness is united with the Divine, does transformation follow?

Yes, “follow”, but not instantaneously. It takes time. Only if the Divine descends into the physical consciousness — or rather, to put it more precisely, if the physical consciousness is totally receptive to the Divine — the transformation follows naturally. But transformation does not come about by waving a magic wand. It takes time and is done progressively.

But it is sure to come once the physical consciousness is united, isn't that so?

I shall tell you this a little later!

For, if so, it is not the final aim¹ — if transformation does not follow!

¹ “To be in full union with the Divine is the final aim.”

Questions and Answers

No. It is not what *we* call the final aim. But transformation *must* follow, it must follow automatically. But what I mean is the degree of totality, so to speak, of integrality, which is not assured, in the sense that probably there are many stages in this transformation. We speak of transformation vaguely, in this way; it gives us the impression of something that is going to happen which will see to it that all is well—I think it comes to that approximately. If we have difficulties, the difficulties will disappear; those who are ill—their illness will vanish; and again, if there are physical shortcomings, these will disappear, and so on. But it is all very hazy, it's just an impression.

There is something quite remarkable: the physical consciousness, the body-consciousness, cannot know a thing with precision, in all its details, except when it is *on the point* of being realised. And this will be a sure indication when, for instance, one can understand the process: through what sequence of movements and transformations will the total transformation come about, in what order, in what way, to put it thus? What will happen first? What will happen later?—all that, in all its details. Each time you see a detail with exactitude, it means that it is on the point of being realised.

One can have the vision of the whole. For instance, it is quite certain that the transformation of the body-consciousness will take place first, that a progress in the mastery and control of all the movements of the body will come next, that this mastery will gradually change (here it becomes more vague), gradually, into a sort of transformation of the movement itself: alteration and transformation—all that is certain. But what must happen in the end, what Sri Aurobindo has spoken about in one of his last articles² in which he says that even the organs will be transformed, in the sense that they will be replaced by centres of concentration of forces (of concentration and action of forces) of different qualities and kinds which will replace all the organs

² “The Divine Body”, *The Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 20–40.

21 April 1954

of the body — that, my children, is much more distant, that is, it is something which... one cannot yet grasp the means of doing it. Take, for instance, the heart: by what means is this function of the heart which makes the blood flow through the whole body going to be replaced by a concentration of forces? By what means will the blood be replaced by a certain kind of force, and all the rest? By what means will the lungs be replaced by another concentration of forces, and what forces, and with what vibrations, and in what way?... All that will come much later. It cannot yet be realised. One can have an inkling of it, foresee it, but...

For the body, to know is to have the power to do. I shall give you an example that's just at hand. You do not know a gymnastic movement except when you do it. When you have done it well, you know it, understand it. But not before that, don't you? Physical knowledge is the power of doing. Well, that applies to everything, including transformation.

A certain number of years must pass before we can speak with knowledge of how this is going to happen, but all that I can tell you is that it has begun. If you read attentively the next issue of the *Bulletin* which you will get on the 24th of April, you will see that it has begun. But in fact we shall see later if I can explain to you what it means. *Voilà*.

Another question?

Sweet Mother, "later" means when? When will you explain?

Explain when? I don't know, my children!

I did not understand very well "the real meaning of activity and passivity in sadhana".

You don't know what activity and passivity are? Do you know what the two words mean?

Questions and Answers

Yes.

Yes! So, when you are active, what does it mean?

When I work.

Work? Good! And when are you passive, when you sleep?
(*Laughter*)

When I am lazy, I cannot do...

No, my child, not necessarily. Passivity is not laziness. An active movement is one in which you throw your force out, that is, when something comes out from you — in a movement, a thought, a feeling — something which goes out from you to others or into the world. Passivity is when you remain just yourself like this, open, and receive what comes from outside. It does not at all depend on whether one moves or sits still. It is not that at all. To be active is to throw out the consciousness or force or movement from within outwards. To be passive is to remain immobile and receive what comes from outside. So it is said here... I don't know what is written... (*Mother turns the pages of the book.*) It is very clear! "Activity in aspiration", that means that your aspiration goes out from you and rises to the Divine — in the tapasya, the discipline you undertake and when there are forces contrary to your sadhana you reject them. This is a movement of activity.

Now, if you want to get true inspiration, inner guidance, the guide, and if you want to have the force, to receive the force which will guide you and make you act as you should, then you do not move any longer, that is — I don't mean not move physically but nothing must come out from you any more and, on the contrary, you remain as though you were quite still, but open, and wait for the Force to enter, and then open yourself as wide as possible to take in all that comes into you. And it is

21 April 1954

this movement: instead of out-going vibrations there is a kind of calm quietude, but completely open, as though you were opening all your doors in this way to the force which must descend into you and transform your action and consciousness.

Receptivity is the result of a true passivity.

But Mother, to be able to become passive an effort has to be made, hasn't it?

Not necessarily, that depends upon people. An effort? One must, yes, one must want it. But is the will an effort?... Naturally, one must think about it, must want it. But the two things can go together, you see, there is a moment when the two — aspiration and passivity — can not only be alternate but simultaneous. You can be at once in the state of aspiration, of willing, which calls down something — exactly the will to open oneself and receive, and the aspiration which calls down the force you want to receive — and *at the same time* be in that state of complete inner stillness which allows full penetration, for it is in this immobility that one can be penetrated, that one becomes permeable by the Force. Well, the two can be simultaneous without the one disturbing the other, or can alternate so closely that they can hardly be distinguished. But one can be like that, like a great flame rising in aspiration, and at the same time as though this flame formed a vase, a large vase, opening and receiving all that comes down.

And the two can go together. And when one succeeds in having the two together, one can have them constantly, whatever one may be doing. Only there may be a slight, very slight displacement of consciousness, almost imperceptible, which becomes aware of the flame first and then of the vase of receptivity — of what seeks to be filled and the flame that rises to call down what must fill the vase — a very slight pendular movement and so close that it gives the impression that one has the two at the same time.

Questions and Answers

(*Silence*)

This is one of the things one discovers gradually as the body becomes ready for transformation. It is quite a remarkable instrument in the sense that it can experience two contraries at the same time. There is a certain state of body-consciousness which brings things together, adds up things that in other states of consciousness alternate or even in certain others oppose each other. But if one has reached up there, in the vital and the mind, a development sufficient for harmonising opposites (that of course, is quite indispensable), when one has succeeded in doing this, there are moments when it alternates, you see, one thing comes after the other; but what is remarkable in the consciousness of the body is that it can feel (“feel”, can we say “feel”? — “experience” — the word “aware” expresses it best) all things simultaneously, as though you were hot and cold at once, as though you were active and passive at once, and everything becomes like that. Then you begin to grasp the totality of movements in the cells. It is something much more concrete naturally, but much more perfect in the body than in any other part of the being. This means that if things continue in this way, it will be proved that the physical, material instrument is the most perfect of all. That is why perhaps it is the most difficult to transform, to perfect. But of all, it is the one most capable of perfection.

That’s enough for today, isn’t it?

So, my children, if we go at this rate, we shall finish the book in three or four lessons, and we must already think about what we shall take up next....

The Mother, *Sweet Mother*.

Ah! You want to take up *The Mother*? Good, we shall read *The Mother*. That is decided.

Good night!

28 April 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 3, "Aspiration".

Mother, what is an "acute resistance"?

Acute? Acute is used in a figurative sense. Acute describes something pointed, don't you know? — and perhaps this means an aggressive, sharp resistance which sinks deep like a claw.

*I did not understand very well the answer to this question: "Does the power of aspiration vary in different sadhaks according to their natures?"*¹

Ah! Yes.

You see, I think the question has been put badly. I believe the one who asked the question wanted to say "the effect of aspiration" and he put "power". That is, aspiration in everyone, no matter who it is, has the same power. But the effect of this aspiration is different. For aspiration is aspiration: if you have aspiration, in itself it has a power. Only, this aspiration calls down an answer, and this answer, the effect, which is the result of the aspiration, depends upon each one, for it depends upon his receptivity. I know many people of this kind: they say, "Oh! But I aspire all the time and still I receive nothing." It is impossible that they should receive nothing, in the sense that the answer is sure to come. But it is they who do not receive. The answer comes but they are not receptive, so they receive nothing.

There are people, you know, who have a lot of aspiration. They call the force. The force comes to them — even enters deeply into them — and they are so unconscious that they don't

¹ Sri Aurobindo's answer: "No. Aspiration is the same power in all; it differs only in purity, intensity and object."

Questions and Answers

know it! That indeed happens quite frequently. It is their state of unconsciousness which prevents them from even feeling the force which enters into them. It enters into them, and does its work. I knew people who were gradually transformed and yet were so unconscious that they were not even aware of it. The consciousness comes later — very much later. On the other hand, there are people who are more passive, so to speak, more open, more attentive, and even if a very slight amount of force comes, they become aware of it immediately and use it fully.

When you have an aspiration, a very active aspiration, your aspiration is going to do its work. It is going to call down the answer to what you aspire for. But if, later, you begin to think of something else or are not attentive or receptive, you do not even notice that your aspiration has received an answer. This happens very frequently. So people tell you: “I aspire and I don’t receive anything, I get no answer!” Yes, you do have an answer but you are not aware of it, because you continue to be active in this way, like a mill turning all the time.

Mother, doesn't the Purusha commit mistakes like the Prakriti?

That depends on the point of view... I don't know!

Mother, if there is a part in one's nature that does not open, what is the method of aspiring so that this part may open?

You may aspire that this part may open — let the part that is open aspire for the other to open. It will open after a certain time; one must continue, persist. That is the only thing to do. There is something that does not want it, an acute resistance there, which does not want it. It is like a stubborn child: “I don’t want it, I shall remain what I am, I won’t move.”... It does not say, “I am pleased with myself”, because it does not dare. But

28 April 1954

the truth is it is quite self-satisfied, it does not budge.

But when one wants to aspire, shouldn't one know which part it is?

Ah! Yes, but if one is sincere, one will know it. If one looks at oneself sincerely, one is sure to know. It is only when one plays the ostrich that one does not know: one shuts one's eyes, turns one's head to the other side, and says, "It does not exist." But if one looks at oneself straight in the face, one knows *very* well where it is — hidden somewhere in a corner quite nicely, turned upon itself, shut in, close-set. But then, when you go and flash a light like that, straight upon it, oh, it suddenly hurts, doesn't it?

Mother, on what does receptivity depend?

It depends first of all upon sincerity — on whether one really wants to receive — and then... yes, I believe the principal factors are sincerity and humility. There is nothing that closes you up more than vanity. When you are self-satisfied, you have that kind of vanity of not wanting to admit that you lack something, that you make mistakes, that you are incomplete, that you are imperfect, that you are... There is something in the nature, you know, which grows stiff in this way, which does not want to admit — it is this which prevents you from receiving. You have, however, only to try it out and get the experience. If, by an effort of will you manage to make even a very tiny part of the being admit that "Ah, well, yes, I am mistaken, I should not be like that, and I should not do that and should not feel that, yes, it is a mistake", if you manage to make it admit this, at first, as I said just now, it begins by hurting you very much, but when you hold on firmly, until this is admitted, immediately it is open — it is open and strangely a flood of light enters, and then you feel so glad afterwards, so happy that you ask yourself, "Why, was I foolish enough to resist so long?"

Questions and Answers

But when one is so self-satisfied, can one still aspire?

One is not made all of a piece, don't you know? There is something in the being which can aspire. There is always something in the being which is conscious exactly of what is not all right, at times vaguely, imprecisely, but yet sufficiently conscious that still, after all, one is not perfect, you see, that things could be better than they are. That's enough! That part can aspire.

What is the work of Purusha and Prakriti?

Ah! Once again I have to give the impression that I don't know. (*Mother turns to Nolini.*) Nolini, explain this. (*Laughter*) As for me, I understand nothing at all of this, it does not correspond to any inner experience for me, I have never had this experience; consequently, I cannot speak about it.

If Mother says that Mother does not know, then I must say I am ignorant! (Laughter)

The Indian concept I know theoretically, and it is enough to read books to know it — that is not what I call knowing. I can speak to you only about things I have experienced. Well, this does not correspond to anything in me. I have not had that experience. I have had very clearly the experience of a witness looking at things, completely detached from everything, who knows all and does not move, who allows everything to be done and who... I have also had the experience of a will which decides. Naturally, everybody has the experience of a moving force — the force in Nature, in its obscurity, and all that — everybody has that experience. But as for making a clear-cut division in this way and calling one Purusha, masculine, and the other Prakriti, feminine, no, I refuse to do that — I have always objected to it and shall always object. And that is why I prefer not to speak about it.

28 April 1954

This seems to me an Asiatic version, or perhaps more particularly Indian, I don't know, of the Chaldean conception of a single, masculine God: you know, the Christian God. This is for me something that comes (pardon me) from a masculine mentality that's a bit warped. That is how I feel about the subject. Now, if you had not asked me, I would never have spoken to you about it!

Mother, you said precisely that you had the experience of this witness who does not move, then that is the Purusha!

Ah! I don't know. (*Laughter*) Purusha, if you like. But I did not find it particularly masculine! You understand, what... what I object to is the male element and female element. Well, I find that it is not true, and I shall always say: IT IS NOT TRUE. There is an element like this and another like that (*Mother turns her hand from one side to the other*). There is an activity like this and an activity like that. But why on earth do you want one to be masculine and the other feminine? It is not like that. This, this masculine-feminine business is a trick of Nature, it has arranged things here like that. Now, let me tell you: when one descends from above, well, right up there one has no idea of masculine and feminine and all that nonsense; as you come down and arrive here, it starts to become something real. So you tell yourself, "Well, well! That's how Nature has arranged things." Good! But what I say is that these conceptions — these very conceptions which make one element masculine and the other feminine — this is a conception which has come from below, that is, has come out of man's brain which cannot think otherwise than of MAN and WOMAN — because he is still an animal. There you are! And that's how I feel — I have always felt this, I have said it from the beginning and will repeat it till the very end, and if you don't want to hear me say so, don't speak to me about it! (*Laughter*) That's all.

Good night.

5 May 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 4, "Sincerity" and Chapter 5, "Faith".

"Q: What is the right attitude to stick on to this path till the Supramental Truth is realised?"

"A: There is the psychic condition and sincerity and devotion to the Mother."

What is "the psychic condition"?

The psychic condition? That means being in relation with one's psychic, I suppose, being governed by one's psychic being.

Sweet Mother, I don't understand very clearly the difference between faith, belief and confidence.

But Sri Aurobindo has given the full explanation here. If you don't understand, then...

He has written "Faith is a feeling in the whole being."

The whole being, yes. Faith, that's the whole being at once. He says that belief is something that occurs in the head, that is purely mental; and confidence is quite different. Confidence — one can have confidence in life, trust in the Divine, trust in others, trust in one's own destiny, that is, one has the feeling that everything is going to help him, to do what he wants to do.

Faith is a certitude without any proof.

Mother, on what does faith depend?

5 May 1954

Probably on Divine Grace. Some people have it spontaneously. There are others who need to make a great effort to have it.

How can faith be increased?

Through aspiration, I suppose. Some have it spontaneously... You see, it is difficult to pray if one doesn't have faith, but if one can make prayer a means of increasing one's faith, or aspiring, having an aspiration, having an aspiration to have faith... Most of these qualities require an effort. If one does not have a thing and wants to have it, well, it needs great, great, great sustained efforts, a constant aspiration, an unflagging will, a sincerity at each moment; then one is sure, it will come one day — it can come in a second. There are people who have it, and then they have contrary movements which come and attack. These people, if their will is sincere, can shield their faith, repel the attacks. There are others who cultivate doubt because it is a kind of dilettantism — that, there's nothing more dangerous than that. It is as though one were letting the worm into the fruit: it eventually eats it up completely. This means that when a movement of this sort comes — it usually comes first into the mind — the first thing to do is to be very determined and refuse it. Surely one must not enjoy looking on just to see what is going to happen; that kind of curiosity is terribly dangerous.

It is perhaps more difficult for intellectuals to have faith than for those who are simple, sincere, who are straightforward, without intellectual complications. But I think that if an intellectual person has faith, then that becomes very powerful, a very powerful thing which can truly work miracles.

Mother, where does determination come from?

Usually it is in those who have a will and bring their will to bear upon their actions.

Questions and Answers

If one has faith in the Divine and also trust, what is the difference between faith and trust?

Faith is something much more integral — that is what Sri Aurobindo has written — much more integral than trust. You see, you have trust in the Divine, in the sense that you are convinced that all that comes from Him will always be the best for you: whatever His decision and whatever the experience He sends you or the circumstances in which He puts you, it will always be what is best for you. This is trust. But faith — that kind of unshakable certitude in the very existence of God — faith is something that seizes the whole being. It is not only mental, psychic or vital: it is the whole being, entirely, which has faith. Faith leads straight to experience.

Can't trust be total and entire?

Not necessarily. Well, there is a shade of difference — however, I don't know, it is not the same thing.

One has given oneself totally to the divine work, one has faith in it, not only in its possibility, but faith that it is *the* thing which is true and which must be, and one gives oneself entirely to it, without asking what will happen. And so, therein or thereon may be grafted a certitude, a confidence that one is capable of accomplishing it, that is, of participating in it and doing it because one has given oneself to it — a confidence that what one is going to do, what one wants to do, one will be able to do; that this realisation one wants to attain, one will attain. The first does not put any questions, does not think of the results: it gives itself entirely — it gives itself and then that's all. It is something that absorbs one completely. The other may be grafted upon it. Confidence says: "Yes, I shall participate, realise what I want to realise, I shall surely take part in this work." The other one has faith in the Divine, that it is the Divine who is all, and can do all, and does all... and who is the only real existence — and one

5 May 1954

gives oneself entirely to this faith, to the Divine, that's all. One has faith in the existence of the Divine and gives oneself; and there can also be grafted upon this a trust that this relation one has with the Divine, this faith one has in the Divine, will work in such a way that all that happens to him — whatever it may be, all that happens to him — will not only be an expression of the divine will (that of course is understood) but also the best that could happen, that nothing better could have happened to him, since it is the Divine who is doing it for him. This attitude is not necessarily a part of faith, for faith does not question anything, it does not ask what the consequence of its self-giving will be — it gives itself, and — that's all; while confidence can come and say, "That's what the result will be." And this is an absolute fact, that is, the moment one gives oneself entirely to the Divine, without calculating, in a total faith, without bargaining of any kind — one gives oneself, and then, come what may! "That does not concern me, I just give myself" — automatically it will always be for you, in all circumstances, at every moment, the best that will happen... not the way you conceive of it (naturally, thought knows nothing), but in reality. Well, there is a part of the being which can become aware of this and have this confidence. This is something added on to faith which gives it more strength, a strength — how shall I put it? — of total acceptance and the best utilisation of what happens.

There is a state in which one realises that the effect of things, circumstances, all the movements and actions of life on the consciousness depends almost exclusively upon one's attitude to these things. There is a moment when one becomes sufficiently conscious to realise that things in themselves are truly neither good nor bad: they are such only in relation to us; their effect on us depends absolutely upon the attitude we have towards them. The same thing, identically the same, if we take it as a gift of God, as a divine grace, as the result of the full Harmony, helps us to become more conscious, stronger, more true, while if we take it — exactly the very same circumstance

Questions and Answers

—as a blow from fate, as a bad force wanting to affect us, this constricts us, weighs us down and takes away from us all consciousness and strength and harmony. And the circumstance in itself is *exactly* the same—of this, I wish all of you had this experience, for when you have it, you become master of yourself. Not only master of yourself but, in what concerns you, master of the circumstances of your life. And this depends exclusively upon the attitude you take; it is not an experience that occurs in the head, though it begins there, but an experience which can occur in the body itself. So much so, that—well, it is a realisation which naturally asks for a lot of work, concentration, self-mastery, consciousness pushed into Matter, but as a result, in accordance with the way the body receives shocks from outside, the effect may be different. And if you attain perfection in that field, you become master of accidents. I hope this will happen. It is possible. It is not only possible, it is *certain*. Only it is just one step forward. That is, this power you have—already fully and formidably realised in the mind—to act upon circumstances to the extent of changing them totally in their action upon you, that power can descend into Matter, into the physical substance itself, the cells of the body, and give the same power to the body in relation to the things around it.

This is not a faith, it is a certitude that comes from experience.

The experience is not total, but it is there.

This opens new horizons to you; it is the path, it is one step on the path leading to transformation.

And the logical conclusion is that there is nothing impossible. It is *we* who put limitations. All the time we say, “That thing is possible, that other, impossible; this, yes, this can be done, that can’t be done; oh yes, this is true, it is feasible, it is even done, but that, that is impossible.” It is *we* who all the time put ourselves like slaves into the prison of our limits, of our stupid, narrow, ignorant sense which knows nothing of the

5 May 1954

laws of life. The laws of life are not *at all* what you think they are nor what the most intelligent people think. They are quite different. Taking a step, especially the first step on the path — one begins to find out.

Mother, here it is written:

“Q: Is it a sign of sincerity to confess one’s weakness and faults to the Divine and to others?”

“A: Why to others? One has to confess them to the Divine.”

“Q: But if one does some wrong to a person, is it not necessary to confess it to him? Is it enough to confess it to the Divine?”

“A: If it concerns the other persons, then it can be done.”

It is harmless. You can do it if it gives you pleasure! Fundamentally, if it sets you at rest and allows you to progress, if you feel you must do it in order to progress, it is very good.

Sweet Mother, can it happen that a person is very insincere but unconscious of his insincerity?

I think in a case like this, he is no longer insincere, he is wicked; for if one knows that one is insincere and persists in one’s insincerity, it is wickedness, isn’t it? It means that one has bad intentions, otherwise why would one persist in one’s insincerity?

I said: if one is unconscious.

Then how can one be conscious and unconscious at once? It is just this that is impossible. If one is conscious of one’s insincerity, one can’t be unconscious of it. It is impossible. The two can’t exist simultaneously.

Questions and Answers

But if one is insincere and doesn't know where this insincerity lies?

Oh! One doesn't know?... That is because one is not sufficiently sincere and doesn't look at oneself. For, I guarantee this, if you are conscious that you are insincere, you know where it lies. Otherwise you could not be aware of your insincerity. For instance, in a certain circumstance one knows, knows that one should do this: "I should do this"; and at the same time one does not wish to do it, eh! And so, within oneself one finds a means, a sort of way of deceiving oneself and not doing it, because one does not want to do it — ah, that happens *very* often! (*Laughter*) And then, if at that moment, the moment when you are doing this little inner work to find an excuse for not doing what you don't want to do, if at that moment you become aware that you are insincere and still continue to do it, this means that you are perverse. If you ask me, this is what I call being wicked, bad. But if you realise that you are insincere, this means that you are conscious that you are insincere, and how can you say "I am not conscious of my insincerity"?... Ninety times out of a hundred one does it without knowing. That indeed is the misery. It is that one deceives oneself with such facility, finds good tricks for not doing what one doesn't want to do, or the contrary: for doing what one wishes to do when one knows very well one shouldn't do it — it is the same thing. So you give yourself good reasons, and, unhappily, as I said, most men are so unconscious that they do it without even realising it. They think they are *very* sincere: "No, sincerely, I thought I had to do it" — like that, quite innocently. But that's because they are not sincere, not at all because they are quite unconscious. But if one is just a little conscious of what is happening within, one perceives very well the little trick one has played and how one has found — has somewhere been so cleverly unearthing, an excellent excuse for doing what one wanted to do. Even when one knows very well one ought not to do it. It is these two, you see: a play between unconsciousness

5 May 1954

and insincerity, insincerity and unconsciousness, in this way. But if you tell me, "I am conscious of my insincerity", then naturally at that moment this fact faces you: Have you decided to remain in the darkness or do you want to progress? There, the problem comes up. If you are conscious of your insincerity, you have only one thing to do: that is to put a red-hot iron on it and make yourself sincere. That is the feeling. You must take a red-hot iron: it burns well, and then... ouch!... that's the way.

For a moment it hurts a little, afterwards one is left in peace.

Sweet Mother, you have written: "Sincerity is the key to the divine gates." What does that mean?

It is a literary image, my child, an imaged, figurative, literary way of expressing the fact that with sincerity one can attain everything, even the Divine. If one wants to open a door, a key is necessary, isn't it? Well, for the door separating you from the Divine, sincerity works as a key and opens the door and lets you in, that's all.

Good night.

12 May 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 6, "Surrender".

"Q: If the Purusha does not consent to the action of the Mother's Grace, does it prevent the other beings from receiving or feeling the Mother's Grace for transformation?"

"A: No. The Purusha often holds back and lets the other beings consent or feel in his place."

What does he exactly understand by Purusha?... The ego?

(Nolini) No, it is the conscious being. There is the being and the becoming. The conscious being is Purusha, the becoming is Prakriti.

But then each inner being has its Purusha? Or is there one Purusha in all the beings?

(Nolini) In each part of the being: that is, there is a vital Purusha, a mental Purusha, a physical Purusha...

It is what we call consciousness?

Yes, the conscious being.

The conscious being in its continuity?

Yes.

But how can one do the sadhana if the conscious being within does not consent, for it seems to me that it is this being which must take the resolution to begin.

Yes.

(To the children) It is I who am asking questions!

(A child) *Sweet Mother, the following question has been put here: "What is the sign to indicate that a sadhak's determination to surrender to the Divine is having practical effect in his life?" And Sri Aurobindo replies: "The sign is that he has full obedience without question or revolt or demand or condition and that he answers to all divine influences and rejects all that are not from the Divine."*

Isn't this a resigned surrender?

Resigned? What does that mean, "resigned"?

Passive!

I don't know what you mean. He is asking for the sign which shows that his surrender is perfect. There is no question of active or passive surrender there. He says that the determination to surrender brings certain results. The first result is simply to be obedient without questioning, and the second is to have the power of rejecting all influences except that of the Divine. These are great results. When one has attained these, one is already quite advanced.

Do you know how to distinguish between an influence coming from the Divine and one coming from elsewhere?... When you feel an impulse in you, can you tell whether it comes from the Divine or from elsewhere?

A little.

A little! Ah! That's good, and tell us why, and how?... That indeed is interesting.

Questions and Answers

Sometimes, when I wake up in the morning or afternoon, I feel someone saying: "The time is passing, you must hurry up."

And then?... Someone?... That is to say, you feel there is a person telling you: "Get up and go quickly to do your work"?

Not a person.

An influence?

Yes.

But you know from where it comes?... Do you know from where it comes?

It is not bad. I think it is not bad, so it must come from the Divine.

Ah! That is an interpretation. If, for instance, in your mind there is a formation, an idea, that you ought not to be lazy and should work — that you should be on time, should not waste your time sleeping — that is enough for this idea or formation to come up at the moment of awakening like an influence (for it is a part of your mind which has remained awake) like an influence telling you: "Hurry up, let's go, go and work, don't be lazy!" But it is perhaps just one part of yourself trying to act upon another. Or else, if you have to go to class or do some work with somebody, this may be the active thought of that person saying: "Isn't she perchance still sleeping and going to be late?" — that suffices. So, this is something perhaps which has its good side and may be useful for you as a check on your activity, but it is not at all necessarily something from the Divine. To judge that a thing comes from the Divine because you find it good may lead you into terrible mistakes.

12 May 1954

This is not how one should sense things. It is not by a perception of this kind of consciousness, not in this way. It comes when one has a sufficiently delicate and refined sensitivity to perceive clearly the value of a vibration; all vibrations that come from external activities, whether mental, vital or physical, or even psychic, have a particular quality, but what comes from the divine influence is of an absolutely different nature and quality. In order to be able to distinguish this, one must first of all have felt both; and even when one has felt both, one must be very calm, very attentive, indeed very still within, to be able to distinguish between them and not make a mistake. If your active thought comes in the way, it is finished, you cannot distinguish clearly any longer; you begin to question. And then you make use of your notions of good and evil to judge whether this comes from the Divine or doesn't come from the Divine. That's absurd. It is impossible.

Even when one has had this double experience and can make the distinction, there are still precautions to be taken and a check to be kept in order to be sure of not being mistaken. Only when one has opened wide the door of the psychic being, has entered consciously, and had the absolute, total, complete contact with the Divine, when one has the feeling of being born to a new life, when one is another being, does not see anything in the same way any longer, does not feel anything in the same way any more — then one knows intimately, profoundly, completely what the divine life is. And even afterwards, if the door closes again, one can keep a precise memory. And it is in this way that it is seen. It is impossible to make a mistake. It is something quite different, there is no comparison, none: one can compare nothing with this. It is unique and absolute. That is why I asked you, "Can you make the distinction?" For surely if one among you has had the experience, he knows in this way what comes from the Divine, and necessarily if he knows absolutely what comes from the Divine, he knows perforce all that does not. So there I asked you the question. For I should have been very happy

Questions and Answers

that one among you could tell me with sincerity, “I have had the experience and I know.” But it is only after this experience that one knows, not before. That is why, if one sincerely wants to progress, one must at each step inquire, be sure from where the influence comes: “Who has given me this suggestion? Is it a part of myself? Is it something external? Does this come from the Divine?”

But before having had that experience, one is not capable of judging by oneself. Naturally, if one’s surrender is truly sincere and there is this constant attitude in the being, this total self-giving to the Divine, “Thy Will be done”, in this way, one can, without knowing, without understanding, instinctively, choose the thing that should be done and reject the one that should not, but this becomes an instinct, a sort of automatic thing, if your surrender is perfect. And that is the very advantage of surrender, for you can do the right thing in the right way automatically, *before* having the knowledge.

But as Sri Aurobindo says there, you understand, one must be in a state of perfect obedience which does not question, does not discuss and obeys spontaneously, acts rightly as one is guided. Nothing in the thought or the vital must revolt or contradict or question or try to justify, to prove to oneself (and sometimes even to the Divine) that one is right, that what one has done is the right thing. All that must be done with.

Fundamentally, whatever be the path one follows — whether the path of surrender, consecration, knowledge — if one wants it to be perfect, it is always equally difficult, and there is but one way, one only, I know of only one: that is perfect sincerity, but *perfect* sincerity!

Do you know what perfect sincerity is?...

Never to try to deceive oneself, never let any part of the being try to find out a way of convincing the others, never to explain favourably what one does in order to have an excuse for what one wants to do, never to close one’s eyes when something

12 May 1954

is unpleasant, never to let anything pass, telling oneself, “That is not important, next time it will be better.”

Oh! It is very difficult. Just try for one hour and you will see how very difficult it is. Only one hour, to be *totally, absolutely* sincere. To let nothing pass. That is, all one does, all one feels, all one thinks, all one wants, is *exclusively* the Divine.

“I want nothing but the Divine, I think of nothing but the Divine, I do nothing but what will lead me to the Divine, I love nothing but the Divine.”

Try — try, just to see, try for half an hour, you will see how difficult it is! And during that time take great care that there isn’t a part of the vital or a part of the mind or a part of the physical being nicely hidden there, at the back, so that you don’t see it (*Mother hides her hands behind her back*) and don’t notice that it is not collaborating — sitting quietly there so that you don’t unearth it... it says nothing, but it does not change, it hides itself. How many such parts! How many parts hide themselves! You put them in your pocket because you don’t want to see them or else they get behind your back and sit there well-hidden, right in the middle of your back, so as not to be seen. When you go there with your torch — your torch of sincerity — you ferret out all the corners, everywhere, all the small corners which do not consent, the things which say “No” or those which do not move: “I am not going to budge. I am glued to this place of mine and nothing will make me move.”... You have a torch there with you, and you flash it upon the thing, upon everything. You will see there are many of them there, behind your back, well stuck.

Try, just for an hour, try!

No more questions?

Nobody has anything to say?

Then, *au revoir*, my children!

19 May 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 7, "Love".

There is a pure affection for the Divine and a pure love for the Divine. What is the difference?

That depends upon the meaning you give to your words. It depends upon what you call affection. I don't know, but generally affection means something personal and external and a little superficial; it depends altogether on the meaning you give to your words. Usually, when someone says, "Oh! I have much affection for him", this means that one has good feelings, a sort of friendliness but it is nothing very deep; but one may also use the word in a deeper sense. It is very difficult to distinguish between words unless one has already defined one's whole vocabulary quite precisely. It is at the moment of speaking, when one wants to say something, if one puts a kind of intensity of thought, perception, knowledge into the words used, then it can carry that state — that soul-state — with the words. But if words are used altogether intellectually and, so to say, arbitrarily, before using them one should say, "When I say this..." and give a long explanation, a definition.

What does "psychic vision" mean?

Vision? You know what physical vision is, don't you? — *physical*, do you know it? Well, the same thing happens in the psychic. That is to say, instead of seeing with physical organs, you see with psychic organs. You have these eyes, here, don't you? Well, there are eyes in the psychic which see psychically. It does not depend upon the quality of the vision, it depends upon the state

19 May 1954

of being which sees, the organs which see. A psychic sight sees what goes on in the psychic, either in the psychic state or the psychic domains or the psychic being. A mental sight sees what goes on in the mind: it sees. It is a seeing like a physical sight, truly physical.

With your physical eyes you cannot have a psychic vision; only your psychic being can have psychic sight. You may have a sufficiently close relation with your psychic being to remember what it has seen, to be conscious of what it saw, but it is not your physical being which sees, it is your psychic being. It is not your physical being seeing in a different way, it is your psychic which sees.

Mother, here it is written: "The intensity of divine Love never creates a disturbance anywhere in the being."

Yes.

But if someone has a weak body, doesn't the intensity of divine Love create a disturbance?

In the body? Why should divine Love create a disturbance in the body?

But if it cannot bear the intensity?

That is perhaps not divine Love, then; I don't understand. When it is divine Love, one automatically receives only what one can bear.

Divine Love is there always in all its intensity, a formidable power. But most people — ninety-nine per cent — do not feel anything at all! What they feel of it is exclusively in proportion to what they are, to their capacity of receiving. Imagine, for instance, that you are bathing in an atmosphere all vibrant with divine Love — you are not at all aware of it. Sometimes, very

Questions and Answers

rarely, for a few seconds there is suddenly the feeling of “something”. Then you say, “Oh, divine Love came to me!” What a joke! It is just that you were simply, for some reason or other, just a little open, so you felt it. But it is there, always, like the divine Consciousness. It is the same thing, it is there, all the time, in its full intensity; but one is not even aware of it; or else in this way, spasmodically: suddenly one is in a good state, so one feels something and says, “Oh, the divine Consciousness, divine Love have turned to me, have come to me!” It is not at all like that. One has just a tiny little opening, very tiny, at times like a pin-head, and naturally that force rushes in. For it is like an active atmosphere; as soon as there is a possibility of being received, it is received. But this is so for all divine things. They are there, only one does not receive them, for one is closed up, blocked, one is busy with other things most of the time. Most of the time one is full of oneself. So, as one is full of oneself, there is no place for anything else. One is very actively (*laughing*) busy with other things. One is filled with things, there is no place for the Divine.

But He is there.

It is like all the wonders that are there around you; you do not see them. Do you see them?... No. Sometimes, one moment when you are just a tiny bit more receptive, or else when in sleep you are less exclusively busy with your small affairs, you have a gleam of something and see, feel something. But usually, as soon as you are awake again, all this is obliterated — first, as you know, by the formidable ego which is all full of itself, and the whole universe moves in accordance with this ego: you are at the centre, and the universe turns round you. If you look at yourself attentively, you will see it is like that. Your vision of the universe — that’s you at the centre and the universe all around. So there is no place for anything else. It is not the universe you see: it is yourself you see in the universe.

So, at first, to begin with, one must be able to get out of the ego. Afterwards, it has to be, you understand, in a certain state of inexistence. Then you begin to perceive things as they are,

19 May 1954

from a little higher up. But if you want to know things as they really are, you must be *absolutely* like a mirror: silent, peaceful, immobile, impartial, without preferences and in a state of total receptivity. And if you are like that, you will begin to see that there are many things you are not aware of, but which are there, and which will start becoming active in you.

Then you will be able to be *in* these things instead of being exclusively enclosed within the little point you are in the universe.

There are all kinds of ways of getting out of yourself. But it is indispensable if you want to begin to know things as they are and not in terms of yourself.

What attitude should one take to get out of the ego?

Attitude? It is rather a will, isn't it? You must will it.... What should one do, are you asking that?

The surest means is to give oneself to the Divine; not to try to draw the Divine to oneself but try to give oneself to the Divine. Then you are compelled at least to come out a little from yourself to begin with. Usually, you know, when people think of the Divine, the first thing they do is to "pull" as much as they can into themselves. And then, generally, they receive nothing at all. They tell you, "Ah! I called, I prayed and I did not have the answer. I had no answer, nothing came." But then, if you ask, "Did you offer yourself?" — "No, I pulled." — "Ah, yes, that is why it did not come!" It is not that it did not come, it is that when you pull you remain so shut up in your ego, as I told you just now, that it raises a wall between what is to be received and yourself. You put yourself in prison and then you are astonished that in your prison you feel nothing.

A prison, and worse: without any windows on the street.

Throw yourself out (*Mother opens her hands*), give yourself without holding back anything, simply for the joy of giving yourself. Then there's a chance that you may feel something.

Questions and Answers

But if one tries to feel...

If one tries to feel? Is this not still an egoism, this trying to feel?... If one wants to get out of the ego while still remaining egoistic, it is very difficult, isn't it? The two are pretty contradictory.

“Try to feel” — why? for your own satisfaction?

If one tries to feel that one does not exist, that it is the Divine who exists, is that a way of getting out of the ego?

One does not exist? This — I don't know if one can succeed in anything by trying mentally, because this is a kind of mental effort. So one makes mental constructions and does not achieve anything very much. No, what is necessary is something spontaneous, intense, a *flame* burning in the being, a *flame* of aspiration, something... I don't know how to put it.

If the thing goes on in the head, nothing, nothing happens.

The effort one can make can be only mental. What can one do to make it spontaneous?

Eh?

The effort one...

Yes, I heard you quite well. But why do you assert that all effort one makes can be only mental?

But what can be done to make it spontaneous?

I believe there is a vast difference between an effort for transformation which, precisely, comes from the psychic centre of the being and a kind of mental construction to obtain something.

I don't know, it is very difficult to make oneself understood, but so long as the thing goes on in the head in this way (*Mother turns a finger near her forehead*), it has no power. It has a very little force that is extremely limited. And all the time it belies itself. One feels that with great difficulty one has gathered up one's will, artificial enough, besides, and one tries to catch something, and the very next minute it has all vanished. And one doesn't even realise it; one asks oneself, "How did it happen?"

I don't know, indeed it seems to me very difficult to do yoga with the head — unless one is gripped.

The will is not in the head.

The will — what I call the will — is something that's here (*Mother points to the centre of the chest*), which has a power of action, a power of realisation.

What one does exclusively in the head is subject to countless fluctuations; it is not possible to construct a theory, for instance, without there intervening immediately things which give all the opposite arguments. And so, there's the great skill of the mind, you know: it can prove no matter what, argue about anything at all. Consequently one does not go a step farther. Even if momentarily one catches an idea that has a certain force, unless one can keep that state of intensity, as soon as there is a relaxation all the contrary things come along, and all, as you know, with the charm of their expression. So it is a ceaseless battle.

It has no solution.

You ask how it can be spontaneous? Even in the body, for instance, when there is something like an attack, an accident, an illness trying to come in — something — an attack on the body, a body that is left to its natural spontaneity has an urge, an aspiration, a spontaneous will to call for help. But as soon as it goes to the head, it takes the form of things to which one is accustomed: everything is spoilt. But if the body is seen in itself, just as it is, there is something which suddenly wakes up and calls for help, and with such a faith, such an intensity, just as the tiny little baby calls its mamma, you know — or whoever is

Questions and Answers

there, it says nothing if it cannot speak. But the body left to itself without this kind of constant action of the mind upon it... well, it has this: as soon as there is some disturbance, immediately it has an aspiration, a call, an effort to seek help, and this is very powerful. If nothing intervenes, it is very powerful. It is as though the cells themselves sprang up in an aspiration, a call.

In the body there are invaluable and unknown treasures. In all its cells, there is an intensity of life, of aspiration, of the will to progress which one does not usually even realise. The body-consciousness would have to be completely warped by the action of the mind and vital for it not to have an immediate will to reestablish the equilibrium. When this will is not there, it means that the entire body-consciousness has been spoilt by the intervention of the mind and vital. In people who cherish their malady more or less subconsciously with a sort of morbidity under the pretext that it makes them interesting, it is not their body at all — poor body! — it is something they have imposed upon it with a mental or vital perversion. The body, if left to itself, is remarkable, for, not only does it aspire for equilibrium and well-being but it is capable of restoring the balance. If one leaves one's body alone without intervening with all those thoughts, all the vital reactions, all the depressions, and also all the so-called knowledge and mental constructions and fears — if one leaves the body to itself, spontaneously it will do what is necessary to set itself right again.

The body in its natural state likes equilibrium, likes harmony; it is the other parts of the being which spoil everything.

Mother, how can one prevent the mind from intervening?

Ah! First you must will it, and then you must say, as to people who make a lot of noise, "Keep quiet, be quiet, be quiet!"; you must do this when the mind comes along with all its suggestions and all its movements. You must tranquillise it, pacify it, make it silent. The first thing is not to listen to it. Most of the time,

19 May 1954

as soon as all these come, all these thoughts, one looks, seeks to understand, one listens; then naturally that imbecile believes that you are very much interested: it increases its activity. You must not listen, must not pay attention. If it makes too much noise, you must tell it: "Be still! Now then, silence, keep quiet!" without making a lot of noise yourself, you understand? You must not imitate those people who begin shouting: "Keep quiet", and make such a noise themselves that they are even noisier than the others!

(Here the tape-recorder stops at the end of the tape. To the disciple:) Don't put in another, it is finished. Fate!

Voilà, au revoir, good night!

26 May 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 8, "The Psychic Opening".

Sweet Mother, when we see you in a dream, is it always a symbolic dream?

No, not necessarily. It can be a fact. This means that instead of seeing physically, one sees in the subtle physical or the vital or the mind. But one sees something of me: for instance, if I send out a force or a thought or a movement, an action to someone, in his atmosphere this takes my form, in his mental consciousness it takes my form. So he sees it. It is a fact. I send something and he sees it. It is not my whole being (there the interpretation goes wrong most of the time), but it is something of myself.

But this always has some significance, Mother, hasn't it?

Certainly it has a significance. It has mostly even a very precise aim: either it is that I want to do something or to say something to someone, or it is that I want to change something in that person or give him some needed knowledge or else I want to put someone on his guard against something — put him on his guard, tell him to be careful — or else I come to answer a question at times.

Symbolic dreams... symbolic dreams are usually very coherent, one remembers everything, to the least detail; it is more living, more real, more intense than the material life, and it is fairly rare. When one returns from a symbolic dream, one remembers everything, all the details, and feels that one has lived for those moments a much intenser and truer life than the physical one. And it leaves a very deep impression upon you.

26 May 1954

This does not happen very often, you know. Usually it comes when it is very necessary.

Has anyone any dreams to narrate?

It would be interesting. I could give you an example. If you have a dream to relate, I could explain it to you.

Sweet Mother, I have a dream to tell.

Ah! You have one. Let us hear your dream.

One day, when you were giving blessings, I went to you, you took me in your arms and embraced me for quite some time.

And then? That's all?

You said something to me, but...

But what it was you don't remember!

No.

(Another child) Mother, sometimes I see you weeping in my dreams.

What? I am weeping?

Yes, You, weeping.

I, I weep? *(Laughter)*

Yes.

Wait a little!... That's when one is very sad oneself, isn't it?

Questions and Answers

Perhaps.

That, indeed, is very symbolic. It means precisely... no, I shall tell you afterwards. But generally speaking, it means this: that every time one is unhappy, well, it is one more suffering added to the collective suffering of the Divine.

It is from a state of deep compassion that the Divine acts in Matter and this deep compassion is translated in Matter precisely by this psychic sorrow which is spoken about here.¹ We read that this evening. That is as though something were reversed, it is the same thing but reversed in this way (*Mother joins her hands and then opens them as in an offering.*)

Well, the Divine's state of compassion is translated in the psychic consciousness by a sorrow that is not egoistic, a sorrow that is the expression of the identification through sympathy with universal sorrow. In the *Prayers and Meditations* I have said this (in one of the later ones), I have described at length an experience in which way I say, "I wept... the sweetest tears of my life",² because it was not over myself that I wept, you understand. Well, that is it. You know, human beings always suffer because of egoistic causes, humanly. Even when, for instance (I have explained this often), they lose someone they loved, and suffer and weep, it is not over the state of that person they weep, for most of the time, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they do not know the state of the person, they cannot even know whether that person is happy or unhappy, whether he is suffering or in peace, but it is over the sense of separation they themselves experience, because they loved to have that person near them and he has gone. So, always at the root of human sorrow there is

¹ "Q: Nowadays I feel very intensely a sorrow which brings a flow of tears in my eyes. There is no unrest or disturbance in it, rather there is a feeling of calm and purity and a deep gravity associated with it. Is this what is called the psychic sorrow?"

"A: Yes, there is a psychic sorrow of that kind — but psychic tears need not be sorrowful, there are also tears of emotion and joy."

² *Prayers and Meditations*, 12 July 1918.

26 May 1954

a turning back upon oneself, more or less conscious, more or less — how to put it? — acknowledged, but it is always that. Even when one weeps over another's misery, there is always a mixture. There is a mixture, but as soon as the psychic gets mingled in the sorrow, there is an element of "compassion in reverse" (that's what I was trying to explain a moment ago) which comes into the being and, if one can disentangle the two, concentrate upon that, come out of one's ego and unite with this compassion in reverse, through this one can come into contact with the great universal Compassion which is something immense, vast, calm, powerful, deep, full of perfect peace and an infinite sweetness. And this is what I mean when I say that if one just knows how to deepen one's sorrow, go right to its very heart, rise beyond the egoistic and personal part and go deeper, one can open the door of a great revelation. That does not mean that you must seek sorrow for sorrow's sake, but when it is there, when it comes upon you, always if you can manage to rise above the egoism of your sorrow — seeing first which is the egoistic part, what it is that makes you suffer, what the egoistic cause of your suffering is, and then rising above that and going beyond, towards something universal, towards a deep fundamental truth, then you enter that infinite Compassion, and there, truly it is a psychic door that opens. So, if someone sees me shedding tears, if at that moment one tries to unite completely — you understand, to enter into these tears, melt in them — this can open the door. One can open the door and have the full experience, a very exceptional experience, which leaves a very deep mark upon your consciousness. Usually it is never effaced. But if the door closes again, if once again you become what you are in your ordinary movements, that still remains somewhere behind and you can go back to it in moments of intense concentration; you can go back to it and you feel once again that immensity of an infinite sweetness, a great peace, which... understands everything but not intellectually, which has compassion for all things, which can embrace all things and so heal all things.

Questions and Answers

Naturally, it is always the same thing: one must... must sincerely want to be healed, for otherwise it does not work. If one wants to have the experience solely for the experience's sake and then the next minute one returns to what one was before, this does not work. But if sincerely one wants to be healed, if one has a real aspiration to overcome the obstacle, to rise — rise above oneself, to give up all that pulls one back, to break the limits, become clear, purify oneself of all that blocks the way, if truly one has the *intense* will not to fall back into past errors, to surge up from the darkness and ignorance, to rise into the light, stripped of all that is too human, too small, too ignorant — then that works. It works, works powerfully. At times it works definitively and totally. But there must be nothing that clings to the old movements, keeps quiet at the moment, hides itself, and then later shows its face and says, “Yes, yes, it is very fine, your experience, but now it is my turn!” Then, when that happens, I do not answer for anything, because sometimes, as a reaction it becomes worse. That is why I always come back to the same thing, say always the same thing: one must be truly sincere, truly.

One must be ready, if there is something which is clinging, clinging tightly, one must be ready to tear it away completely, without its leaving any trace behind. This is why at times one makes the same mistake and repeats it, until the suffering is sufficiently great to impose a total sincerity. One must not try that method, it is bad. It is bad because it destroys many things, it wastes much energy, spreads bad vibrations. But if one can't do otherwise, well, in the intensity of suffering one can find the will for perfect sincerity.

And there is a moment — in everyone's life there is a moment — when this need for perfect sincerity comes as a definitive choice. There is a moment in one's individual life, also a moment in the collective life when one belongs to a group, a moment when the choice *must* be made, when the purification *must* be done. Sometimes this becomes very serious, it is almost a

26 May 1954

question of life and death for the group: it *must* make a decisive progress... if it wants to survive.

(*Silence*)

No other dreams?

(The first child) *Sweet Mother, you did not give the explanation of my dream.*

There is no explanation, my child. You saw something of which you are not conscious in your physical being, that's all. The Forces are always there, full of tender affection, love, help, of... but one is not aware of this because one lives in too narrow, too small a consciousness. There is no need of any explanation, these things are not explained. It is a fact. If you like, there is an experience, a fact, something happens — there is also its translation in your brain. When you wake up it is a sort of interpretation of your dream which you remember. It is very rarely that one is conscious at the time the experience occurs and conscious of the experience as it really is. For that one must be very wakeful during the night, quite awake in one's sleep. Usually this is not the case. There is one part of the being which has an experience; when that part of the being which had gone out of the body re-enters it, brings back the experience, the brain receives a contact with this experience, translates it by images, words, ideas, impressions, feelings, and when one wakes up one catches something of this, and with that makes a "dream". But it is only a transcription of something that has happened — which has an analogy, a similarity, but which wasn't exactly what one receives as a dream.

In your experience of the night which produced the dream, you entered into contact with these Forces which *always* envelop, help, sustain, and... you understand, don't you? — which are full of love and tenderness, which help and welcome all those

Questions and Answers

who come — which, in fact, are there, everywhere at work all the time. So you became aware of that. When you woke up, this was translated through images you know, that is, that you come to see me, receive blessings, and then as there was a new feeling — that of contact with this Force which envelops and helps — this gave you the impression that I was taking you in my arms and embracing you. It was translated in this way. The fact is there; the translation is that of your brain.

Some people make me do very funny things at night! I have heard all kinds of extraordinary stories. But it is always the same thing: there is a fact behind, they entered into contact either with an emanation or with a force or an action, as I was saying just now, but then, in their brain it was translated by images which at times are very astonishing! But that, of course, is their translation. As for me, when they tell me all that, it gives me the *exact* picture of the state of their mental, vital and physical consciousness. Just the deformation in the translation suffices for me to know what the state of their mind is. And I cannot tell them, “It was not I”, for it was I! Only they have changed this in their own way, which is at times quite surprising! Still, in the present instance, the image is very fine.

Here we are, my children, anything else?

Sweet Mother, last week I had a dream.

Very well, tell us.

It was an afternoon after a storm and I was on the seashore. The sea had receded very far and there was a village where I saw horses of stone. There were four horses, perhaps, in black stone, and above them there was a white horse, in marble perhaps, and this one was shining with many colours.

It was when the sea had receded?

26 May 1954

Yes.

Was it local or general? I mean, was it any sea or the sea here?
Were you on the shore here?

It was at the Tennis Ground.

Oh! You were watching from the Tennis Ground?

Yes, I could see the lighthouse also.

The lighthouse. Four black horses and one white horse.

The number is not certain.

Ah!

The white horse was one alone.

Necessarily.

Perhaps it concerns the future of Pondicherry. It is a pity you don't remember the number. It could have given an indication. There had been a kind of tempest?

Yes, a storm.

And the sea had receded afterwards?

Yes.

Ah! It is symbolical.

The sky was then very clear.

Yes, yes. After the storm the sky clears up.

Questions and Answers

I can't tell definitively because some information is missing. But still, it concerns perhaps the future of Pondicherry. We shall see that.

But you can tell the future of Pondicherry without the dream!

Without the dream? (*Laughter*) Ah!

Very well, for the moment we are in the storm. We shall see when the sea recedes. (*Laughter*)

(Another child) *I had a dream in which I went for blessings and you gave me three flowers: "mental honesty", next "surrender", and last, I think, "quiet mind".*

It is very good. It is very necessary! (*Laughter*)

It is a fact. You have only to take it like that and make an effort to have a quiet mind, see that this mind surrenders and becomes perfectly honest. It is very good, it is a programme — and then, one must concentrate on that.

Voilà, my children, is that all?

I think we shall stop.

2 June 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 9, "Experiences and Visions" and Chapter 10, "Work".

No questions?... I was going to propose a meditation.

What are the causes for not being able to meditate?

Because one has not learnt to do it.

Why, suddenly you take a fancy: today I am going to meditate. You have never done so before. You sit down and imagine you are going to begin meditating. But it is something to learn as one learns mathematics or the piano. It is not learnt just like that! It is not enough to sit with crossed arms and crossed legs in order to meditate. You must learn how to meditate. Everywhere all kinds of rules have been given about what should be done in order to be able to meditate.

If at a tender age, when you are taught, for instance, how to squat, if one was taught at the same time not to think or to remain very quiet or to concentrate or gather one's thoughts, or... all sorts of things one must learn to do, like meditating; if, when quite young and at the same time that you were taught to stand straight, for instance, and walk or sit or even eat — you are taught many things but you are not aware of this, for they are taught when you are very small — if you were taught to meditate also, then spontaneously, later, you could, the day you decide to do so, sit down and meditate. But you are not taught this. You are taught absolutely nothing of the kind. Besides, usually you are taught very few things — you are not taught even to sleep. People think that they have only to lie down in their bed and then they sleep. But this is not true! One must learn how to sleep

Questions and Answers

as one must learn to eat, learn to do anything at all. And if one does not learn, well, one does it badly! Or one takes years and years to learn how to do it, and during all those years when it is badly done, all sorts of unpleasant things occur. And it is only after suffering much, making many mistakes, committing many stupidities, that, gradually, when one is old and has white hair, one begins to know how to do something. But if, when you were quite small, your parents or those who look after you, took the trouble to teach you how to do what you do, do it properly as it should be done, in the right way, then that would help you to avoid all — all these mistakes you make through the years. And not only do you make mistakes, but nobody tells you they are mistakes! And so you are surprised that you fall ill, are tired, don't know how to do the things that you wish to do, and that you have never been taught. Some children are not taught anything, and so they need years and years and years to learn the simplest things, even the most elementary thing: to be clean.

It is true that most of the time parents do not teach this because they do not know it themselves! For they themselves did not have anyone to teach them. So they do not know... they have groped in the dark all their life to learn how to live. And so naturally they are not in a position to teach you how to live, for they do not know it themselves. If you are left to yourself, you understand, it needs years, years of experience to learn the simplest thing, and even then you must think about it. If you don't think about it, you will never learn.

To live in the right way is a very difficult art, and unless one begins to learn it when quite young and to make an effort, one never knows it very well. Simply the art of keeping one's body in good health, one's mind quiet and goodwill in one's heart — things which are indispensable in order to live decently — I don't say in comfort, I don't say remarkably, I only say decently. Well, I don't think there are many who take care to teach this to their children.

Is that all?

2 June 1954

Sweet Mother, ought we to do some other work besides studies?

Some other work? That depends upon you. It depends upon each one and on what one wants. If you want to do sadhana, it is obvious that you must have at least partially an occupation which is not selfish, that is, which is not done for oneself alone. Studies are all very well — very necessary, even quite indispensable, it's precisely one of the things I was talking about just a while ago, that you must learn when you are young, for when you are grown-up it becomes much more difficult — but there is an age when you can acquire the indispensable foundation for your studies, and if you want to begin to do sadhana, you must do something which does not have an exclusively personal motive. One must do something a little unselfish, for if one is exclusively occupied with oneself, one gets shut up in a sort of carapace and is not open to the universal forces. A small unselfish movement, a small action done with no egoistic aim opens a door upon something other than one's own small, very tiny person.

One is usually shut up in a shell and becomes aware of other shells only when there is a shock or friction. But the consciousness of the circulating Force, of the interdependence of beings — this is a very rare thing. It is one of the indispensable stages of sadhana.

Mother, can't one study for the Divine?

That means?

Can one study for the Divine and not for oneself, prepare oneself for the divine work?

Yes, if you study with the feeling that you must develop yourselves to become instruments. But truly, it is done in a very different spirit, isn't it? — very different. To begin with, there

Questions and Answers

are no longer subjects you like and those you don't, no longer any classes which bore you and those which don't, no longer any difficult things and things not difficult, no longer any teachers who are pleasant or any who are not — all that disappears immediately. One enters a state in which one takes whatever happens as an opportunity to learn to prepare oneself for the divine work, and everything becomes interesting. Naturally, if one is doing that, it is quite all right.

What you have said in the Bulletin about “educating the mind” — this means that one educates oneself for that, lives and studies for the Divine. Then isn't this a work done for the Divine?

Yes, yes, yes. It is very good if it is done with that aim. But it must be with that aim. For instance, when one wants to understand the deep laws of life, wants to be ready to receive whatever message is sent by the Divine, if one wants to be able to penetrate the secrets of the Manifestation, all this asks for a developed mind, so one studies with that will. But then one no longer needs to choose one's particular subject of study, for everything, no matter what, the least little circumstance in life, becomes a teacher who can teach you something, teach you how to think and act. Even — I think I said this precisely — even the reflections of an ignorant child can help you to understand something you didn't understand before. Your attitude is so different. It is always an attitude which is awaiting a discovery, an opportunity for progress, a rectification of a wrong movement, a step ahead, and so it is like a magnet that attracts from all around you opportunities to make this progress. The least things can teach you how to progress. As you have the consciousness and will to progress, everything becomes an opportunity, and you project this consciousness and will to progress upon all things.

And not only is this useful for you, but it is useful for all those around you with whom you have a contact.

2 June 1954

Let us take simply a question about your class, shall we? — the school class. Even as an undisciplined, disobedient and ill-willed child can disorganise the class — and this is why at times one is obliged to put him out, because simply by his presence he can completely disorganise the class — so too, if there is a student who has the absolutely right attitude, the will to learn in everything, so that not a word is pronounced, not a gesture made, but it becomes for him an opportunity to learn something — his presence can have the opposite effect and help the class to rise in education. If, consciously, he is in this state of intensity of aspiration to learn and correct himself, he communicates this to the others.... It is true that in the present state of things the bad example is much more contagious than the good one! It is much easier to follow the bad example than the good, but the good too is useful, and a class with a true student who is there only because he wants to learn and apply himself, who is deeply interested in every opportunity to learn — this creates a solid atmosphere.

You can help.

Mother, why is it that here, in work, some people venture to satisfy their fancies and thus much money is wasted?

It is not money alone that is wasted!

Energy, Consciousness is *infinitely*, a thousand times more wasted than money. Should there be no wastage... my word, I believe the Ashram couldn't be here! There is not a second when there isn't any wastage — sometimes it is worse than that. There is this habit — hardly conscious, I hope — of absorbing as much Energy, as much Consciousness as one can and using it for one's personal satisfactions. That indeed is something which is happening every minute. If all the Energy, all the Consciousness which is constantly poured out upon you all, were used for the true purpose, that is, for the divine work and the preparation for the divine work, we should be already very far on the road, much

Questions and Answers

farther than we are. But everybody, more or less consciously, and in any case instinctively, absorbs as much Consciousness and Energy as he can and as soon as he feels this Energy in himself, he uses it for his personal ends, his own satisfaction.

Who thinks that all this Force that is here, that is infinitely greater, infinitely more precious than all money-forces, this Force which is here and is given consciously, constantly, with an endless perseverance and patience, only for *one sole purpose*, that of realising the divine work — who thinks of not wasting it? Who realises that it is a sacred duty to make progress, to prepare oneself to understand better and live better? For people live *by* the divine Energy, they live *by* the divine Consciousness, and use them for their personal, selfish ends.

You are shocked when a few thousand rupees are wasted but not shocked when there are... when streams of Consciousness and Energy are diverted from their true purpose!

If one wants to do a divine work upon earth, one must come with tons of patience and endurance. One must know how to live in eternity and wait for the consciousness to awaken in everyone — the consciousness of what *true* integrity is.

9 June 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 11, "Transformation".

"Q: When a sadhak gets dreams signifying some spiritual truth, does it not indicate that his nature is getting transformed?"

"A: Not necessarily. It shows that he has more consciousness than ordinary people, but dreams do not transform the nature."

If you read a book it will help you to transform yourself. But it is not the book which will transform you. A dream is an indication, it gives you the exact picture of what is going on within you, of the state you are in, of the state of your surroundings, and with these indications you can do what is necessary to transform yourself. But it is not the dream that will transform you.

Now... One says always the same thing.... There is a difference between what is said and what is done. I could read this sentence to you a hundred times; there are some sentences here, you know... I have told you this so often, so often, so often, and he says it so clearly, doesn't he? What are these things? (*Mother turns the pages once again, searching for the sentences.*) I am going to repeat them to you, I shall repeat them to you a hundred times, but unless you decide that you have... (*there is a sudden noise, a cracking in the tape-recorder; Mother laughs and says:*) It is we who are creating the lightnings now! (*Laughter*) Ah! Where is this? (*To a child*) Do you know? (*Mother continues turning the pages and finds the sentence.*)¹ Here we are!

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote that one of the "three fundamental obstacles" which stand in the way of transformation is "Egoism—the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to a true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits."

Questions and Answers

“The mind clinging to its own ideas”! See, how many times I have told you this! “The vital preferring its own desires”! And then the mind becomes the accomplice of the vital and gives admirable explanations for keeping the desires by reasoning, explaining, giving justifications also, and all these things are very useful to it. I have heard people say that the best way to get rid of desires is to satisfy them. They make a theory of it. You continue to satisfy your desires and then, naturally, you have others, for desires — well, one replaces another very easily, and you continue to satisfy the new ones under the idea that you are going to get cured. That will take you at least a hundred lives!

And then, finally, habits!... There is a charming phrase here — I appreciated it fully — in which Sri Aurobindo is asked, “What is meant by ‘the physical adhering to its own habits?’” What are the habits which the physical must throw off? It is this *terrible, frightful* preference for the food you were used to when you were very young, the food you ate in the country where you were born and about which you feel when you no longer get it that you have not anything at all to eat, that you are miserable.

I don’t know, I believe there won’t be a dozen people here who have come to the Ashram and eaten the food of the Ashram without saying, “Oh! I am not used to this food. It is very difficult.” And how many, how many hundreds of people who prepare their own food because they cannot eat the food of the Ashram! (*Mother slams the book down on the stool.*) And then, they justify this! So it is here that these ideas begin to come, and they say, “My health! I can’t digest well!” All this is only in their head. There is not a word of truth in it. NOT ONE WORD OF TRUTH. It is a perpetual lie in which everybody lives, and in this matter, indeed, I may tell you what I think, you have not advanced any farther than the mass of human beings.

I make an exception for the very, very, very rare ones who are not like that. They could be counted on one’s fingers. And all, all justify this, all, all — “Oh, my poor children! They are

9 June 1954

not used to eating this food. How shall we manage? They will die because of this change of food!" Well, I, indeed, can give a remedy for that. You take a boat, take a train and go round the world several times, you are obliged to eat in each country the food of that country, and after you have done this several times, you will understand your stupidity... It is a stupidity. A frightful *tamas*. One is tied up there like this (*Mother makes a movement with her hands*) to one's gastric habits.

Now I have said what was on my mind! You may ask questions.

(*Silence*)

No questions?

Mother, you have said in Prayers and Meditations: "What must happen will happen." Then why should we make personal efforts?

"What must happen will happen"? You know what I meant? — that there have been prophecies from the beginning of the world that there will be a new earth and a new human race and that the Divine will be manifest upon earth: and so I tell you, what must happen, will happen; what has been predicted, will be realised. There we are, it is that, it is not a small little explanation, quite down-to-earth, not at all!

(*After a silence*) Nobody has any questions? I have squashed all your questions at one stroke! (*Laughter*)

Sweet Mother, those who have made this prophecy, are they, are they...

They are the ones who will realise it, my child. It is those who have made it who will realise it and who have been working for that through centuries. And so?

Questions and Answers

But, I wanted to say, did they have the same vision as Sri Aurobindo? The Supermind?

If you had understood what I told you, you would not have put this question!

Is that all? We are sheltered, it is not raining, it is quite comfortable. It does not awaken your desire to know something, does it? Or are you afraid of another rebuff? (*Laughter*)

What is the work of the psychic being?

What is the work of the psychic being? You want it to have some work? What do you want to say exactly? What is its function? Ah! Very well. One could put it this way, that it is like an electric wire that connects the generator with the lamp. Now, if someone has understood, let him explain what I said!

What is the generator and what the lamp? (*Laughter*)

Ah, there we are! So, what is the generator and what the lamp? That is exactly it. What is the generator and what the lamp? Or rather, who is the generator and who is the lamp?

The generator is the Divine and the lamp is the body.

It is the body, it is the visible being.

So, that is its function. This means that if there were no psychic in Matter, it would not be able to have any direct contact with the Divine. And it is happily due to this psychic presence in Matter that the contact between Matter and the Divine can be direct and all human beings can be told, "You carry the Divine within you, and you have only to enter within yourself and you will find Him." It is something very particular to the human being or rather to the inhabitants of the earth. In the human being the psychic becomes more conscious,

9 June 1954

more formed, more conscious and more independent also. It is individualised in human beings. But it is a speciality of the earth. It is a direct infusion, special and redeeming, in the most inconscient and obscure Matter, so that it might once again awake through stages to the divine Consciousness, the divine Presence and finally to the Divine Himself. It is the presence of the psychic which makes man an exceptional being—I don't like to tell him this very much, because already he thinks too much of himself; he has such a high opinion of himself that it is not necessary to encourage him! But still, this is a fact—so much so that there are beings of other domains of the universe, those called by some people demigods and even gods, beings, for instance, of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, who are very eager to take a physical body on earth to have the experience of the psychic, for they don't have it. These beings certainly have many qualities that men don't, but they lack this divine presence which is altogether exceptional and exists only on the earth and nowhere else. All these inhabitants of the higher worlds, the Higher Mind, Overmind and other regions have no psychic being. Of course, the beings of the vital worlds don't have it either. But these latter don't regret it, they don't want it. There are only those very rare ones, quite exceptional, who want to be converted, and for this they act without delay, they immediately take a physical body. The others don't want it; it is something which binds them and constrains them to a rule they do not want.

But it is a fact, so I am obliged to state that this is how it is, that it is an exceptional quality of the human being to carry within himself the psychic and, truly speaking, he does not take full advantage from it. He does not seem to consider this quality as something very, very desirable, from the way he treats this presence—exactly that! He prefers to it the ideas of his mind, prefers the desires of his vital being and the habits of his physical.

I don't know how many of you have read the Bible; it is not very entertaining to read it, and besides, it is very long, but still,

Questions and Answers

in the Bible there is a story I have always liked very much. There were two brothers, if I am not mistaken, Esau and Jacob. Well, Esau was very hungry, that's the story, isn't it? I believe he was a hunter or something; anyway, the story goes like this. He came back home very hungry, and told Jacob he was very hungry, and he was so hungry that he said to him, "Listen, if you give me your mess of pottage" (Jacob had prepared some stew), "if you give me your mess of pottage I will give you my birthright." You know, one can understand the story quite superficially, but it has a very profound meaning: the birthright is the right of being the son of God. And so he was quite ready to give up his divine right because he was hungry, for a concrete, material thing, for food. This is a very old story, but it is eternally true.

Ask something else.

Mother, the Ashram has been here for a long time; and you say the people who have done something could be counted on your fingers...

No, no, I didn't say that. (*Laughter*) I was speaking only of food. I was speaking of those who came here and who did not begin, you understand, who did not... The story is very interesting. There are people who come, full of goodwill, moreover — I think I have written this somewhere in the *Bulletin* — their goodwill is so overflowing that when they arrive everything is perfect, including the food. They find it very good as long as they are in their psychic consciousness. When *that* begins to go down, the old habits begin to rise up; you understand, when the psychic consciousness comes down, the old habits climb back into their place. And then they begin saying: "It is strange! I used to like this, but I don't like it any more; it has become bad, this food!" This is an intermediary period, and later, after some time, more or less shyly according to their nature they say (*Mother begins whispering*), "Couldn't I have my personal food? For... I don't know, my stomach does not digest this!" (*Laughter*) Well, I say

9 June 1954

that among the people in the Ashram, I am not sure... but there are very, very few who haven't done that. And those who have told themselves, "Oh, as for me, it is all the same to me, I eat what I am given, and I don't bother about it" — these, indeed, can truly be counted on your fingers.

One must look at the thing very clearly, you understand, for there are some who do not dare to speak, many do not dare to say anything, except when they are a little indisposed or really have a stomach-ache or they think they have a stomach-ache and go to see a doctor. The doctor tells them, "Oh, try this or try that and see" — just the things they were accustomed to eating. The doctor begins by asking them, "What were you used to eating formerly?" (*Laughter*) "Weren't you used to taking this?" (*Laughter*) In this way. Then naturally, immediately they say, "Yes, yes, yes, I think that will do me good!" (*Laughter*)

So, now! (*Mother looks at the child who had put the question.*)

I meant, are all the efforts then in vain?

My child, I hope not! The question of food is just one question — I can't say it's secondary, for it is very symptomatic — it is altogether... it is related to the most physical consciousness, and from that point of view it expresses very well the physical condition. But indeed, this poor body! One must be a little patient with it. It is not that which discourages me — if I could be discouraged — it is the vital. Oh! Really, with its accomplice, the mind, these two rascals together, taking each other's support, making excuses and presenting to you such a marvellous picture of your own difficulties in order to justify them — that, indeed, is terrible. From this point of view Sri Aurobindo wrote a little rule which for some time we had put up everywhere. But, I believe, it must have disappeared now or else people are so used to it that they no longer even look at it. It said: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you," and Sri Aurobindo added,

Questions and Answers

“because she is, indeed, always present.” Still these physical eyes... “No, no, no, she is not there”, and so the first instinct is to hide things. Not only does one do everything that one wouldn’t do before me, but as one doesn’t at all believe the last part of Sri Aurobindo’s sentence, that even though I am not there physically, perhaps still I know how things are, so the first instinct is to hide things, and the moment one enters that path, it is like stepping into quicksand. One goes down, down, down; it seizes you, swallows you up, it draws you down in such a way that it is very difficult to come out of it. Of all things this is the worst: “Ah, provided that Mother does not know!” And so it begins like that and that’s the end. Well, I hope not many among you tell lies, but still, usually the end of the curve is that! And so, you understand, this is one of those stupidities without equal; for — I am going to tell you something — and I can tell you this with impunity: even if you don’t want that to happen, it will happen all the same!

People come for blessings in the morning, you know, or else during the night I go on inspection, everywhere I move around, going to everyone. In both cases, even in the morning when they come to receive a flower, I have only to look at them. There is something around their heads, and at times it is as clear as though they said, “This indeed is something I shall never tell.” They tell *me* this, “Never will I tell you this and this and that”; you understand, they tell me this by telling me that they will not say it. By telling me, “I shall not tell you this”, they tell me.

Mother, when we have done something and want to hide it from you, when we come to you, you look as if you knew nothing. Why? (Laughter)

(Laughingly) I look as if... I listen, yes? I listen as though I knew nothing, don’t I? It is good like that, and sometimes I exclaim “Ah!” and “Oh!” as though I did not know, don’t I? Well, my

9 June 1954

child, all that is for another reason. I have explained that already several times.

When I see people and am busy with them, I want to—I don't say it is always possible, but still—I want to see in them their psychic being, their ideal, what they want to do, what they want to be, in order to keep it, pull it to the surface; all my work consists of this: what I see I pull out always. And so, when I am doing that, apart from those cases in which I am aware that people are a little conscious of themselves, I am not always sure of the degree of their outer consciousness; and when I ask questions it is to know the difference between what they are conscious of and what I see; and this I am doing all the time. It looks as though I did not know, doesn't it? I ask a question to find out: "What do you feel? What do you think? What have you experienced? What..." You know, it is to have a clear picture of the degree of your consciousness.

There is a tremendous difference between what you know about yourself and what I know about you. What I know about you is obviously what you ought to be. So, outwardly one sees clearly what people are like, but that is just an outer phenomenon, you know. Between the two there is the vital and mental domain which is the most important from the human point of view, and it is there that in everyone the consciousness of what he ought to be should be reflected, so that he may realise it. But there is a vast distance between what each one knows about himself, what is actively conscious in him and what he is in the truth of his being. It is more difficult for me; this intermediate domain is a very cloudy one, for me it is a domain of falsehood, what I call falsehood. There are two words in English, "falsehood" and "lie"; well, it is the sense of falsehood. It is not a lie in the sense that one tells a lie, but it is a domain of what is not true, what is not at all the experience of the truth of a being, and yet it is of this that he is almost solely conscious. Only a very few have the inner perception of what they want to be, what they want to do, of what the truth of their being is.

Questions and Answers

There are not many such. Or else it comes and then gets veiled; suddenly one has a flash and then it gets clouded over. And so the questions I put are always in order to know the state of this surface consciousness, which for me is something quite unreal, something that is not true.

There is such a contradiction between the brutal fact of your daily way of life and the picture I have before myself of what each one of you ought to be, a picture I keep there with all the power of my consciousness so that you may realise it — and that is yourself, that, yes, is yourself! It is not this ignorant being, stupid and insincere — sometimes dishonest — who is the... whom you call yourself.

Listen, I am not quite young according to ordinary human notions. I am fairly old. From my earliest childhood I have not stopped observing things. When I was very young I was chided for never speaking. It was because I spent my time observing. I passed my time observing, I registered everything, I learnt all I could, I did not stop learning. Well, I can still feel surprised. Suddenly I find myself looking at such twisted, insincere and obscure movements that I tell myself, “It is not possible. Can such a thing exist?” Indeed, things which still come to me, day after day, “It is not possible! In the world things happen in this way?” And yet I have seen a great number of people, I began being interested in people when very young, I have seen many countries, done what I recommend to others; in every country I lived the life of that country in order to understand it well, and there is nothing which interested me in my outer being as much as learning.

Well, now I still feel that I know nothing. There may occur in this world and in the human consciousness things which are beyond me! I don't understand how it can be possible. For me, when someone is so twisted up, to the point of being unrecognisable, I get the feeling — I always get the feeling that this consciousness of truth which is trying to manifest is seized and completely deformed. And how one can come to such a pass,

9 June 1954

that — that I have not yet understood — how one can come to this point.

Here we are! This is not to discourage you; it is only to tell you why I sometimes ask questions. Even to a little baby I may ask questions. I always feel that one can learn something, always. There is something else still. There are all the things I see and I have told you, haven't I, that at night I go for inspection while others sleep. It is very convenient for me, because in sleep one is just what one is. Well, I go around, I inspect and I see all kinds of things! You can't imagine what! But each time that it is possible for me I ask questions, many questions, in order to check what I have seen. I have done this work for years and years and years; I began working at night in this way, consciously, in 1904 perhaps, that is, fifty years ago, and I have not stopped. Well, even now, in order to be sure of what I see, I always ask practical questions, so as to verify, and never do I know (*the tape-recorder starts making a loud noise which draws Mother's attention; she asks, "Finished? It does not want to go on!"*, then continues), never do I have that kind of assurance people usually have of believing that they know, that they can't be mistaken, and that the thing is understood.

The world is in perpetual transformation. Even were I to live a thousand years and more upon earth, I should continue to learn without stopping, and I am sure I would always learn something new, because what was true yesterday is no longer so today, and what is true today will no longer be so tomorrow; the world is perpetually changing, therefore, one can learn perpetually. And after all, I don't know if that is not the very reason for the world, an objectification of oneself in order to know oneself in all detail; there are many details, it can last a very long time, and they are unexpected ones!

There, then. Is the tape finished? For we can also stop now, it is late.

Good night.

16 June 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 12, "Difficulties and Progress".

"Q: Do our thoughts (good and bad) about others affect them in any way?"

"A: Yes, there is an influence."

"Q: Is it possible that the desires, doubts, etc. of one person can pass on to another?"

"A: Anything can pass from one to another. It is happening all the time throughout the world."

Who has a question?

Sweet Mother, why doesn't one receive the Divine as one receives other things?

What do you understand by "other things"?

The question has not been put very well. Do you mean... Here what is spoken about are the influences which pass from one person to another — is that what you mean? Why doesn't one receive the Divine as easily as, say, one receives a neighbour's ill-will? Is that it?

Because it is not on the same plane. The neighbour's ill-will or goodwill are on the same plane, whereas the Divine belongs to another world. That's the reason why. If you want an image: all that is on a horizontal plane in relation to you is very easily received, but all that comes from a vertical direction is much more difficult. First one must look up above, within oneself, and then open oneself so that it descends; while in the other way... one moves like that all the time. Don't understand?

And unfortunately, it is much easier to slide down, to fall than to climb up. It is much easier to respond to an influence

16 June 1954

which drags you down than to a force that pulls you up. Is it not more easy to go down than to climb up? If you are at a certain place and have to climb a rock, it is much more difficult than if you let yourself slide in order to go down below. Isn't that so?

Sweet Mother, when one realises the Divine, does one no longer have enemies?

Ah, indeed! Why? I believe it is rather just the opposite.

Is it because there are adverse forces?

Yes, surely. The earth is full of adverse forces and of men who respond to these adverse forces; usually, the more one realises the Divine, the more enemies does he have around himself.

Do they act against the Divine?

Oh, yes! At least they try. I don't know if they succeed, but they try. They try, they have always tried.

Why? The Divine hasn't done anyone any harm!

(Laughing) You think one acts against others only when they have done some harm? Usually it is just the contrary. Can you tell me why the strong use their strength against the weak? It is not that the weak have harmed them, but simply because they have the strength and wish to use it for their own ends and want to compel the weak to obey their force, so they beat them; when they have a chance, they ill-treat them. It is not because the weak have made mistakes; it is because they want to use their strength for their own purposes, for the satisfaction of their desires.

Suppose, for instance, that there are forces in the universe which are accustomed to govern, as there are certain asuric forces governing the earth. They do not want to lose their authority. So all who put out a force which could compel them to

Questions and Answers

withdraw, they attack with as much strength as they have. They do this to keep their power. But it is not because these people... in fact, you understand, it is not that they are wicked or bad. It is because the light and power they represent are completely opposed to the power represented by the other forces.

Mother, it is said that something of the Divine is there even in the Asuras.

Naturally!

Then, when the Divine fights the Asura, what does the Divine in the Asura do?

He goes back into the Divine. But you know the story? He is re-absorbed by the Divine, as in the Ramayana; that story is quite true in this sense.

If the Divine were to withdraw from the Asura, the Asura would dissolve, wouldn't he? — the Divine who is in the Asura?

I know people who have rejected their psychic being and who still continue to live; and yet, logically it would seem that a human being without a psychic being would die, still they continue to live. And perhaps it would be necessary in order finally to dissolve these asuric forces in the world — perhaps it would be necessary for the Divine to withdraw his whole creation into himself, because these are at the very origin of the creation.

Then the transformation cannot come about unless the Divine withdraws into the Divine?

That, why, that is Pralaya! It is not transformation, it is the dissolution of the earth. It is said that there were six creations,

16 June 1954

that is, six exteriorisations of the universe, and that six times the universe went back — it is recounted in the scriptures, you know — went back into the Divine. But it is said that this is the end. It is evidently one ending, but it is not the completion. It is because the creation lacked something and it was necessary to withdraw it and remake it. And it is said that our present creation is the seventh, and being the seventh it is the real one, that is, it is the final one, and it will not be withdrawn again, that it will continue to be transformed and become more and more perfect, so as not to have to be withdrawn.

How far is what is said true?

We shall see!

But the last six times, is that what happened?

The first six, yes, it is true. Even the order is given, the order in which... Because each creation is built on certain attributes, and the order of these attributes is given. I know them, I have written them somewhere. But I don't have it with me. So I can't give it to you, I would make a mistake. But one day I could bring you the paper on which it is written. All that I know is that this time it is the creation based on equilibrium. But a special equilibrium, for it is a progressive equilibrium. It is not a static equilibrium. The attribute of the present creation is *equilibrium*; that is why it is said that in this creation, if each thing is exactly in its place, in a perfect balance, well, there is no more evil. What is evil? — it is things not in equilibrium! There is nothing that is bad in itself, it is only the position which is wrong, which is not the true position.

Then what is the position of the Asuras?

To be taken back into the Divine. There were four great Asuras.

Questions and Answers

Out of the four, two are converted. They are taking part in the divine work. The other two are holding out well. How long will they hold out? We shall see. So, they have the choice between being converted, that is, taking their place, poised, in the whole totality or else being dissolved, that is, being reabsorbed into their Origin.

There is one of them who has almost attempted conversion and not succeeded. When it had to be done, it seemed to him quite unpleasant. So he has put it off till another time.

As for the other, he refuses to try. He has taken up a very, very important position in the world, because people who don't know things call him "Lord of the Nations". In fact, I was speaking a while ago about the forces which govern the world and don't want to give up their rule at all. They are perfectly satisfied with it — it is not that he does not know that his end will come one day, but still he always postpones it as long as he can.

But as they do not have human dimensions, it can go on for quite a long time, can't it? As long as they find somewhere upon earth a human consciousness ready to respond to their influence, they will remain. So you can imagine the problem! Now it is not through individuals, it is through nations that they exert their influence.

Which are the two forces that are already converted?

Do you know the four Asuras?

No. I don't know them.

Do you know what the origin of these four Asuras is? (*To another child*) Who knows this?

You had once told us in class.

16 June 1954

Yes, surely; that's just why I am asking you about it, to find out if you remember the things I tell you!

You said there were four divine forces: Love, Light, Truth and the opposite of Death.

And what?

(Another child, laughing) *Life!*

Ah!

Then these four forces separated from the Divine and changed into falsehood...

Yes, it is something like that! It is something like that!

Light or Consciousness, Ananda or Love, Life and Truth.

Then Light or Consciousness became Darkness and Inconscience. Love and Ananda became Hatred and Suffering, and Truth became Falsehood, and Life became Death. Well, it is the first two... but not exactly in the same conditions. The first is converted and works, but he has refused to take a human body, he says it is a limitation in his work; perhaps one day he will take one, but for the time being he refuses. The second is converted and has of his own will been dissolved. He has dissolved into his origin. And the last two are holding out well.

The one of Death tried to incarnate. But he could not get converted. He tried to incarnate, which is something very rare. But it was a partial, not a total incarnation. That is difficult for them, a total incarnation. Human bodies are quite small, human consciousnesses are too small.

As for the other, he has emanations which are very active in certain human bodies and have played a big role in the recent history of the earth!

Questions and Answers

Don't the Asuras quarrel among themselves?

Oh yes, oh yes! Just like men who are under asuric influences. They are the worst enemies among themselves. We must say it is a blessing, for if they had an understanding, things would be much more difficult. Perhaps it is so just because it is a law of equilibrium that governs the world. It is in order to lessen the strength of their influence. But still...

That Lord of Falsehood has truly a lot of influence. This is what catches you with a contagion as strong as that of contagious diseases. Stronger still!

Sweet Mother, did not Falsehood try to incarnate?

He sent emanations upon earth but I don't think that was with the purpose of conversion. Anyway, he did not succeed in it.

But why is man a centre of attraction for the adverse forces? He is so limited!

Yes. Also they do not usually work upon one man. But they try to get hold of the earth-atmosphere, you understand, and without getting hold of men, they can't get hold of the earth-atmosphere, because it is in man that the highest terrestrial force manifests. As for taking a human body for conversion, that indeed is quite... the answer is quite simple. It is because in man there is a psychic being and there is no Asura who can eternally resist the influence of the psychic being, even were he to refuse as much as he could to surrender and bind himself closely. That's exactly the contradiction of their existence.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo has said that one can pass from human love to divine Love.

He was speaking of human love manifesting as Bhakti, as a

16 June 1954

force of devotion for the Divine, and he says that at the beginning your love for the Divine is a very human love with all the characteristics of human love. He describes this very well, besides. Yet if you persist and make the necessary effort, it is not impossible for this human love to be transformed into divine love through identification with what you love. He has not said that the love between two persons can change into divine love. It is not that at all! He has always said the opposite. He spoke about someone who had asked him about devotion, you know, about the sadhak's love for the Divine. At the beginning your love is altogether human — and he speaks of it even as commercial barter. If you make progress, your love will change into divine love, into true devotion.

Why do we sometimes have a special preference for a certain chapter, for instance, the one on sincerity or aspiration?

You mean the desire to read it? Because one probably needs what is in it! If you have an attraction for something, usually it is that you need to read it, and it is exactly the thing you need to understand which comes to you. You can use this even with an altogether material method which I have often given you. See, you concentrate — if you have a difficulty or want to be helped, you concentrate and then insert a marker in a book and you alight upon the thing which is the answer to what you have asked. That is the most material means; but if the mind is well disposed, then, quite naturally, when it reads the titles, it will say, “Oh, this is what I want to read”, without even knowing what is within, because it will feel that this is what has to be read to answer its question or its need.

Some people have this power even without having tried to make any progress, and somebody will always come along to give them a book and tell them, without even knowing why, “Here, read this book, it will interest you”; or else they will

Questions and Answers

enter a house and see a book lying on the table — it is just the one thing they will want to read. It depends a great deal on the intensity of the inner aspiration. If you are in a state of conscious aspiration and very sincere, well, everything around you will be arranged in order to help in your aspiration, whether directly or indirectly, that is, either to make you progress, put you in touch with something new or to eliminate from your nature something that has to disappear. This is something quite remarkable. If you are truly in a state of intensity of aspiration, there is not a circumstance which does not come to help you to realise this aspiration. Everything comes, everything, as though there were a perfect and absolute consciousness organising around you all things, and you yourself in your outer ignorance may not recognise it and may protest at first against the circumstances as they show themselves, may complain, may try to change them; but after a while, when you have become wiser, and there is a certain distance between you and the event, well, you will realise that it was just what you needed to do to make the necessary progress. And, you know, it is a will, a supreme goodwill which arranges all things around you, and even when you complain and protest instead of accepting, it is exactly at such moments that it acts most effectively.

I have written a short sentence which will appear in the *Bulletin*, the next *Bulletin*. It goes something like this (I don't remember the words exactly now): If you say to the Divine with conviction, "I want only You", the Divine will arrange all the circumstances in such a way as to compel you to be sincere.¹ Something in the being... "I want only You."... the aspiration... and then one wants a hundred odd things all the time, isn't that so? At times something comes, just... usually to disturb everything — it stands in the way and prevents you from realising your aspiration. Well, the Divine will come without showing

¹ "If earnestly you say to the Divine, 'I want only Thee', the Divine will arrange the circumstances in such a way that you are compelled to be sincere."

16 June 1954

Himself, without your seeing Him, without your having any inkling of it, and He will arrange all the circumstances in such a way that everything that prevents you from belonging solely to the Divine will be removed from your path, inevitably. Then when all is removed, you begin to howl and complain; but later, if you are sincere and look at yourself straight in the eye... you have said to the Lord, you have said, "I want only You." He will remain close to you, all the rest will go away. This is indeed a higher Grace. Only, you must say this with conviction. I don't even mean that you must say it integrally, because if one says it integrally, the work is done. What is necessary is that one part of the being, indeed the central will, says it with conviction: "I want only You." Even once, and it suffices: all that takes more or less long, sometimes it stretches over years, but one reaches the goal.

But one has all kinds of imperfections!

Eh? The more the imperfections, the longer it takes; the more the attachments one has, the longer it takes.

BUT THE GOAL IS SURE!

23 June 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 13, "Sex — Food — Sleep".

"Q: Is taking very little food helpful in controlling the senses?"

"A: No, it simply exasperates them — to take a moderate amount is best. People who fast easily get exalted and may lose their balance.

"Q: If one takes only vegetarian food, does it help in controlling the senses?"

"A: It avoids some of the difficulties which the meat-eaters have, but it is not sufficient by itself."

Any questions?

What happens if one eats meat?

Do you want me to tell you a story? I knew a lady, a young Swedish woman, who was doing sadhana; and she was by habit a vegetarian, from both choice and habit. One day she was invited by some friends who gave her chicken for dinner. She did not want to make a fuss, she ate the chicken. But afterwards, during the night suddenly she found herself in a basket with her head between two pieces of wicker-work, shaken, shaken, shaken, and feeling wretched, miserable; and then, after that she found herself head down, feet in the air, and being shaken, shaken, shaken. (*Laughter*) She felt perfectly miserable; and then all of a sudden, somebody began pulling out things from her body, and that hurt her terribly, and then someone came along with a knife and chopped off her head; and then she woke up. She told me all this; she said she had never had such a frightful nightmare, that

23 June 1954

she had not thought of anything before going to sleep, that it was just the consciousness of the poor chicken that had entered her, and that she had experienced in her dream all the anguish the poor chicken had suffered when it was carried to the market, sold, its feathers plucked and its neck cut! (*Laughter*)

That's what happens! That is to say, in a greater or lesser proportion you swallow along with the meat a little of the consciousness of the animal you eat. It is not very serious, but it is not always very pleasant. And obviously it does not help you in being on the side of man rather than of the beast! It is evident that primitive men, those who were still much closer to the beast than to the spirit, apparently used to eat raw meat, and that gives much more strength than cooked meat. They killed the animal, tore it apart and bit into it, and they were very strong. And moreover, this is why there was in their intestines that little piece, the appendix which in those days was much bigger and served to digest the raw meat. And then man began to cook. He found out that things tasted better that way, and he ate cooked meat and gradually the appendix grew smaller and was no longer of any use at all. So now it is an encumbrance which at times brings on an illness.

This is to tell you that perhaps now it is time to change one's food and go over to something a little less bestial! It depends absolutely on each one's state of consciousness. For an ordinary man, living an ordinary life, having ordinary activities, not thinking at all of anything else except earning his living, of keeping himself fit and perhaps taking care of his family, it is good to eat meat, it is all right for him to eat anything at all, whatever agrees with him, whatever does him good.

But if one wishes to pass from this ordinary life to a higher one, the problem begins to become interesting; and if, after having come to a higher life, one tries to prepare oneself for the transformation, then it becomes very important. For there certainly are foods which help the body to become subtle and others which keep it in a state of animality. But it is only at that

Questions and Answers

particular time that this becomes very important, not before; and before reaching that moment, there are many other things to do. Certainly it is better to purify one's mind and purify one's vital before thinking of purifying one's body. For even if you take all possible precautions and live physically taking care not to absorb anything except what will help to subtilise your body, if your mind and vital remain in a state of desire, inconscience, darkness, passion and so on, that won't be of any use at all. Only, your body will become weak, dislocated from the inner life and one fine day it will fall ill.

One must begin from inside, I have already told you this once. One must begin from above, first purify the higher and then purify the lower. I am not saying that one must indulge in all sorts of degrading things in the body. That's not what I am telling you. Don't take it as an advice not to exercise control over your desires! It isn't that at all. But what I mean is, do not try to be an angel in the body if you are not already just a little of an angel in your mind and vital; for that would dislocate you in a different way from the usual one, but not one that is better. We said the other day that what is most important is to keep the equilibrium. Well, to keep the equilibrium everything must progress at the same time. You must not leave one part of your being in darkness and try to bring the other into light. You must take great care not to leave any corner dark. There you are.

Why were eggs forbidden in the Ashram formerly? Now you give eggs.

Eggs were forbidden?

I don't know. That's what we were told.

Ah, people say many things, but I am not responsible for all the things they say! (*Laughter*) I don't remember ever refusing

23 June 1954

an egg to someone who needed it from the point of view of health. But if people come and ask for something just out of greediness, for pleasure, I always refuse, as much now as before. It is only from the point of view of health, you know, of the physical equilibrium, that certain things are allowed. Everything is allowed. I haven't refused meat to one who needed it. There were people who ate it because they needed it. But if someone comes asking me for something just in order to satisfy a desire, I say "No", whatever it may be, even ice-cream! (*Laughter*)

When one eats an egg, doesn't one eat the chicken inside it?

It's not yet formed, the consciousness of the chicken. Of course, one must take care to eat the egg fresh before the chick begins to be formed.

Sweet Mother, if the agony of a chicken can attack us, so too can that of a beetroot or a carrot, can't it?

For all that, I believe the chicken is more conscious than the beetroot. (*Laughter*) But I ought to tell you my own experience. Only I was thinking this was not something common.

In Tokyo I had a garden and in this garden I was growing vegetables myself. I had a fairly big garden and many vegetables. And so, every morning I used to go for a walk, after having watered them and all the rest; I used to walk around to choose which vegetables I could take for eating. Well, just imagine! There were some which said to me, "No, no, no, no, no."... And then there were others which called, and I saw them from a distance, and they were saying, "Take me, take me, take me!" So it was very simple, I looked for those which wanted to be taken and never did I touch those which did not. I used to think it was something exceptional. I loved my plants very much, I used to look after them, I had put a lot of consciousness into

Questions and Answers

them while watering them, cleaning them, so I thought they had a special capacity, perhaps.

But in France it was the same thing. I had a garden also in the south of France where I used to grow peas, radishes, carrots. Well, there were some which were happy, which asked to be taken and eaten, and there were those which said, “No, no, no, don’t touch me, don’t touch me!” (*Laughter*)

Why did they say that, Sweet Mother?

Well, I experimented precisely to find out; and the result was not always the same. At times it was indeed that the plant was not edible; it was not good, it was hard or bitter, it was not good for eating. At other times it happened that it was not ready, that it was too early; it wasn’t ripe. By waiting for a day or two, a day or two later it said to me, “Take me, take me, take me!” (*Laughter*)

In the past, sages used to torture their bodies in order to realise the Divine!

Well then, they were not *sages*! (*Laughter*) This leads to nothing at all, except to pride, a spiritual pride, that’s all. But surely not to the realisation of the Divine.

But it is said that they did the highest form of sadhana and realised what they wanted.

It is said, many things are said.

Aren’t dogs more faithful than men?

Certainly! Because it is their nature to be faithful, and they have no mental complications. What prevents men from being faithful are their mental complications. Most men are not

23 June 1954

faithful because they fear being duped. You don't know what it is to be duped? They fear being deceived, being exploited. They fear... Behind their faithfulness there is still a very big egoism which is more or less hidden, and there is always that bargaining, more or less conscious, of give-and-take: one gives oneself to someone but whether one tells oneself this or not, one expects something in exchange. You are faithful, but also want others to be faithful to you, that is, look after you, to be quite sweet to you, and, especially not to try to profit by your faithfulness. None of these complications are there in the dog, for its mind is very rudimentary. It does not have this marvellous capacity of reasoning that men have, a capacity which has made them commit so many stupidities.

Only one cannot turn and go back. One cannot become a dog again. So one must become a higher man and have the quality of the dog on a higher plane; that is, instead of its being a half-conscious fidelity, and in any case very instinctive, a sort of need that ties it down, it must be a willed, conscious fidelity, and especially above all egoism. There is a point where all the virtues are united: it is a point that goes beyond the ego. If we take this faithfulness, if we take devotion, take love, the meaning of service, all these things, when they are above the egoistic level, they meet, in the sense that they give themselves and do not expect anything in exchange. And if you climb one step higher, instead of its being done with the idea of duty and abnegation, it is done with an intense joy which carries within itself its own reward, which needs nothing in exchange, for it carries its joy in itself. But then, for that you must have climbed quite high and must no longer have that turning back upon yourself which, of all things, pulls you down lowest. That kind of... that sympathy, full of self-pity, wherein one cajoles and caresses oneself and says, "Poor me!", that, indeed, is something terrible, and one does this so constantly, without being aware of it. This turning back upon oneself, a kind of degrading self-compassion, in which one tells oneself in a tone so full of pity, "Nobody understands me! No

Questions and Answers

one loves me! No one cares for me as people should!" etc., and one goes on and on.... And now this is really terrible, it draws you down into a hole immediately.

One must have gone far beyond all that, left it very far behind oneself, in order to truly have the joy of faithfulness, the joy of self-giving, which does not care at all, no, indeed, not at all, in any way, whether it is properly received or gets the adequate response. Not to expect anything in exchange for what one does, not to expect anything, not through asceticism or a sense of sacrifice but because one has the joy of the consciousness one is in and that is enough; this is much better than all one can receive, from whomsoever it be; but that again is something else. There are quite a few stages between the two.

Mother, you said that the sleep before midnight gives us most rest...

Physically, yes.

Why?

Ah! I said that through personal experience and then that... There's no why about it, is there? Everyone should find this out for himself, or not find it out. But I have heard from those who are interested in earth-chemistry that there are certain rays — (*turning to Pavitra*) isn't that so? Tell us, do you know about it? — sun-rays which remain active in the atmosphere till midnight, and other rays which become active afterwards, and these give you strength and those draw it out of you. But there are many things like that; at least this, you understand, is something we hear of or read in books. I am giving it to you for what it is worth, I know nothing. Somebody who is very well up in the subject could give you a fuller explanation. (*Laughing*) But certain things are true, in practice. I cannot say why; perhaps they are only personal things! But still, I have heard of a similar

23 June 1954

experience from others also. For instance, you go into the sea, remain there a few minutes and you come out full of strength. You go into the sea and remain in it for an hour and you come out completely exhausted! Even with a hot bath it is the same thing. You have a hot bath; you are very tired; you get into it; you remain there at the most for a moment; you come out and feel quite fresh. You remain there for a quarter of an hour, you come out, you have lost all your strength, your energy, there's nothing left, you are drained out.

I tell you this, I cannot speak to you with any competence about the reason, but the fact is there. It is like that. For myself I have an explanation, but it is good only for me, it does not work for others. So it is useless.

As for these stages of sleep which are spoken about here, if one is conscious of one's nights, one can cover them in a few minutes. One does not need to wait for hours of sleep to do this, you understand; if one is conscious, one can pass through all that in a few minutes. To begin with, when one is conscious of one's nights, the first thing to do before falling fast asleep, just in the state when one begins to relax, relax all one's nerves — I have explained this to you already, one relaxes all the nerves and lets oneself go... like this... you know — well, at that moment, one must relax very carefully all mental activity and make that quiet, as quiet as possible, and not go off to sleep until the mind is quite calm. Then you escape quite a long period of useless excitement which is extremely tiring. If you can so manage that the mind relaxes and enters into a complete peace first, your sleep will immediately become very peaceful and very refreshing; naturally, your vital must not be in a turmoil, for then, in that case, it will take you into all sorts of places and make you commit all kinds of stupidities, and the result will be that you will wake up even more tired than when you went to sleep.

But if you are conscious, after having calmed your vital, when you begin to come out from your physical consciousness and enter a more subtle consciousness, you put your vital to

Questions and Answers

sleep, you say to it, “Rest now, keep very quiet”, and then you enter your mental activity and say to the mind, “Rest now, remain very quiet”, and you put it to sleep also; and then you come out of the mind into a higher region, and there, if it begins to interest you, for instance, if it is the first time you have gone there, you may look at what is happening, have your experience, learn things — at times one learns very interesting things; and then, sometimes one can become aware of a certain general state also, have ideas about other people, other things; it is interesting! And later, if you have had enough of this, you say, “Keep quiet, sleep, don’t move”, and you put that to sleep, and rise to a still higher consciousness, and so on, till you reach a state where you are on the borders of *form*, I am not speaking of physical form — on the borders of all form, much higher than the form of thought, naturally; on the borders of all form and all vibration, in the perfect silence, what here we call Sachchidananda. And when you are there, everything stops, all vibrations subside, and if you remain there just three minutes, you come back to your body *absolutely* rested, refreshed, fortified, as though you had slept for hours! This is something one can learn to do. I don’t say it can be done overnight, a little work is necessary and also some persistence, but still... this one must learn to do; and when you are very anxious, very tired, very... for instance, when you have just undergone violent attacks from hostile forces in one form or another and are very tired, if you follow this process consciously, well, within a few minutes all that disappears completely. It is something worth learning. Only, one must be very, very, very persevering, for... Wait a bit, I am going to tell you something more about it.

When I began studying occultism, I became aware that — just when I began to work upon my nights in order to make them conscious — I became aware that there was between the subtle-physical and the most material vital a small region, very small, which was not sufficiently developed to serve as a conscious link between the two activities. So what took place in the

23 June 1954

consciousness of the most material vital did not get translated exactly in the consciousness of the most subtle physical. Some of it got lost on the way because it was like a — not positively a void but something only half-conscious, not sufficiently developed. I knew there was only one way, that was to work to develop it. I began working. This happened sometime about the month of February, I believe. One month, two months, three, four, no result. We go on. Five months, six months... it was at the end of July or the beginning of August. I left Paris, the house I was staying in, and went to the countryside, quite a small place on the seashore, to stay with some friends who had a garden. Now, in that garden there was a lawn — you know what a lawn is, don't you? grass — where there were flowers and around it some trees. It was a fine place, very quiet, very silent. I lay on the grass, like this, flat on my stomach, my elbows in the grass, and then suddenly all the life of that Nature, all the life of that region between the subtle-physical and the most material vital, which is very living in plants and in Nature, all that region became all at once, suddenly, without any transition, absolutely living, intense, conscious, marvellous; and this was the result, wasn't it?, of six months of work which had given nothing. I had not noticed anything; but just a little shift like that and the result was there! It is like the chick in the egg, yes! It is there for a very long time and yet one sees nothing at all. And one wonders whether there is indeed a chick in the egg; and then, suddenly "Tick!", there is a tiny hole, you know, and then everything bursts and out comes the chick! It is quite ready, but it took all that time to be formed; that's how it is. When you want to prepare something within you, that is how it is, it is like the chick in the egg. You need a very long time, and this without having the least result, never getting discouraged, and continuing your effort, absolutely regularly, as though you had eternity before you and, moreover, as though you were quite disinterested about the result. You do the work because you do it. And then, suddenly, one day, it bursts and you see before you the full result of your work.

Questions and Answers

But you understand, don't you? One speaks like this, very easily, of becoming conscious of one's nights, having control over one's sleep-activities and all sorts of things of this kind, but you need to do many such little works like the one I have just described to you. Many of these are needed to obtain this result. When one is accomplished, you realise that there is another missing, and when this is done, you realise there is still another, and so on, until one fine day you can do what I said, and you go from one plane to another, like that, putting all to rest, until you come out of all activity and enter the supreme rest, consciously. It is worth the trouble.

There you are!

Another question? No?

Finished.

30 June 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 14, "Some Explanations".

"Q: What is the place of occult power in Yoga?"

"A: To know and use the subtle forces of the supraphysical planes is part of the Yoga."

"Q: What is the meaning of occult endeavour and power?"

"A: It depends on the context. Usually it would mean power to use the secret forces of Nature and an endeavour by means of these forces. But 'occult' may mean something else in another context."

"Q: Has every Yogi to pass through occult endeavour?"

"A: No, everyone has not the capacity. Those who do not have it, must wait till it is given to them."

That's the end of the book!

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo is speaking about occult endeavour here and says that those who don't have the capacity must wait till it is given to them. Can't they get it through practice?

No. That is, if it is latent in someone, it can be developed by practice. But if one doesn't have occult power, he may try for fifty years, he won't get anywhere. Everybody cannot have occult power. It is as though you were asking whether everybody could be a musician, everybody could be a painter, everybody could... Some can, some can't. It is a question of temperament.

What is the difference between occultism and mysticism?

Questions and Answers

They are not at all the same thing.

Mysticism is a more or less emotive relation with what one senses to be a divine power — that kind of highly emotional, affective, very intense relation with something invisible which is or is taken for the Divine. That is mysticism.

Occultism is exactly what he has said: it is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science. It is altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry, for it is the same kind of knowledge as the knowledge of chemistry for material things. It is a knowledge of invisible forces, their different vibrations, their interrelations, the combinations which can be made by bringing them together and the power one can exercise over them. It is absolutely scientific; and it ought to be learnt like a science; that is, one cannot practise occultism as something emotional or something vague and imprecise. You must work at it as you would do at chemistry, and learn all the rules or find them if there is nobody to teach you. But it is at some risk to yourself that you can find them. There are combinations here as explosive as certain chemical combinations.

Is occultism necessary in this life?

In this life? That depends upon what one wants to do. You mean in the life of yoga? Not at all necessary. And besides, as he says, there are many who are not gifted, who don't have the faculty. Lots of people, as soon as they have the least experience, the least experience, for instance when they just begin to come out of their body, are panic-stricken, and this indeed is something very difficult to cure. It can be cured if one has a strong will and a great self-mastery. But many people are not able to dissociate their states of being. If they dissociate them, something goes wrong, their body suffers; while there are others who go out, take a walk, return. For them this is quite natural. Usually, those who are interested in this — unless

30 June 1954

it is only a kind of mental curiosity — are also gifted. They may not know it but they can be taught. But these things have to be practised with precaution. For instance — I am going to give you an example: as soon as one goes out of the body, no matter how slightly, and even just mentally, well, that part of the mind which controls the functioning goes out; and the automatic side of the mind which makes or produces movements or glandular secretions, that whole automatic side, you see, remains without the protection and control of the conscious, thinking part. Well, in the atmosphere there are always numerous little entities, very tiny, usually originating from human disintegrations, which are like physical microbes, some kind of microbes of the vital. They are more visible and have a will of their own. One can't say they are wicked but they are full of mischief. They like to have a good time and enjoy themselves at people's expense. So, as soon as they see that you are not sufficiently protected, they get hold of the automatic mind and bring upon you all sorts of quite unpleasant things — as, for example, some people swallow their tongue when in a trance; this suffocates them if they don't take care. Others bite their tongue; sometimes this hurts very badly. All sorts of things like this may happen to you — which means that normally you should never enter into a trance without having somebody nearby to watch over you, and not only watch just physically but... watch with the conscious power of preventing these little entities from getting hold of your nervous centres which are not protected by the conscious Presence. This is a general rule. There are greater dangers than that. When one goes out of the body materially — and nothing but the contact of a link remains, you understand, it is a kind of link like a thread of light joining the being that has gone out with the one that remains behind — if this link is protected, nothing happens. But if it is not protected, there may be adverse forces, not only full of mischief but with much ill-will also, which could come and cut it. And then, once it is cut, you

Questions and Answers

may try as hard as you like, but you cannot get back into the body.

One dies?

Yes, after a while. Which means that all this is not at all a joke, you understand, or just a matter of having fun or something one can do simply to amuse oneself. It must be done in the right way and in the required conditions, and with great care. And then, one thing is *absolutely* essential, absolutely: you must not touch this occult science if you have the least fear in you. For instance, if in your dreams you meet terrible things and get frightened, you should not practise occultism. If, on the other hand, the most frightful dreams you have leave you absolutely calm, and even at times amused and very much interested, if you can handle all that and know how to get out of the difficulty in every circumstance, then that means you have the ability and can do it. Some people are very brave warriors in their dreams. When they meet enemies, they know how to fight; they know not only how to defend themselves, but also to conquer; they are full of ardour, energy, courage; these indeed are the true candidates for occultism. But those who rush back into their body as fast as a rat into its hole, they should surely not touch it. And then, you must also have an infinite patience; because just as it takes many years to learn how to handle the different chemical substances, just as you have to work for long periods without getting any visible results when you want to discover the least thing that's new, so in occultism you may try for years together and not have the least experience. And that becomes very monotonous and hardly interesting; and there is always in man that kind of physical mind, practical and positive, which keeps on telling you, "Why are you trying? You see quite well there is nothing in it, these are all stories people tell you; why are you working for nothing? You are wasting your time. There is nothing at all in it, it is all imagination." It is very difficult

30 June 1954

to keep one's conviction and faith when there is nothing upon which to found them.

Sweet Mother, are religious exercises very important for those who have an ordinary consciousness?

Religious exercises? I don't know! What do you mean by religious exercises?

Japa, etc.

Oh, those things! If it helps you, it is all right. If it doesn't help you, it is just... This is one of those altogether relative things. It is altogether relative. Its value lies only in the effect it has on you and the extent to which you believe in it. If it helps you to concentrate, it is good. The ordinary consciousness always does it just through superstition, with the idea that "If I do this, if I go to the temple or church once a week, if I offer prayers, something very fine will happen to me." This is superstition, spread all over the world, but it has no value at all from the spiritual point of view.

Mother, for instance, on certain days of the year we have Lakshmi-puja, Mahakali-puja, and all that....

That's because it amuses you, my children!

But on these days you give us blessings also!

Yes, because that amuses you! (*Laughter*) Eh?

You give us blessings only to amuse us?

Come now! It pleases you; I said "amuses"; it's... I was disrespectful; but it's because it pleases you.

Questions and Answers

Mahakali day, for instance...

Yes, yes, sometimes Kali comes three days earlier or four days later or at some other time in the year. She is not necessarily there on that very day; at times, to make you happy, I call her a little. (*Laughter*) In any case, it is not I who believe in these things!

In all religious monuments, in monuments considered the most... well, as belonging to the highest religion, whether in France or any other country or Japan — it was never the same temples or churches nor the same gods, and yet my experience was everywhere almost the same, with very small differences — I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable — in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people's devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this thing. But they had their faith which could change that evil thing into something good in them; they had their faith. So, truly, if I had gone and told them, "Do you think you are praying to God? It is an enormous vital spider that's feeding upon all your forces!", that would really not have been very charitable. And that's how it is most of the time, almost everywhere; it is a vital force which is there, for these vital entities feed upon the vibration of human emotions, and very few people, very few, an insignificant number, go to church or temple with a true religious feeling, that is, not to pray and beg for something from God but to offer themselves, give

thanks, aspire, give themselves. There is hardly one in a million who does that. So they do not have the power of changing the atmosphere. Perhaps when they are there, they manage to get across, break through and go somewhere and touch something divine. But the large majority of people who go only because of superstition, egoism and self-interest, create an atmosphere of this kind, and that is what you breathe in when you go to a church or temple. Only, as you go there with a very good feeling, you tell yourself, "Oh, what a quiet place for meditation!"

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. I remember painting in a basilica of Venice, and while I was working, in the confessional a priest was hearing the confession of a poor woman. Well, it was truly a frightful sight! I don't know what the priest was like, what his character was, he could not be seen — you know, don't you, that they are not seen. They are shut up in a box and receive the confession through a grille. There was such a dark and sucking power over him, and that poor woman was in such a state of fearful terror that it was truly painful to see it. And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon. Besides, in the invisible world hardly any beings love to be worshipped, except those of the vital. These, as I said, are quite pleased by it. And then, it gives them importance. They are puffed up with pride and feel very happy, and when they can get a herd of people to worship them they are quite satisfied.

But if you take real divine beings, this is not at all something they value. They do not like to be worshipped. No, it does not give them any special pleasure at all! Don't think they are happy, for they have no pride. It is because of pride that a man likes

Questions and Answers

to be worshipped; if a man has no pride he doesn't like to be worshipped; and if, for instance, they see a good intention or a fine feeling or a movement of unselfishness or enthusiasm, a joy, a spiritual joy, these things have for them an infinitely greater value than prayers and acts of worship and pujas...

I assure you what I am telling you is very serious: if you seat a real god in a chair and oblige him to remain there all the while you are doing puja, he may perhaps have a little fun watching you do it, but it certainly gives him no satisfaction. None at all! He does not feel either flattered or happy or glorified by your puja. You must get rid of that idea. There is an entire domain between the spiritual and the material worlds which belongs to vital beings, and it is this domain that is full of all these things, because these beings live upon that, are happy with it, and it immediately gives them importance; and the one who has the greatest number of believers, devotees and worshippers is the happiest and the most puffed up. But how can anyone imagine that the gods could value... The gods — I am speaking of the true gods, even those of the Overmind, though they are still a bit... well, so-so... they seem to have taken on many human defects, but still, despite all that, they really have a higher consciousness — it does not please them at all. An act of true goodness, intelligence, unselfishness or a subtle understanding or a very sincere aspiration are for them infinitely higher than a small religious ceremony. Infinitely! There is no comparison. Religious ceremony! For example, there are so many of these entities called Kali — who are given, besides, quite terrible appearances — so many are even placed in houses as the family-goddess; they are full of a terrible vital force! I knew people who were so frightened of the Kali they had at home that indeed they trembled to make the least mistake, for when catastrophes came they thought it was Kali who sent them! It is a frightful thing, thought. I know them, those entities. I know them very well, but they are vital beings, vital forms which, so to say, are given a form by human thought, and what forms! And to think that

30 June 1954

men worship such terrible and monstrous things; and what's more that these poor gods are given, are paid the compliment of believing that it is...

From this point of view, it is good that for some time men get out of this religious atmosphere, so full of fear, and this sort of blind, superstitious submission of which the hostile forces have taken a dreadful advantage. The period of denial, positivism, is from this viewpoint quite indispensable in order to free men from superstition. It is only when one comes out of that and the abject submission to monstrous vital forces that one can rise to truly spiritual heights and there become the collaborator and true instrument of the forces of Truth, the real Consciousness, the true Power.

One must leave all this far behind before one can climb higher.

Mother, the other day you said that you go everywhere during the night, didn't you? Then you know everything that happens in the Ashram....

I act as a policeman!

And then, Mother, what is the difference between what you know in this way and what you know physically? That is, why is it necessary for all the...

Do you suppose I can go everywhere and see everything? Unfortunately, I have only one head, two arms and two legs, and all that would take a long time; I would be spending my time running about everywhere.

No! I mean since you already know what is going on in the Ashram, why is it necessary for the heads of departments to come and give you the information?

Questions and Answers

No, no, they do not come to give me information: they come to ask me for orders. That's not the same thing. And if I were to give them my orders in the night, they would not hear me, or if by chance they heard something, it would probably be the contrary! They would do any odd thing according to their own fancy. No, no! Information? That's because it pleases them to say what they have to say. If I were to tell them at once, "It is all right, I know, I know!"... At times I do that, when I am in a great hurry; but they are quite shocked and think, "How can she know? She has not asked me!" They alone can give me the exact information, according to them. If they don't explain things to me, I don't know them. That's what they think, so I have to let them explain. Sometimes, if it takes too long, and I don't have much time, I tell them, "It's all right, it's all right, I know it; come on, come to the point, what do you want to know?" Well, that upsets them a great deal.

For example, Mother, if one has done something...

Bad.

Yes.

Sometimes good, eh?

*No, mostly bad; then one thinks, "Mother knows it."
Instead of that, wouldn't it be better to come and tell
you about it?*

Yes. Because here there is... Note that if one has done something bad, if one has done something one knows very well should not be done; for instance, if one tells oneself, "Mother knows about it, I don't need to tell her", then one takes that in. One carefully shuts a door upon it and then keeps it in one's heart, or elsewhere. While if one doesn't think of all that... one feels

30 June 1954

uneasy, something turns there inside, it is not pleasant... “Well, I am going to tell Mother about it.” When you set out you have to make a great effort, eh? There’s a lump in the throat, the tongue goes dry, and then it is so difficult to find your words — truly, one doesn’t know how to go about it, eh! But now you have resolved, you make a big effort: you draw out the words one by one, like that, with much effort and finally speak, and you try to say it as exactly as possible. My child, that opens a door as wide as this, and I can enter straight into the psychic being, just through this effort of sincerity that you have made. And then, when I enter, I pour in all the light, all the force, the will, the consciousness, all the resolution necessary, so that you cannot repeat what you have done; much... as when too much is poured into a cup, it overflows — there is much that overflows, but all the same a little remains and this little works. And if you repeat this effort once again, until you feel — well, that you have nothing more to say, for there is now nothing more to hide — then that’s very fine, you have made great progress.

Sweet Mother, in class when we ask you questions, at times they come quite easily, automatically, and at times we hesitate...

You know, most of the questions are badly worded, because you really do not know what you want to know. I mean, you are not quite clearly aware of the thing you want to know. There’s a grouping of words in your head, not the consciousness of an idea trying to become clear; there are only words knocking about in your brain which you cannot manage to fit in, so as to be able to understand what they mean. So you cannot speak easily, because you do not think. It does not proceed from thought. It is a kind of automatic thing coming from the brain; if you have a clear awareness of an experience you want to state accurately or some knowledge you want to arrange in your head, then you can state it very clearly and at the same

Questions and Answers

time your brain is ready to receive the answer; but if, merely with the clash of words — words come like that, don't they? You connect three or four words and then launch an idea.... I answer, because I think there will always be someone... that it could drop into a brain somewhere; but otherwise, most of the time, the head is not ready to understand even what I say. You must think well and be well concentrated and see very clearly what you want to ask before asking. Otherwise, it is not the part of the mind which can understand that asks. It is just a surface which is in a perpetual movement of words linking up more or less aptly, coming and going and passing on, and it is this which speaks, it's this which asks and this, indeed, cannot understand.

How many times have I told you things — the same thing, and if I ask you about it, sometimes just a week later, you do not remember it! How many times you ask me the same question, because you asked the question but were not at all in a condition to understand the answer. Nothing remains inside, these are only passing words, just that. It's as when you learn a lesson by heart: they are only passing words. There is nothing, there's nothing which enters within, gets settled somewhere in the real thought, and so it has no effect and does not help you to understand anything at all. The proof: how many times I have asked you, said to you, "But indeed I have told you this"; you don't even remember it!

It has often happened, hasn't it? — but usually with the very small children — and well, even with you it has sometimes happened, that someone has asked me a question, I have answered. Another person asks me the same question in different words. If you had listened to what I just said, I have already replied to what you are asking me! All that goes by like that, you know, altogether passingly like that, absolutely in the superficial thought, nothing enters within and gets settled in an inner understanding. That is why you cannot ask questions: it is because you don't think... only words playing about....

30 June 1954

Mother, one last question: Tomorrow we are having sports. So...

Now, if we were to offer a fine little superstitious prayer to ask that it does not rain! (*Laughter*) But you know, in the clouds, the wind, there are little entities. These entities belong to the vital domain; they are not all wicked, they are often very mischievous. Most of the time they obey the laws of Nature of a much vaster and more general order, but some of these entities are half-independent and bring about local rain, etc. Perhaps (we said that they like prayers, these small entities), perhaps if we tell them, “I beg of you, be a little kind, tomorrow we have our opening, don’t be up to mischief, wait till the evening to send rain if you want to do so, don’t come and disturb our little session”, perhaps this will have some effect!

Do you remember how when there was no rain, people told us that if we prayed, we would bring rain? And what a good time we had one day trying that out — calling the rain — and it rained? It really rained afterwards. Well, that’s how it happens. This domain is that of the vital.

Now say what you wanted to say!

Mother, especially on the day we have an event, we call you a lot. Then, Mother, isn’t it...

Yes, yes, my children.

Mother, then it is not bad to call you in order to satisfy one’s own purpose?

Own purpose? You are here for that. If you call me in order to do things as well as you can, there’s nothing wrong. But, it is true, you know, when I come back from there, at the end of the session, well, I am drained. I have to rest.... It draws and draws, sometimes terribly.... The performances we have on the

Questions and Answers

1st and 2nd of December or other events of this kind, draw, draw, draw.... After a while it is made up for again. It isn't serious but it's true that it draws.

But I have no objection; on the contrary, I myself tell you, "My children, if you are doing something difficult, call me, call me." No, not in order to come first or gain a victory, but so that nothing unpleasant happens to you. Call me so that things may go as well as possible, not for showing off but for the joy of doing well. And you may also call in order to do the thing as an offering, and then it becomes very good.

Sweet Mother, isn't there another way of calling, rather than drawing?

Yes, my child, but that's much more difficult. Yes, there is another way. There is a true way... it is more difficult.

But this one is all right, I have nothing to say against it, it is all right. I prefer this to having the experience, when looking at people, of seeing a little black cloud turning around their head, of feeling that there's going to be an accident, something that's going to happen, and trying to break through that to give protection, and finding myself before someone who is absolutely closed up, unconscious and convinced that he alone is capable of protecting himself and... not being able to avoid the accident! That has happened! This is much more unpleasant for me.

I prefer to be called....

So, no rain tomorrow, yes!

Au revoir.

7 July 1954

A few days before this class, Mother told the children that she would proceed differently with the new book they were to study, Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*. She herself (not the children as previously) would read out passages from the book. Each child was asked to read beforehand the chapter to be taken up in class and to prepare a question based upon it.

The following talk is based upon Chapter I of *The Mother*.

Sweet Mother, it is written here: "A... submission... of the inner Warrior who fights against obscurity and falsehood."¹ Who is this "inner Warrior"?

It is the vital being when it is converted. The vital turned completely to the Divine is like a warrior. It has even the appearance of a warrior. The vital is the place of power and it is this power which impels it to fight, which can fight and conquer, and of all things this is the most difficult, for it is precisely these very qualities of fighting which create in the vital the sense of revolt, independence, the will to carry out its own will. But if the vital understands and is converted, if it is truly surrendered to the divine Will, then these fighting capacities are turned against the anti-divine forces and against all the darkness which prevents their transformation. And they are all-powerful and can conquer the adversaries. The anti-divine forces are in the vital world; from there, naturally, they have spread out into the physical, but their true seat is in the vital world, and it is the converted vital force which has the true power to vanquish them. But of all things this conversion is the most difficult.

¹ The complete sentence is:

"A glad and strong and helpful submission is demanded to the working of the Divine Force, the obedience of the illumined disciple of the Truth, of the inner Warrior who fights against obscurity and falsehood, of the faithful servant of the Divine."

Questions and Answers

What are “subterfuges”?

Subterfuges? They are tricks. You know what a trick is? — Yes? Well, subterfuges are ways of deceiving, means employed to deceive. One hides what one wants to do under other appearances, in order to deceive; these are subterfuges.

“Irrevocable transformation”?

Irrevocable — it means a transformation on which one cannot go back, which is achieved once and for all.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “It is not enough that the psychic should respond and the higher mental accept or even the lower² vital submit and the inner physical consciousness feel the influence.” Does this mean that there is also a higher vital?

Yes, the higher vital is usually much less difficult to surrender, for it is under the influence of the mind and at times even of the psychic; so it understands more easily. It is much easier to convert this than the lower vital which is essentially the vital of desires and impulses. So, you see, what he means is that the lower vital can submit, it agrees to obey, to do what it is asked, but it is not at all satisfied. It is not happy; sometimes it even suffers; it pushes its revolt down into itself through obedience, but it does not collaborate. And unless the vital collaborates with joy and true love, nothing can be done; the transformation cannot come.

Sweet Mother, here it is written...

Wait, wait, your turn will come!

² Sri Aurobindo's word here is “inner”. In the French translation this word translated as “intérieur” was by mistake printed as “inférieur” which means “lower”. The question arises due to this mistake.

7 July 1954

There is a mistake! Here, in French, we have “the lower (inférieur) vital”, but in English it is “the inner vital”!

Inner? The inner vital? Yes. But here the mistake has been carefully reproduced! This edition is ours. (*Mother shows the book printed at the Ashram Press.*) Exactly! Yes, it is “inner”. It is the inner vital. Yes, it should be “inner” here, as “the inner physical”. (*Pavitra asks whether the error has been reproduced in all the editions.*) In all the editions there seems to be (“*inférieur*”) instead of “*intérieur*”). But this is our own edition, and we should have corrected it. This one is the first edition that was printed in France;³ not this; this one, the small one, was printed in France. Of course, the letters are very similar, aren’t they? The *t* and *f* are very similar.

(*To the child who has just spoken*) So you think you are going to escape your question? (*Laughter*)

(*To another child*) You don’t have one? No! Then it will be for next week. Today I am not saying anything, because you were not informed. Not long enough in advance.

(*To another child*) And you? You don’t have one?

(*To another*) And you?

Here, I don’t understand this: “For if it [the supreme Grace] were to yield to the demands of the Falsehood, it would defeat its own purpose.” What does the defeat of its own purpose mean?

Yes. This means that it would be going against its work, its own work. The Grace has come; well, it works for the realisation of the truth. If it accepts the conditions laid upon it by the falsehood, it can no longer do anything. Of this, you know, I could give you *countless* examples — of people who insist that

³ Sri Aurobindo, *La Mère*. Les grands Maîtres spirituels dans l’Inde contemporaine. Lyon: Éditions Derain, 1945.

Questions and Answers

things should happen in a particular way as far as they are concerned. They implore, at times even demand that things should be like that; and what they ask for is absolutely contrary to the truth; and if the Grace obeyed their demand, it would go against its own purpose and defeat its own purpose, that is, it would go against its own work and aim. It comes here to realise the truth; if it obeys the falsehood, it turns its back on truth. And people, you see, very often put the cart before the horse — most often through ignorance and stupidity; but sometimes it is also through bad will that they insist on having their conditions fulfilled, that they go in for a kind of bargaining in exchange for their surrender, and they do it.... Yes, many do it unconsciously — I said through ignorance and stupidity. There are others who do it consciously, and so they want their conditions fulfilled. They say, “If it is like this and like that...” And finally they go as far as to say to the Divine, “If you are like this and like that, if you fulfil the conditions I lay down for you, I shall obey you!” They don’t put it in this way because that would be too ridiculous, but they almost constantly do it. You see, they say, “Oh, the Divine is like this. The Divine does this. The Divine must respond like this.” And they continue in this way, and they are not aware that they are quite simply imposing their conceptions and also their desires on what the Divine ought to be and do. And so, when the Divine does not do what they want or does not fulfil the conditions they lay down, they say, “You are not the Divine!” (*Laughter*) It is very simple. “You do not fulfil the conditions I lay down, so you are not the Divine!” But they do it constantly, you know. So, naturally, if to please people, the Divine Grace were to submit to their demands, it would be working entirely against its own purpose and would destroy its own Work.

(*To another child*) Now, do you have a question?

It is not my turn! (*Laughter*)

Oh, how very convenient! (*Laughing*) So now whose turn is it?

7 July 1954

Yours? Your question?

Here it is written: "... it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties." I don't understand the last part.

Which words exactly don't you understand?

"And opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature."

Handle victoriously!... You don't know what this means? (*Pavitra re-reads the sentence which had been incorrectly pronounced.*) Opening from below — that is, something which comes from above and forces itself up from below, forces its way, makes a kind of road, a path through the resistance that's below, by opening a way, as when one enters a virgin forest and cuts down trees, one opens up a way. Well, it is like that, you see; there is a resistance in the lower levels of matter, and by the pressure from above, it opens the road and makes a passage through the resistance. And then, do you understand what follows?

No. *"That can victoriously handle."*

"Handle" — that means... "deal with"; that is, which can deal with all the resistances of the physical world. It is only the highest force which can overcome the difficulties of matter. That's what it means. All the resistances and difficulties of the physical world can be overcome only by the highest force — the highest supramental force. Do you understand now?

Yes.

Questions and Answers

(To another child) Nothing?

(To another) You?

Mother, it is said: "Reject the false notion that the divine Power will do and is bound to do everything for you at your demand and even though you do not satisfy the conditions laid down by the Supreme." Then...

But, you know, there are people who are told, "You should surrender." Then they answer you with a smile, "Well, make me surrender!" Why, this is very simple!

When one wants to make some progress...

Yes!

One tries but finds that something doesn't want to advance, doesn't want to progress.

Yes, to progress.

Then, if one asks the Divine to...

To help?

Yes.

That's something quite different. To help, that's understood, He is there to help. But what is said here means to sit idly not doing anything, not making the shadow of an effort, nor even aspiring or willing, nothing, and then say, "Well, God will do this for me; the Divine will do everything for me. The Divine Grace will give me aspiration. If I need aspiration, It will give it to me. If I need surrender, It will give me that", and so on. "I have to do nothing except to remain passively seated, without stirring and without

7 July 1954

willing anything.” Well, there are people like that, many! They are told “Aspire.” “Give me aspiration.” (*Laughter*) They are told, “Be generous.” “Oh, make me generous; and I shall give everything!” (*Laughter*)

And then? (*To another child*) Now, you!

I am repeating a question. Sweet Mother, here in French it is written “opening the passage from below”, but in English the word “passage” is not there.

Yes. Who has the English?

I.

Read it, read your English!

“... and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical nature and annihilate its difficulties.”

Opening from below? (*Long silence*)

This can mean allowing the force which is hidden at the core of matter to manifest itself. It gives the idea of the supramental Presence which is at the centre of all things but is hidden and incapable of manifesting itself, so to say, and which, then would be as if awakened by the force coming from above and would manifest.

It can mean this, that is to say, it may want to express the fact that the two extremities meet, as in a circle, you know, the beginning and the end touch. It can mean this.

Pavitra: Mother, that’s what the French means — the French translation!

Obviously! Only, it is not said in these very words. It means, in

Questions and Answers

fact — whether it is said in this way or another, it means that the two extremities join, you see, they unite, the Supreme who is in matter and the Supreme who is outside matter unite and join. That's what it means. In both cases it means the same thing.

Sweet Mother, what does “inert passivity” mean?

Inert passivity? It means... Passivity, we said the other day, didn't we, is what does not move, does not act, vibrate, respond — well, an inert passivity is just this, what is absolutely unconscious, inactive, what does not respond; whereas the other day we described a passivity which responds, which opens and is receptive, but doesn't move, doesn't act, which is the opposite of... Let us take passivity as the opposite of activity, something that does not act but is receptive and receives.

But an inert passivity is a passivity that receives nothing, it is like a stone; for instance, we say the stone has an inert passivity, don't we?... like the soil or sand. It is not quite true, for there is nothing which is not at least a little receptive to forces. But still, the more we go towards something we call unconscious, the more is it inert and passive at the same time. That is it.

So, an inert passivity in someone is a kind of incapability of vibrating, receiving, opening himself, responding, something that's quite unconscious and does not move in any way!

Sweet Mother, how can we make our submission gladly?

It must be sincere. If it is truly sincere, it becomes happy. So long as it is not — you may reverse the thing — so long as it is not happy, you may be sure it is not perfectly sincere; for if it is perfectly sincere, it is always happy. If it is not happy, it means that there is something which holds back, something which would like things to be otherwise, something that has a will of its own, a desire of its own, its own purpose and is not satisfied, and therefore is not completely surrendered, not

7 July 1954

sincere in its surrender. But if one is sincere in one's surrender, one is perfectly happy, automatically; rather, one automatically enjoys an ineffable happiness. Therefore, as long as this ineffable happiness is not there, it is a *sure* indication that you are not sincere, that there is something, some part of the being, larger or smaller, which is not sincere.

Sweet Mother, how to discover this part?

Aspire, insist, put the light on it, pray if necessary. There are many ways. Sometimes surgical operations are necessary, putting a red hot iron on the wound, as when there is a nasty abscess somewhere which will not burst.

(To another child) Did you say something?

No, it is not my turn!

(Laughing) Oh, it is not your turn! *(Laughter)* So...

Here it is said: "The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving...."

Yes, this is something that happens every minute!

(The child repeats the last phrase) "To deny and to reject the Divine" — "deny" means?

"Deny"? That's what I was just saying. People who find that the Divine does not want all that they want or that He does not comply with their own will, deny Him. They say, "It is not the Divine!" Or else, there are others who go still further. They say, "There is no Divine, it does not exist, the Divine, for it is not consistent with..." It is a nuisance that a Divine should be there: they say there's no such thing!

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, what does “an inert automaton” mean?

Automaton — it’s just a little more than inert passivity. Automaton — it’s a mechanical movement; and “inert” means unconscious. So it is an unconscious mechanical movement, something that has no soul, no spirit, no will, no urge, something that is merely a machine, that has no consciousness; and inert, absolutely without any consciousness and any receptivity. It is yet... I don’t think even a watch, for example, could be called an inert automaton. A watch has something like a soul: a machine, when it is very well made, has something like a soul, it responds, it has a certain receptivity. But the other is something which has no receptivity, no consciousness, and is only like a machine which one rewinds and which does just this (*Mother makes automatic movements*), you see, without knowing why or how!

Mother, what does “helpful submission” mean?

Submission... helpless? (*Laughter*) It can’t be that. It is a helpful submission. A helpful submission, we all know what that is, don’t we? A helpful submission.

Where is the text? We can’t say a helpless submission. (*Laughter*) (*Mother looks for the text.*)

Helpful, it is not helpless! (*Laughter*)

A glad submission, as I was just saying. Strong, you understand, not something weak and without energy; strong, powerful, and helpful, that is, which acts, is active, produces results, a submission which makes itself useful, a submission which, for example, wants to collaborate in the work, collaborate in the progress. It is the opposite of the inert automaton, the very opposite.

Sweet Mother, what does “an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power” mean?

7 July 1954

Instead of self-opening we could put receptivity, something that opens in order to receive. Now, instead of opening and receiving from all sides and from everyone, as is usually done, one opens only to the Divine to receive only the divine force. It is the very opposite of what men usually do. They are always open on the surface, they receive all the influences from all sides. And then this produces inside them what we might call a *pot-pourri* (*Mother laughs*) of all kinds of contradictory movements which naturally create countless difficulties. So here, you are advised to open only to the Divine and to receive only the divine force to the exclusion of everything else. This diminishes all difficulties almost entirely. Only one thing remains difficult. It is... One can do it and, unless one is in a state of total alchemy, well, it is difficult to be in contact with people, to speak to them, for example, to have any kind of exchange with them without absorbing something from them. It is difficult. If one is in a kind of... if one is in an atmosphere that's like a filter, then everything that comes from outside is filtered before it touches you. But it is very difficult; it requires a very wide experience. That is why, also, people who wanted the easiest path went into solitude to sit under a tree, did not speak any more and saw nobody; for this helps to diminish undesirable exchanges. Only, it has been noticed that these people begin to become enormously interested in the life of little animals, the life of plants, for it is difficult not to have any exchange with anything at all. So it is much better to face the problem squarely and be surrounded by an atmosphere so totally concentrated on the Divine that what comes through this atmosphere is filtered in its passage.

And then again, even when this has been done, there is still the problem of food; as long as our body is compelled to take in foreign matter in order to subsist, it will absorb at the same time a considerable amount of inert and unconscious forces or those having a rather undesirable consciousness, and this alchemy must take place inside the body. We were speaking of the kinds of consciousness absorbed with food, but there is

Questions and Answers

also the inconstance that's absorbed with food — quite a deal of it. And that is why in many yogas there was the advice to offer to the Divine what one was going to eat before eating it (*Mother makes a gesture of offering, hands joined, palms open*). It consists in calling the Divine down into the food before eating it. One offers it to Him — that is, one puts it in contact with the Divine, so that it may be under the divine influence when one eats it. It is very useful, it is very good. If one knows how to do it, it is very useful, it considerably reduces the work of inner transformation which has to be done. But, you see, in the world as it is, we are all interdependent. You cannot take in the air without taking in the vibrations, the countless vibrations produced by all kinds of movements and all kinds of people, and you must — if you want to remain intact — you must constantly act like a filter, as I was saying. That is to say, nothing that is undesirable should be allowed to enter, as when one goes to infected areas, one wears a mask over the face so that the air may be purified before one breathes it in. Well, something similar has to be done. One must have around oneself so intense an atmosphere in a *total* surrender to the Divine, so intensified around oneself that everything that passes through is automatically filtered. Anyhow, it is very useful in life, for there are — we spoke about this too — there are bad thoughts, bad wills, people who wish you ill, who make formations. There are all kinds of absolutely undesirable things in the atmosphere. And so, if one must always be on the watch, looking around on all sides, one would think only of one thing, how to protect oneself. First of all, it is tiresome, and then, you see, it makes you waste much time. If you are well enveloped in this way, with this light, the light of a perfectly glad, totally sincere surrender, when you are enveloped with that, it serves you as a marvellous filter. Nothing that is altogether undesirable, nothing that has ill-will can pass through. So, automatically, these things return where they came from. If there is a conscious ill-will against you, it comes, but cannot pass; the door is closed, for it is open only to divine

7 July 1954

things, it is not open to anything else. So it returns very quietly to the source from where it came.

But all these things are... One can learn how to do them through a kind of study and science. But they can be done without any study or science provided the aspiration and surrender are absolute and total. If the aspiration and surrender are total, it is done automatically. But you must see to it that they are total; and besides, as I was saying just now, you become very clearly aware of it, for the moment they are not total, you are no longer happy. You feel uneasy, very miserable, dejected, a bit unhappy: "Things are not quite pleasant today. They are the same as they were yesterday; yesterday they were marvellous, today they are not pleasing!" — Why? Because yesterday you were in a perfect state of surrender, more or less perfect — and today you aren't any more. So, what was so beautiful yesterday is no longer beautiful today. That joy you had within you, that confidence, the assurance that all will be well and the great Work will be accomplished, that certitude — all this, you see, has become veiled, has been replaced by a kind of doubt and, yes, by a discontent: "Things are not beautiful, the world is nasty, people are not pleasant." It goes sometimes to this length: "The food is not good, yesterday it was excellent." It is the same but today it is not good! This is the barometer! You may immediately tell yourself that an insincerity has crept in somewhere. It is very easy to know, you don't need to be very learned, for, as Sri Aurobindo has said in *Elements of Yoga*: One knows whether one is happy or unhappy, one knows whether one is content or discontented, one doesn't need to ask oneself, put complicated questions for this, one knows it! — Well, it is very simple.

The moment you feel unhappy, you may write beneath it: "I am not sincere!" These two sentences go together:

"I FEEL UNHAPPY."

"I AM NOT SINCERE."

Now, what is it that is wrong? Then one begins to take a look, it is easy to find out...

Questions and Answers

There you are, my children. Is that all?
Have we exhausted the questions or not?
(*To a child*) You haven't asked your question, have you?

Mother, in the Letters Sri Aurobindo says somewhere⁴ that the Grace does not choose the just and reject the sinner. It has its own discernment which is different from the mind's. That is how, for example, the Grace came to St. Augustine's help. Then, why does Sri Aurobindo say here: "But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth...."?

Yes, I noticed that. When I read it, I thought about this.

I thought about it. I think he wrote the sentence in this way so that it would be more easily understandable. But in fact, what he meant he has said here: you are yourself rejecting the Grace... Isn't that it? He says — where is it? what page? page four? Yes, "... pushing the divine Grace from you", yes; "... you are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you." No, it is not that; it is... (*The child begins reading: "the Grace..."*) No, after that, my child... "It will not act..." (*To another child*) This is what we have explained. That is something else. You see, this is what I have explained: you ask the Grace to do something for you, but this thing is a falsehood. It won't do it, because It always acts only in the truth.

But then how can It come to the help of the sinner?

It doesn't help the sinner to be a sinner! It helps the sinner to give up his sin; that is to say, It does not push away the sinner, saying, "I won't do anything for you." It is there, always, even when he is sinning, to help him to come out of it, but not to continue in his sin.

⁴ See *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 609.

7 July 1954

There is a great difference between this and the idea that you are bad and so “I won’t look after you, I shall throw you far away from me, and whatever is to happen to you will happen, I am not concerned about it.” This is the common idea. One says, “God has rejected me”, you know. It is not that. You may not be able to feel the Grace, but It will always be there, even with the worst of sinners, even with the worst of criminals, to help him to change, to be cured of his crime and sin if he wants to be. It won’t reject him, but It won’t help him to do evil. It wouldn’t be the Grace any longer. You understand the difference?

But there is a sentence here that’s... here we are, it is absolutely true: “You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you”, and then there is a... (*The lamp had to be switched on and this made a noise in the mike. Mother shows a little surprise, then continues turning the pages of the book to find the sentence.*) I thought it was here... (*She finds the sentence and reads*) “Then...” here we are, “... always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.” You see, this... (*silence*) It is not the Grace which recedes from you, it is you who recede from the Grace. It is a feeling, and the expression of the fact. For in the sentence... a preceding sentence, we have: “You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you.” This is just the thing. You are yourself pushing the divine Grace away from you. But after having pushed It away, you have the impression that It has receded from you; and it is rather this: “... then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.” It is not a fact that It recedes from you, you have the impression that It recedes from you.

While reading it I noticed this. I don’t know what it is in English. Here it is on page seven. I don’t know, it must be approximately on the same page, I suppose: “If you call for the Truth...”, something like that.

(*Someone looks up the required sentence in the English book and reads: “the Grace will recede from you.”*)

Questions and Answers

Ah, yes. “Recede from you...” “... then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you.”

It expresses one’s impression. But it is not that the Grace withdraws. For it is written here, you see, just a little before, “it is not the divine Grace you must blame”, it is you who push It away from you.

In one case he takes the position of the Grace and in the other he takes the attitude of the person who says, “The Grace recedes from me.” But it is not the Grace that recedes, it is he himself who pushes It away, that is, he has put a distance between himself and the Grace. In fact, even “pushing away” doesn’t give the correct picture; you see, this is not written, it was not written to a philosopher, and it is not in philosophical terms. In one case, you see, he has taken this particular attitude, but the phenomenon is the same; that is, there is a kind of psychological distance created between the Grace and the individual. And due to this psychological distance the individual cannot receive the Grace and feels that It is not there. But It *is* there, in fact; only, as he has established this distance between the two, he doesn’t feel It any longer. This is the real phenomenon. It isn’t that the Grace goes away, it isn’t even that he has the power to push It away, for if It doesn’t want to go, no matter how much he tries, It won’t go. But he makes himself incapable of feeling It and receiving its effect. He creates a psychological barrier between himself and the Grace.

There you are, my children, I think that’s enough for this evening.

Good night.

14 July 1954

This talk could not be recorded very clearly because of the noise of the fireworks celebrating the French Republic Day.

The talk is based upon Chapter 2 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, does Sri Aurobindo make a difference between the Divine and the Shakti? Here he speaks of “surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti”.

He has said that the Divine is the Supreme. That’s the origin. He has said, hasn’t he? at the very beginning of this chapter, I think, he has said, “The Divine...”

(The child reads the text) “... *through his Shakti is behind all action...*”¹

He takes the Shakti as the executive power, the creative Consciousness.

What is the meaning of “surrender” and of “every plane of the consciousness”?

It means surrender of the physical, surrender of the vital, surrender of the mind and surrender of the psychic. And if you are conscious of other parts of your being... You must first begin by distinguishing between the different parts of your being, and

¹ The complete sentence is: “In all that is done in the universe, the Divine through his Shakti is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya and works through the ego of the Jiva in the lower nature.”

Questions and Answers

then, when you can distinguish them clearly, you offer them one by one.

What does “Yoga Maya” mean?

Yoga Maya? Maya, I don't know in what sense he takes it, whether it is as the most external manifestation... Does he speak of Yoga Maya?

(A child reads the last part of the phrase) “... he is veiled by his Yoga Maya...”

Yes, veiled by his external manifestation. Truly, that's what it means, the outer form of the world; and also the egoism of the Jiva, that is, the individual being.

He “works through the ego of the Jiva...”

Yes, it's the same thing. Yes, “through” — that means the ego is there.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “But so long as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the sadhaka remains necessary.” I didn't understand here “so long as the lower nature is active”. How?

Generally, the lower nature is always active. It is only when one has surrendered completely that it stops being active. When one is no longer in his lower consciousness, when one has made a total surrender, then the lower nature is no longer active. But so long as it is active, personal effort is necessary.

In fact, so long as one is conscious of one's own self as a separate person, personal effort has to be made. It is only when the sense of separation is lost, when one is not only completely surrendered, but completely fused in the Divine that there is no

14 July 1954

longer any need of personal effort. But so long as one feels that one is a separate being, one must make a personal effort. This is what he calls the activity of the lower consciousness.

(Silence)

Why are we so afraid of telling the truth?

Yes, why? I, too, ask: Why? I would like to know very much! But it is like that. Things are like that. I think the chief reason is that the nature, in its outer and personal form, doesn't wish to change. It doesn't want to change; so one is hostile to the force that would like you to change, to the truth.

(Suddenly the noise of the fireworks bursts out, drowning all voices. Mother laughingly remarks:)

Ah, that's good! Now all our speeches will be punctuated by this noise! *(Turning to Vishwanath)* You can stop it, we do not want to record the fireworks! *(Laughter)*

*“A tamasic surrender refusing to fulfil the conditions”
— if it refuses to fulfil the conditions, it is no longer
surrender, is it?*

Exactly. But there are many who think that they have surrendered and tell you, “I no longer do anything myself, I have given myself to the Divine, the Divine ought to do everything for me.” This they call surrender... That is to say, it is a movement of laziness and tamas which doesn't want to make any effort and would very much like the Divine to do everything for you, because that is much more comfortable!

What is “the heart's seeking”?

The heart's seeking — it is the emotional being trying...

Questions and Answers

(The class is again interrupted by loud exclamations from the children of the Boarding House who can see the fireworks from their terrace.)

We can't see anything.... It is from that side.... Eh? We can only hear the noise!

“Seeking” means that the affective centre is trying to find an emotional contact with the Divine. It is truly this.

(The noise continues and Mother tells Vishwanath once again): I think you had better stop.

(A child) No, Mother! No, Mother!

I can hardly even speak! *(To another child)* And now?

Why does one always go in for useless talking? Why do we speak uselessly?

Why do people speak uselessly? Yes, that's probably because man is instinctively very proud of being able to formulate words. He is the first being on earth who can speak, who emits articulate sounds. So it is a kind of... it is like a child who has a new toy it likes to play with very much. Man is the only animal on earth who has articulate sounds at his disposal, so he plays with them, you see... I think it's that....

And then there's all the stupidity.... You know, I also said that some people could begin to think only when they talked.... When they do not speak, they do not even think! They are not able to think in silence, so they get into the habit of speaking. But the more developed one is, the more intelligent one is and the less need one has to express oneself. It is always at a lower level that one needs to talk. And truly, a being who is very conscious, who is mentally, intellectually, very developed, talks only when it is necessary. He does not utter useless words. In the social scale it is like this.... Take people right at the

14 July 1954

bottom of the scale: they talk the most, they spend their time in talking. They can't stop! Whatever happens to them they express immediately in words. And to the extent that one is developed and on a higher level of evolution, one feels much less need to speak.

It comes from two causes: one, because it is a new faculty which naturally and instinctively has the attraction of new faculties; the other, because it helps you to become aware of your own thought. Otherwise one doesn't think, one is not able to formulate his thought unless he expresses it in words, aloud.... Except those who are talkers by profession — that is, those who are in the habit of giving lectures or political speeches, or taking classes, giving lessons — except these people who, obviously, can be both intellectual and talkative at the same time, as a general rule, the more talkative people are, the less are they intellectually developed!

What should be done to refrain from talking?

Think! You have only to reflect a little more. If only you make it a habit to think before speaking, that saves you at least half of what you say. To think before speaking and to say only what seems absolutely indispensable to you — then you very quickly become aware that very few words are indispensable, except from the practical point of view, in work, when one is working with somebody and is obliged to use words: “Do this”, “Give me that”, or “Like this”, or “Like that”. And even so, this can be reduced to a minimum. Otherwise, you see... (*Once again a loud noise of fireworks*) These are flying saucers! They go far! How long will all this go on?

Half an hour.

(Another child) *It goes on till ten o'clock.*

Questions and Answers

Ten o'clock!... So, I continue!

Who has a question to ask? Whose turn is it?

Sweet Mother, sometimes one knows that it is the truth but still doubts this truth. Why does one doubt? (Loud noise. Nothing else is heard.)

What did you say? Speak very clearly, it will be a good exercise.
(*Laughter*)

One knows that something is true but still doubts. Why does one doubt the truth?

The usual answer, it is because one is foolish! (*Laughter*)

But the truth is that the physical mind is truly completely stupid! You can prove it very easily. It is constructed probably as a kind of control, and in order to make sure that things are done as they ought to be. I think that this is its normal work.... But it has made it a habit to doubt everything.

I think I have already told you about the small experiment I made one day. I removed my control and left the control to the physical mind — it is the physical mind which doubts. So I made the following experiment: I went into a room, then came out of the room and closed the door. I had decided to close the door; and when I came to another room, this mind, the material mind, the physical mind, you see, said, “Are you sure you have locked the door?” Now, I did not control, you know... I said, “Very well, I obey it!” I went back to see. I observed that the door was closed. I came back. As soon as I couldn't see the door any longer, it told me, “Have you verified properly?” So I went back again.... And this went on till I decided: “Come now, that's enough, isn't it? Closed or not, I am not going back any more to see!” This could have gone on the whole day. It is made like that. It stops being like that only when a higher mind, the rational mind tells it, “Keep quiet!” Otherwise it goes

14 July 1954

on indefinitely.... So, if by ill-luck you are centred there, in this mind, even the things you know higher up as quite true, even things of which you have a physical proof—like that of the closed door, it doubts, it will doubt, because it is built of doubt. It will always say, “Are you quite sure this is true?... Isn’t it an idea of yours?... You don’t suppose it is like that?” And it will go on until one teaches it to keep quiet and be silent.

“Note that a tamasic surrender refusing to fulfil the conditions and calling on God to do everything...”

Yes, but we have just been speaking about this! I have already answered this question. Someone asked me... I have already answered....

How is the Divine the Sadhana?²

Because it is the Divine who does the sadhana in the being. Without the Divine there would be no sadhana. Only, you know nothing about it... you think — you are under the illusion — that it is you. And precisely, so long as you are under this illusion, you must make an effort; but the truth is that it is the Divine who does the sadhana in you, and that without the Divine there would be no sadhana.

Here it is written: “... the Divine... is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana.”

Yes, He is everything, isn’t He?

Yes.

² “In Yoga also it is the Divine who is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana.”

Questions and Answers

(Another child) *Then, Mother, why the personal effort? If it is the Divine who does the sadhana, let the Divine do it; and where is the personal effort?*

Yes, this is precisely what people say in their laziness! But if you were not lazy, you wouldn't say it! (*Laughter*)

What does personal effort mean?

Effort which thinks it is personal. You have the sense of your separate person. Do you feel that you are the Divine, and only the Divine? No! (*Laughter*) Well, the Divine is this... Precisely, so long as you feel that you are Manoj, well, Manoj must make an effort. If you can completely get rid of the notion of Manoj, there is no longer anything but the Divine, and it is the Divine who will make the effort, naturally!... But so long as there is a Manoj, it is Manoj who has to make the effort.

But when Manoj makes the effort, it is the Divine in Manoj who is making the effort!

Perhaps, but Manoj knows nothing about it! (*Laughter*) I say simply that if there were no Divine, Manoj could not make the effort. But Manoj is not yet in a state to know that, so he knows that he is making an effort.

But now you have told me! Today I know, so...

(*Instantaneously*) Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha!... (*Laughter*) Mental knowledge is not enough, you must have the practical experience. Otherwise, my children, we would all have been transformed long ago, because for a long time we have had the knowledge that the transformation must come about. (*Laughter*)

Is that all? Go on!

14 July 1954

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between self-giving, consecration and surrender?

Self-giving, consecration and surrender? I believe we have read this somewhere, haven't we? There was already some explanation like that, wasn't there? We have already spoken about it. It was in *Elements of Yoga* also. Someone had asked about it and the reply was in this book. Sri Aurobindo has given the answer, the difference between... So, my children, if you...

That was about belief.

Eh? In *Elements of Yoga*; wasn't it?

In Elements of Yoga; it was the difference between trust, faith and belief.

Oh, it was between these three! It was not between surrender, self-giving and consecration? But I have read this somewhere.

Mother, Parul says she had asked this question.

(Another child) *It was in Prayers and Meditations.*

Oh, it was in *Prayers and Meditations*?

Yes, Sweet Mother.

And so, what did I tell you? Ah, it's going to be interesting! (Laughter) What did I tell you?

(Long silence)

Pavitra: We could add "offering" also!

I think they are closely synonymous, that they are rather shades

Questions and Answers

than differences. Because one can very well replace one by another in a sentence. It depends on how the sentence sounds and on the word that fits best into it. It is a literary point. If one wants, one can find a difference, but all this depends entirely on what one wants to put into the words.

I said, didn't I, that "*soumission*" is not a good word? We use in French "*soumission*" to translate "surrender", because there is no word which translates "surrender". "*Soumission*" always gives the impression of something which accepts reluctantly, which does not give complete adherence, does not collaborate fully. And so, that is what makes the difference with the word in the sense of "surrender" in which there is the meaning of a perfect adherence. Which means that though one uses this word "*soumission*", it is not a good one....

(*Silence*)

One can — if one wants to split hairs, as it is said — one can make a distinction between self-giving, consecration and offering. These are three... they may be three different phases. But that is if truly one wants to create complications; because in writing, as I said, one can very well use one word in place of another, according to the rhythm of the sentence, and this keeps the meaning intact. For if you want to make a distinction, you are immediately obliged to put adjectives, aren't you?... Take the word in itself, "self-giving, offering, consecration"... Now, if you want to make a distinction, you say "a total consecration", "a partial self-giving"... You see, you are obliged to use adjectives: they are synonyms.

Who asked the question? It was you? Now, it depends on the sentence you are going to write — you will use one word or another. But you must know: the word "*soumission*" does not have the precise meaning that's necessary. "*Soumission*" ("submission") compared with "surrender" gives the same difference that there is — perhaps less strongly — but a difference

14 July 1954

analogous to that between obedience and collaboration. In one case there is a perfect adherence, and in the other there is an acceptance which perhaps reserves itself; it accepts because it realises that it can't do otherwise, but it does not collaborate entirely.... One does not give total adherence.

Any other questions?

Sweet Mother, last time you said that stones have a kind of receptivity.

Yes.

What kind of receptivity?

Perhaps they have even something resembling sensitivity. For instance, if you have a precious stone — precious stones of course have a much more perfect structure than ordinary ones, and with perfection consciousness increases — but if you take a precious stone, you can charge it with consciousness and force; you can put, accumulate force within it. So it is receptive, otherwise it will not receive it, it could not keep it. You can charge it. As one charges an electric battery, you can charge a stone with force, put conscious force into a stone; it keeps it and can transmit it to someone. Therefore this stone has a receptivity. Otherwise it could not do this.

Flowers are extremely receptive. All the flowers to which I have given a significance receive exactly the force I put into them and transmit it. People don't always receive it because most of the time they are less receptive than the flower, and they waste the force that has been put in it through their unconsciousness and lack of receptivity. But the force is there, and the flower receives it wonderfully.

I knew this a very long time ago. Fifty years ago.... There was that occultist who later gave me lessons in occultism for two

Questions and Answers

years. His wife was a wonderful clairvoyant and had an absolutely remarkable capacity — precisely — of transmitting forces. They lived in Tlemcen. I was in Paris. I used to correspond with them. I had not yet met them at all. And then, one day, she sent me in a letter petals of the pomegranate flower, “Divine’s Love”. At that time I had not given the meaning to the flower. She sent me petals of pomegranate flowers telling me that these petals were bringing me her protection and force.

Now, at that time I used to wear my watch on a chain. Wrist-watches were not known then or there were very few. And there was also a small eighteenth century magnifying-glass... it was quite small, as large as this (*gesture*).... And it had two lenses, you see, like all reading-glasses; there were two lenses mounted on a small golden frame, and it was hanging from my chain. Now, between the two glasses I put these petals and I used to carry this about with me always because I wanted to keep it with me; you see, I trusted this lady and knew she had power. I wanted to keep this with me, and I always felt a kind of energy, warmth, confidence, force which came from that thing.... I did not think about it, you see, but I felt it like that.

And then, one day, suddenly I felt quite depleted, as though a support that was there had gone. Something very unpleasant. I said, “It is strange; what has happened? Nothing really unpleasant has happened to me. Why do I feel like this, so empty, emptied of energy?” And in the evening, when I took off my watch and chain, I noticed that one of the small glasses had come off and all the petals were gone. There was not one petal left. Then I really knew that they carried a considerable charge of power, for I had felt the difference without even knowing the reason. I didn’t know the reason and yet it had made a considerable difference. So it was after this that I saw how one could use flowers by charging them with forces. They are extremely receptive.

(*The noise continues.*) Now that’s enough, I suppose? Enough of that noise!

14 July 1954

Another question? (*A loud noise*) Boom!

Do flowers retain the force always, even when they decay?

Decay? No, my child; when they dry up, yes. Decayed flowers are just nothing. A decomposition takes place, so the thing disappears. Perhaps it brings energy to the soil, that's quite possible; but still, when it decays it is good only to make manure to grow other flowers. But if it dries up, it is preserved, it can remain for quite a long time.

Those small packets which I give on Kali Puja day are made to be preserved for one year. For a year they keep their force intact and I renew them every year to make sure that... I know that there isn't one in ten among you who makes a proper use of it... but still, I give it on the off-chance for those who know how to use it. It is prepared to keep the force for one year. And when I give the new one, you can dispose of the other. Usually it has fallen to dust. Not always.... But these little packets keep their charge of force exactly for one year.

Sweet Mother, what should we do with the flowers which you give us every day?

Flowers? You ought to keep them as long as they are fresh, and when they are no longer so, you must collect them and give them to the gardener (any gardener you know), so that he can put them in the earth to produce other flowers. Yes, one must give back to the earth what it has given us, for otherwise it will become poor.

Mother, certain flowers come in a particular season; does this mean that during that season a greater force is at work?

Questions and Answers

This is a question which is difficult to answer. But I have made a rather interesting experiment in this way.

I don't know if you remember — if you were there — if you remember the time when flowers used to be counted; you see, it was a kind of agreement between me and Nature. To each of these flowers I had given a particular value, not only its significance but its value. For example — it was understood — I had made an agreement with Nature. Take, for instance, the “transformation” flowers; note that if one is quite attentive, one will see that in different seasons one flower is replaced by another with a similar or close significance, and you can go all round the year in this way — if you know how to make use of things! There are also permanent things which are always there.... But flowers, for example, like the “transformation” flowers, have a season, quite a long one, but still a season. The “realisation” flower has a fairly long season, but it doesn't come at the same time as the “transformation” flower.... They... how shall I put it?... overlap. One begins before the other finishes. But the seasons when they come abundantly are not the same, and all flowers are like that. Yes, it is arranged. This answers your question, doesn't it? These are shades in the meaning and it is possible that some seasons are more favourable; one may lay greater stress on one movement than on another.

But each of these flowers had a numerical value, and I used to write it down; I had them counted, because I was noting the numerical value. I stopped when my pages... I had long pages like this, you see (*Mother stretches out her arms to indicate the length of the pages*), because I was totalling up the numerical values. I had my reasons for it, it was not just like that.... I did a great deal of work with it.... I had to stop because it was taking too much time. You see, when I had to write figures on a paper at least as long as this, and then later, suddenly it had to be still bigger, it was impossible! (*Mother stretches out her arms again.*) So I had to stop. I stopped because of this. But not only did I

14 July 1954

have a numerical value and did some work upon it, there was also the meaning of the flower.

Well, it was an agreement like this: the numerical value corresponded to something that it was understood Nature would give me for my work, but the significance of the flower also was something agreed upon between me and Nature. For example, take “transformation”. When there was a computation — it was sometimes by thousands during the season, you know — well, it represented (it was an understanding with Nature) that the same number of men would be transformed.... And it was even much better than this. It was that when I gave somebody one, two, three, four, five flowers I gave him at the same time the power to transform as many elements within him. But naturally, for this to work in all sincerity, it had not to pass through the head; because when their head starts working — not always in the right way — men spoil everything. That is why I never used to say anything about this.

It was the same thing for all flowers, “aspiration”, for example: the “aspiration” flowers which used to come in large basketfuls, you know; there were thousands and thousands of them, all counted.... Well, each one represented an aspiration; and even now, sometimes, when I have flowers like “prayer”... I have at times told you when I distribute “prayer” flowers, “It is a prayer. Be careful, this prayer is granted.” I did that, you remember, don’t you? And I told you, “Take care of your ‘prayer’. Pray only for what you want should be! Take great care! Because this prayer is granted. I give the flower, but at the same time the possibility of [. . .]³ the prayer you will make. Well, it will be granted.” It was very interesting, in the sense that I always used to tell Nature, “You know, if you don’t want me to have these things, you need not give them to me.” There were fluctuations, there were times when things came in abundance, when I insisted; there were times when they stopped abruptly,

³ Word missing in transcript.

Questions and Answers

why one couldn't tell, one did not understand.... She did not agree to give us... Other things, on the contrary, she gave in great abundance.

But all this is what goes on behind the scene, behind the stage....

When we have a ring or some ornament with your image, does it give us protection?

My child, all I can hear is the fireworks!

(The child repeats the question.)

It depends above all on what you think about it! Something I give you with my own hands — there I put in something; but if it is of your own choice that you have taken a ring or a portrait, something, and you wear it... if you have the trust, the faith that it protects you, it protects you. When I give it, I give it with something completely different from the thing itself. It can contain this thing if I put it in, but if I don't, it does not contain it.

Sri Aurobindo used to say, you know, that to wear a ring with his portrait and think that it protects you, is a superstition! He would tell you it is a superstition! That is, it depends on what you think about it.... It depends solely on what you think about it. If he had given you a ring, saying, "Wear this, my force will be with you", then it would have been altogether different; there's a world of difference.

I shall tell you another little story. Long ago some people used to believe that a perforated coin... It was in the days when coins were not perforated... now we have perforated coins, don't we, some countries have perforated coins, but in those days they were not perforated, and yet sometimes there were holes in a coin. And there was indeed a superstition like this, that when one found a perforated coin, it brought good luck. It brought you good luck and success in what you wanted to do.

14 July 1954

There was a man working in an office whose life was rather poor and who was not very successful, and one day he found a perforated coin. He put it in his pocket and said to himself, “Now I am going to prosper!” And he was full of hope, courage, energy, because he knew: “Now that I have the coin, I am sure to succeed!” And, in fact, he went on prospering, prospering more and more. He earned more and more money, he had a better and better position, and people said, “What a wonderful man! How well he works! How he finds all the solutions to all problems!” Indeed, he became a remarkable man, and every morning when he put on his coat, he felt it — like this — to be sure that his coin was in his pocket.... He touched it, he felt that the coin was there, and he had confidence. And then, one day, he was a little curious, and said, “I am going to see my coin!” — years later. He was having his breakfast with his wife and said, “I am going to see my coin!” His wife told him, “Why do you want to see it? It’s not necessary.” “Yes, yes, let me see my coin.” He took out the little bag in which he kept the coin, and found inside a coin which was not perforated!

“Ah,” he said, “this is not my coin! What is this? Who has changed my coin?” Then his wife told him, “Look, one day there was some dust on your coat.... I shook it off through the window and the coin fell out. I had forgotten that the coin was there. I ran to look for it but didn’t find it. Someone had picked it up. So I thought you would be very unhappy and I put another coin there.” (*Laughter*) Only, he, of course, was confident that his coin was there and that was enough.

It is the faith, the trust that does it, you see.... The perforated coin gives you nothing at all. You can always try. When one has confidence...

There! now... and that’s enough.

21 July 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 3 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Which of you did not ask questions last time?... The first one!

What is the difference between “the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth?”

If I could only hear what you are saying, it would be easier!

(The child repeats the same question more distinctly.)

The divine truth...

“... spiritual and supramental.”

I don't think there is much difference!

Sweet Mother, what does a “candid” faith mean?

Candid? It is simple, sincere and does not doubt. We speak mostly of the candour of a child, who has a simple faith without any doubts.

Sweet Mother, do we push the divine Grace away from us every time we make a mistake?

Eh? You push it away every time you make a mistake?

Well, there are two different kinds of mistakes. There is the fault committed through ignorance. That remains a fault, and it puts a veil between the Grace and you, but it is a fault made

21 July 1954

without knowing that one is making a mistake. But as soon as one knows that it is a mistake, one must absolutely refrain from making it, because each time one makes it, it is true that one builds a wall between oneself and the divine Grace.

There is a very big difference between the mistake made through ignorance which one will not make again as soon as one knows it is a mistake, and the mistake made knowing that it is a mistake. And this, indeed, is called *obstinacy!* And this is more serious, it is even very serious! It veils the consciousness very much, veils it so much that after some time one no longer knows at all that one is making mistakes. One makes them thinking that one doesn't. One gives so many excuses and justifications for everything one does, that one ends up by believing that one is no longer making any mistakes at all. Then, here, it becomes very serious, because one is incorrigible!

What is the difference between receptivity and opening?

We have already spoken about this once. I have already answered. And I have told you I won't repeat twice the same thing, because I want you to get into the habit of remembering what I have said.

Mother, what does "an egoistic faith... tainted by ambition" mean?

Yes, for instance, if one wants to become somebody very important, to have a high position or attract the admiration of people around him, to become a great sadhak, a great sannyasi, a great yogi, etc., somebody quite important, that is called having a faith full of ambition. You have the faith that this may happen, you have faith in the Divine, but it is for your own small personal vainglory; and this is no longer something pure, sincere and true. It is something that's entirely for personal profit. Naturally, there is no question in this of any self-giving; it is a hoarding of forces

Questions and Answers

as much as it is possible for you to hoard them, that is to say, the very opposite of the true movement. This happens much oftener than one would think.... This movement of ambition is often hidden right in the depths of the being and it pushes you, like this, from behind.... It whips you so that you get on. It is a kind of veiled pride.

Mother, why do these people receive the force, since the Divine knows that they are not sincere?

Listen, my child, the Divine never goes by human notions in His ways of acting. You must get that well into your head, once and for all. He probably does things without what we call reasons. But anyway, if He has reasons they are not the same as human reasons, and *certainly* He does *not* have the sense of justice as it is understood by men.

For example, you imagine very easily that a man who is craving for wealth and tries to deceive people in order to get money... According to your idea of justice, this man ought to be deprived of all his wealth and reduced to poverty. We find that usually just the opposite happens. But that, of course, is only a matter of appearances. Behind the appearances, there is something else.... He exchanges this for other possibilities. He may have money, but he no longer has a conscience. And, in fact, what almost always happens is that when he has the money he desired, he is not happy.... And the more he has, usually the less happy he is! He is tormented, you see, by the wealth he has gained.

You must not judge things from an outer success or a semblance of defeat. We may say — and generally this is what almost always happens — we could say that the Divine gives what one desires, and of all lessons this is the best! For, if your desire is inconscient, obscure, egoistic, you increase the unconsciousness, the darkness and egoism within yourself; that is to say, this takes you farther and farther away from the truth, from consciousness

21 July 1954

and happiness. It takes you far away from the Divine. And for the Divine, naturally, only one thing is true — the divine Consciousness, the divine Union. And each time you put material things in front, you become more and more materialistic and go farther and farther away from full success.

But for the Truth that other success is a terrible defeat.... You have exchanged truth for falsehood!

To judge from appearances and apparent success is precisely an act of complete ignorance. Even for the most hardened man, for whom everything has apparently been successful, even for him there is always a counterpart. And this kind of hardening of the being which is produced, this veil which is formed, a thicker and thicker veil, between the outer consciousness and the inner truth, becomes, one day or another, altogether intolerable. It is usually paid for very dearly — outer success.

(Mother's voice becomes extremely deep.) One must be *very* great, *very* pure, have a *very* high and *very* disinterested spiritual consciousness in order to be successful without being affected by it. *Nothing is more difficult than being successful. This, indeed, is the true test of life!*

When you do not succeed, quite naturally you turn back on yourself and within yourself, and you seek within yourself the consolation for your outer failure. And to those who have a flame within them — if the Divine really wants to help them, if they are mature enough to be helped, if they are ready to follow the path — blows will come one after another, because this helps! It is the most powerful, the most direct, most effective help. If you succeed, be on your guard, ask yourself: “At what price, what cost have I bought success? I hope it is not a step towards...”

There are those who have gone beyond this, those who are conscious of their soul, those who have given themselves entirely, those who — as I said — are absolutely pure, disinterested, and can succeed without its affecting and touching them; here, then, it is different. *But one must be very high to be able to bear*

Questions and Answers

success. And after all, it is perhaps the last test which the Divine gives to anyone: “Now that you are noble, you are disinterested, you have no egoism, you belong only to me, I am going to make you triumph. We are going to see if you will hold out.”

In what way does the divine Shakti act against the Asuras?

I don't hear a thing!... Acts against the Asuras? Why do you want to know that?

It is interesting! (Laughter)

Perhaps to them also She gives what they want to have.... (*Silence*) And usually this hastens their end. There are Asuras and Asuras... that is to say... no, the Asuras are Asuras, but there are all those who have come out of them, and who are beings of an inferior kind.

An Asura is generally a conscious being and he knows he has an end. He knows that the attitude he has taken up in the universe is bound to destroy him after a certain time. Naturally, the time of an Asura is extremely long if we compare it with the lifetime of man. But still, he knows there is an end, because he has cut himself off from Eternity. And so he tries to realise his plan as totally as he can until the day of his complete defeat. And it is possible that if he is allowed to do it, the defeat will come sooner. It is perhaps for this reason that at the time great things are about to be accomplished — it is at this time that the adverse forces are most active, most violently active, and apparently the most fully successful. They seem to have a clear field: it is perhaps in order that things may be more rapidly finished.

(*Long silence*)

Is that all?

21 July 1954

Sweet Mother, what does "mental arrogance" mean?

My children, speak distinctly! You don't need to shout loudly... You must articulate clearly!

(The child repeats the same sentence distinctly.)

Mental arrogance? That means... what all of you have! (*Laughter*)

I don't know a human being who does not have mental arrogance. There are those who have a little, there are those who have much, there are those who are entirely made up of it.... The mind, by its very nature, is something essentially arrogant. It fancies that it can know, it imagines that it can judge, and it spends its time passing judgments on everything — within you, on yourself, on others, on all things!

Recently, a very amusing incident happened. Someone wrote and began to express a doubt about something said by Sri Aurobindo. But then, afterwards, he added, "But we should not forget that he who wrote this is at least as intelligent as we!" (*Mother laughs.*) When people spend their time judging things, if they tell themselves, "But perhaps the other person is at least as intelligent as I am!", they would be less...

But you have only to observe yourselves... you can observe yourself, catch yourself at least a hundred times a day, with a mind which decides everything, knows everything, judges everything, knows very well what is good, what bad, what is true, what false, what is right.... And also how one should act, what this person should have done, how to resolve that problem.... All men know, you see.... If they were at the head of governments, for instance, they would know very well how to manage everything! But people don't listen to them... that's all!

You have only to look at yourself, you will see, you will catch yourself all the time.... Not to speak of those who have long ago decided about all the errors God has committed and how the

Questions and Answers

world would be if it were they who had been commissioned to make it! There.

With the touch of the divine Grace, how do difficulties become opportunities for progress?

Opportunities for progress? Yes! Well, this is something quite obvious. You have made a big mistake, you are in great difficulty: then, if you have faith, if you have trust in the divine Grace, if you really rely on It, you will suddenly realise that it is a lesson, that your difficulty or mistake is nothing else but a lesson and that it comes to teach you to find within yourself what needs to be changed, and with this help of the divine Grace you will discover in yourself what has to be changed. And you will change it. And so, from a difficulty you will have made great progress, taken a considerable leap forward. This, indeed, happens all the time. Only, you must be truly sincere, that is, rely on the Grace and let It work in you — not like this: one part of you asking to be helped and another resisting as much as it can, because it doesn't want to change... this is the difficulty.

All that he is saying, all the time, is: completely, totally, sincerely, without reserve. For there is one part of the being which has an aspiration, there is one part of the being which gives itself, and there are other parts — sometimes a small part, some times a big one which hides nicely, right at the bottom, and keeps absolutely quiet so that it may not be found out, but which *resists* with *all* its might, so as not to change.

And so one wonders... with, “Oh, I had such a beautiful aspiration, I had so much goodwill, I had such a great desire to change, and then, see, I cannot! Why?” Then, of course, your mental arrogance comes in and says, “I didn't get the response I deserved, the divine Grace doesn't help me, and I am left all alone to shift for myself”, etc., etc.

It is not that. It is that hidden somewhere there is a tiny something which is well coiled up, in there, *doubled up, turned*

21 July 1954

in upon itself and well hidden, right at the bottom, as at the bottom of a box, which refuses to stir. (*Mother speaks very softly.*) So when the effort, the aspiration wane, die down, this springs up like that, gently, and then it wants to impose its will and it makes you do exactly what you did not want to do, what you had decided you would not do, and which you do without knowing how or why! Because that thing was there, it had its turn — for small things, big things, for the details, even for the direction of life.

There are people who see clearly, who know so well what they ought to do, and who feel that they can't.... They don't know why. It is nothing else but that. There is a little spot which doesn't want to change and this little spot awaits its hour. And the day it is allowed, through laxity, fatigue, somnolence, through a little inertia, allowed to show itself, it will show itself with all concentrated, accumulated energy, and will make you do, will make you say, make you feel, make you act *ex-act-ly* contrary to what you had decided to do! And you will stand there: "Ah, how discouraging this is!..." Then some people say, "Fate!" They think it is their fate. It is not fate, it is themselves!... It is that they don't have, haven't used, the light, the searchlight. They have not turned the searchlight into the small hidden corners of their being, they haven't discovered what was well hidden. They have left it there, and then have done this (*Mother turns away her head*) so as not to see it. How many times one suddenly feels one is on the point of catching something, "Hup!" It hurts a little.... It is troublesome.... So one thinks of something else, and that's all! The opportunity has gone. One must wait for another occasion, again commit a few stupidities, before being able to find an opportunity to catch the thing by the tail, like this, or by the ear or the nose, and hold it firmly and say, "No! You won't hide any longer now, I see you as you are, and you must either get out or change!"

One must have a strong grip and an unshakable resolution. As in our Japanese story of the other day, that soldier who had a

Questions and Answers

knife in his knee in order to make sure of not falling asleep... and when he felt very sleepy, he turned the knife in such a way that it hurt him still more. One must have something like that. This, *this* is determination: to know what one wants and to do it. There we are!

Mother, may I ask something?

Ask!

Mother, last time I didn't understand something... what you said about the time you used to count the "transformation" flowers. The figure showed the number people who would be transformed?

(*After a silence*) That, well, that depended on the previous arrangement I had made, you see.... One day it could be one thing, another day it could be another. Sometimes it was only movements, elements, cells.... Sometimes it was people. It depended on what I saw as possible and the arrangement I had made before counting.

It was as when I used to give people a certain number of flowers: at times it meant, "As many movements in you, as many elements of your being can be changed." At other times I used to give them a certain number of flowers, well: "You will have the power to change, to bring transformation to as many people as there are flowers" — and all kinds of things like that. It was not always the same thing. But it was always a power of transforming something.... It could be the transformation of the will, it could be the transformation of action, it could be the material transformation of the cells, it could be a transformation of yourself... the transformation of stars in the universe... of many things.... It depended on people.

When it was for people was it a total transformation, Sweet Mother?

21 July 1954

Sometimes. Usually there were also associations with other flowers.... There were times when one could organise one thing more than another... There were times... there was a time when I arranged flowers in this way... for some people it was a total transformation. But when...

The time factor sometimes eludes us, it is difficult.... In organisations of this kind, the most difficult thing to control is the time. One does not know if it will be in a year or in a hundred years.... It is difficult to control. I never had the opportunity to give the time-sense to flowers, and probably it is not possible. Perhaps it will come, but for the moment it is an element difficult to gauge.

Sweet Mother, "transformation of stars" means?

What does it mean? What is your question? I spoke of the transformation of stars.... If the whole universe is going to be transformed, the stars will be transformed also! Why do you suppose it will be only on earth?

There were people here who had a great aspiration, but who for some reason or other revolted and went away. And these are the ones who are specially against the Ashram. But then, could we say that one day they will come back?

Come back? (*Mother makes a movement.*) That is... I shall tell you this personally.

It depends on something.... We could put it like this: first — the very same question is in the Gita — there are two kinds of Asuric beings. There are those who can be converted and will be converted — after all, perhaps it would be enough if only at one moment, were it just in a passing flash, these beings have conceived the possibility of conversion, for this to happen one day. And there are those who have absolutely consciously and

Questions and Answers

wilfully decided that they would prefer to be dissolved and to disappear. So those who want to be dissolved will be dissolved and those who want to be converted will be converted. That's how it is in life!

There are those who die, those who return. Usually it is something known, almost decided. One could say with certainty, *these will die*. They will die, they will die, that is to say, they cut themselves off from their soul. They may have — as I said a while ago — a life that is quite... that seems to be altogether successful. They are not necessarily unhappy physically, far from it; sometimes, on the contrary, everything turns out successfully for them. And then, on the other hand, there are perhaps others under a special grace, who, in their adventure meet the worst rebuffs, and after some time they realise that they have been foolish, idiotic, stupid. And then... they come back. It depends on people. In fact, when they are successful it means that they are condemned; when they do not succeed, well, it is that the Grace has not left them.

But mostly it will be after their death that there will be a difference, because those human beings who have allowed adverse forces to take hold of them and govern their lives, as soon as they leave their body, they are just swallowed up, that's all! They have already cut off the connection with their psychic being, so their psychic being often has gone somewhere far off already in other worlds... and so, their vital being, which is the receptacle for these forces, as soon as it leaves the body will be quite simply swallowed, and that's all. And so they will really die for good. That won't make much difference in the world. It won't change things much.

Sweet Mother, what will swallow them up?

A still greater vital being! (*Laughter*) You see, they have in them an emanation of adverse vital forces, and the being or power which has emanated this force has done so in order to make

21 July 1954

use of the body, to make it do in the material life exactly the things it wanted to do. But now, when there is no longer a body left, it is no longer interesting.... You see, it was this body which was meant to do a certain number of things to act against the divine action. Once the body has disappeared, the emanation is withdrawn and all the force that was with it, and it is swallowed up again for another opportunity.

They spend their time doing this. They emanate and then reabsorb when it pleases them, at times before death... that is, this hastens death a bit. It leaves the being like a kind of rag, powerless, lifeless, without anything.... This happens; it makes them absolutely mad. Or else, when they die in some sort of catastrophe, as it happened during the war, suddenly... hup! It acts like a cupping-glass, it absorbs everything, swallows up everything again for another occasion. It looks for this, for what is ready to receive it, and it makes it... There is always someone who is open to receive it, and who immediately believes himself a very superior being; because it gives this, it gives people the feeling that they are truly, exceptionally remarkable... they are capable of seeing the faults of things which others don't see; their judgment is more sane than that of hundreds of other individuals. Besides, they have decided, they are among those who have decided what the creation ought to be like and who try to make it so, to put things in their place as they ought to be.

I had these... people who, in a moment of lucidity or sincerity, a second of sincerity, had asked to be freed from the hostile emanation which made them act. And then, in that moment of sincerity this emanation went out of them, and without hurting the body it could be caught and destroyed. That has happened several times.

Then for some days the being is so happy... and it feels free, feels good, feels luminous.... And then suddenly, it tells itself, "But I no longer have any power! I don't know any longer, can't do anything any longer, I am altogether an ordinary being!" And then, "But this is not at all good, it was much better before!" And

Questions and Answers

so, as these adverse forces are countless — these entities exist in thousands and thousands, you see, they are there swarming around people, only waiting for an opportunity to be able to rush into someone — immediately one reabsorbs one's dose and becomes once again what one was before, sometimes worse. And so the comedy begins all over again.

But as for me, nothing doing, once is enough! You are far too attached to it! Keep your little hostile being with you! It is useless, in this case. But it is this, it's the feeling, all of a sudden, of having lost one's power. But note, this happens to ambitious people, above all to ambitious people who want to have power, want to dominate others, want to be great masters, great instructors, want to perform miracles, have extraordinary powers... it is to these that this happens most often... those who have a kind of ambition, here, turning in their mind. This is dangerous.

It is so good to be simple, simply good-willed, to do the best one can, and in the best way possible; not to build anything very considerable but only to aspire for progress, for light, a peace full of goodwill, and let That which knows in the world decide for you what you will become, and what you will have to do. One no longer has any cares, and one is *perfectly happy!*

There we are.

28 July 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 4 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

“Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose.”

How does money manifest on other planes?

What other planes? He speaks of the vital and physical, doesn't he?... that it is a force which manifests on the vital plane and the physical plane. The vital forces have a very great influence over money.

(*After a silence*) You see, when one thinks of money, one thinks of bank-notes or coins or some kind of wealth, some precious things. But this is only the physical expression of a force which may be handled by the vital and which, when possessed and controlled, almost automatically brings along these more material expressions of money. And that is a kind of power. (*Silence*) It is a power of attracting certain very material vibrations, which has a capacity for utilisation that increases its strength — which is like the action of physical exercise, you see — it increases its strength through utilisation.

For example, if you have a control over this force — it is a force which, in the vital world, has a colour varying between red, a dark, extremely strong red and a deep gold that's neither

Questions and Answers

bright nor very pale. Well, this force — when it is made to move, to circulate, its strength increases. It is not something one can accumulate and keep without using. It is a force which must always be circulated. For example, people who are misers and accumulate all the money, all the wealth they can attract towards themselves, put this force aside without using its power of movement; and either it escapes or it lies benumbed and loses its strength.

The true method of being in the stream of this money-power is precisely what is written here: a sense of absolute impersonality, the feeling that it is not something you possess or which belongs to you, but that it is a force you can handle and direct where it ought to go in order to do the most useful work. And by these movements, by this constant action, the power increases — the power of attraction, a certain power of organisation also. That is to say, even somebody who has no physical means, who is not in those material circumstances where he could materially handle money, if he is in possession of this force, he can make it act, make it circulate, and if ever he finds it necessary, receives from it as much power as he needs without there being externally any sign or any reason why the money should come to him. He may be in conditions which are absolutely the very opposite of those of usual wealth, and yet can handle this force and always have at his disposal all the wealth that's necessary to carry on his work.

Therefore, it was like this, you see: this letter was written to someone who wanted to go out from here to collect money for Sri Aurobindo's work, and this person had no means at all. So he began by saying to Sri Aurobindo, "But as I myself have no means, people will have no trust in me, and I won't be able to get anything." And Sri Aurobindo answered him something like this, that it is not the external force in its most material form which is necessary, it is the handling of the inner force which gives one control over money wherever it is: whether it is in public institutions or with individuals, one obtains control

28 July 1954

over it and one can, when it is necessary, attract by a certain movement what is needed.

Sweet Mother, in what way have the money-forces left the Divine?

Eh?

(The child repeats its question.)

It is precisely the main word in your question which I don't understand. In what manner, in what way have the money-forces...

... left the Divine?

Left? The money-power belongs to a world which was created deformed. It is something that belongs to the vital world; and he says this, doesn't he? He says that it belongs to the vital and material worlds. And so at all times, always it was under the control of the Asuric forces; and what must be done is precisely to reconquer it from the Asuric forces.

That is why in the past, all those who wanted to do Yoga or follow a discipline, used to say that one should not touch money, for it was something — they said — diabolic or Asuric or at least altogether opposed to the divine life. But the whole universe, in all its manifestation, is the Divine Himself, and so belongs entirely to Him; and it is on this ground that he says that the money-forces belong to the Divine. One must reconquer them and give them to Him. They have been under the influence of the Asuric forces: one must win them back in order to put them at the disposal of the Divine so that He may be able to use them for His work of transformation.

(Long silence)

Sweet Mother, it is men who have created money. Then how is it a divine power?

Questions and Answers

Hm! (*laughing*) It is as though you told me: it is a man and woman who have created another person, then how can he be divine in essence? It is exactly the same thing! The whole creation is made externally by external things, but behind that there are divine forces. What men have invented — paper or coins or other objects — all these are but means of expression — nothing else but that.... I just said this a moment ago, it is not the force itself, it is its material expression as men have created it. But this is purely conventional. For example, there are countries where small shells are exchanged instead of money. There are even countries where... Someone has written a story like this: in the North wealth means having hooks for fishing; and the rich man is he who has the greatest number of fish-hooks. You know what these are, don't you? — small iron hooks for catching fish which are fixed at the end of the line. So, the multimillionaire is one who has a huge number of hooks!

It is purely conventional. What is behind is the force I am speaking about, you see, and so it manifests in all sorts of ways. For example, even gold, you know... men have given a certain value to gold, because of all metals it deteriorates the least. It is preserved almost indefinitely. And this is the reason, there's no other. But it is a mere convention. The proof is that each time a new gold-mine is found and exploited, the value of gold has fallen. These are mere conventions between human beings. But what makes money a power is not this, it is the force that's behind. As I was saying a while ago, it is a force that is able to attract and use anything whatever, all material things and...

So this is used according to a convention. Now, it is understood that wealth is represented by bits of paper which become very dirty, and on which something is printed. They are altogether disgusting, most often good only for lighting the fire. But it is considered a great fortune. Why? Because that's the convention. Yet one who is capable of attracting this and using it for something good, to increase the welfare of this world, the welfare and well-being of the world, that man has a hold on the

money-power, that is to say, the force that is behind money.

In French we call money “*argent*”. “*Argent*” is also the name of a white metal which is just a little more... a little prettier and a little more lasting than other metals, one which is less easily oxidised and spoilt. So this is called “*argent*”, money. And then, by expansion, all that is wealth is also called “*argent*”. It is really paper or gold or sometimes just written things... because many large fortunes are only numbers written on paper, not even these papers which circulate, only books! There are immense fortunes which govern the world and are just written on papers, like that, with some documents and conventions between men. The fortune may increase, become triple, fourfold, tenfold, or else it may be reduced to nothing. They sell everything, they sell cotton, they sell sugar, they sell corn, coffee, anything at all, but there is nothing! There is no cotton, no sugar, no corn, nothing. Everything is on paper! And so you buy millions of worth of cotton: you don't have a wisp of cotton there! It is all on paper. And so, sometimes later, you sell it off again. If the price of cotton has increased, you gain a fortune, if it has gone down you lose a fortune. And you have with you neither money nor cotton nor anything, nothing but paper. (*Laughter*) It is entirely a convention.

*How can one merge oneself one's separative ego in the divine Consciousness?*¹

How can one merge in the divine Consciousness?

*How must one merge oneself one's separative ego in the divine Consciousness?*¹

Eh? merge oneself?

¹ The French text here is wrongly spoken by the child.

Questions and Answers

... *one's separative ego*...

I don't understand what you mean. "Merge"?

... *in the divine Consciousness*.

Yes, that's just what I mean.... How can one dissolve, you mean dissolve in the Divine, and lose one's ego?

First of all, one must will it. And then one must aspire with great perseverance, and each time the ego shows itself, one must give it a little rap on the nose (*Mother taps her nose*) until it has received so many raps that it is tired of them and gives up the game.

But usually, instead of rapping it on the nose, one justifies its presence. Almost constantly, when it shows itself, one says, "After all, it is right." And mostly one doesn't even know that it is the ego, one thinks it is oneself. But the first condition is to find it essential not to have the ego any longer. One must really understand that one doesn't want it. It is not so easy. It is not so easy! For one can very well turn words over in the head and say, "I don't want the ego any more, I no longer want to be separated from the Divine." All this goes on inside, like that. But it remains just there, it hasn't much effect on your life. The next moment you do something purely egoistic, you see, and find it quite natural. It doesn't even shock you.

One must first begin to understand truly what this means. The first method... you see, there are many stages... first, one must try not to be selfish — which is something quite different, isn't it?... If you take the English words you understand the difference. In English, you see, there is the word "selfish", and there is also the word "egoism". The ego — "ego" — exists in English, and "selfish". And these are two very different things; in French there is not this distinction. They say, "I don't want to be selfish", you see. But this is a very small thing, very small! People, when they stop being selfish, think they have made tremendous

progress! But it's a very small thing. It is simply, oh, it is simply to have a sense of its ridiculousness. You can't imagine how ridiculous these selfish people are!

When one sees them thinking all the time about themselves, referring everything to themselves, governed simply by their own little person, placing themselves in the centre of the universe and trying to organise the whole universe including God around themselves, as though that were the most important thing in the universe. If one could only see oneself objectively, you know, as one sees oneself in a mirror, observe oneself living, it is so grotesque! (*Laughing*) That's enough for you to... One suddenly feels that he is becoming — oh, so absolutely ridiculous!

I remember I read in French — it was a translation — a sentence of Tagore's which amused me very much. He was speaking of a little dog. He said... he compared it with something... I don't remember the details now, but what struck me was this: the little dog was sitting on its mistress's lap and fancying itself the centre of the universe! This struck me very strongly. It is true! I used to know a little dog like this! But there are many like that, almost all are like that. You see, they want everybody to pay attention to them, and in fact they succeed very well. Because when there is a little dog, as when there is a little child — it's almost the same thing — everyone attends to them.

Haven't you noticed that when a child of this height (*Mother indicates the height*) comes along, everything else stops? Before that, people could speak, say interesting things, be busy with something higher; but as soon as a child comes along, everybody begins to smile, to mimic a baby, to try to make it speak, to attend to it. One can't bring along a child without everybody fussing over it, wanting to take it, to make it speak. So naturally the child feels itself the centre of the universe! It is quite natural!

For a puppy it is the same thing, for a kitten it is the same. It is a kind of... it is a very poor deformation of a kind of need to protect something that's smaller than oneself. And this is one of the forms, one of the earliest forms of unegoistic manifestation of

Questions and Answers

the ego! It feels so comfortable when it can protect something, busy itself with something much smaller, much weaker than itself, which is almost at its mercy, almost — even entirely — at its mercy, which has no power to resist. And so one feels good and generous because one doesn't crush it!

This is the first manifestation of generosity in the world. But all this, when one can see behind it and a little above, it cures you from being selfish, for truly it is ridiculous! It is truly ridiculous!

So there is a long, long, long way to go before merging one's ego in the Divine.

Merge one's ego in the Divine! But first, one can't merge one's ego in the Divine before becoming completely individualised. Do you know what it means to be *completely* individualised? Capable of resisting all outer influences?

Some days ago I received a letter from someone who told me that he was very hesitant about reading books of ordinary literature, for example, novels or dramas, because his nature had an almost insuperable tendency to receive imprints of the characters in these books and to begin living the feelings and thoughts of these characters, the nature of these persons. There are many more people than one would think who are like that. They read a book and while they are reading it they feel within themselves all kinds of emotions, thoughts, desires, intentions, plans, even ideals. They are simply just absorbed in the reading of the book. They are not even aware of it, because at least ninety-nine parts of an individual's character are made of soft butter — inedible of course... but on which if one presses one's thumb, an imprint is made.

Now, everything is a "thumb": an expressed thought, a sentence read, an object looked at, an observation of what someone else does, and of one's neighbour's will. And all these wills... you know, when one sees them they are all there, like this, intermingled (*Mother intercrosses her fingers*), each one trying to get the uppermost and causing a kind of perpetual conflict within,

28 July 1954

outside.... It goes in and out of people like that, you see, like electric currents. One is not at all aware of all this, and it is a perpetual conflict of all the wills which are trying to express themselves; and the strongest one will succeed. But as there are many of these and as one has to fight alone against a great number, it is not easy.

So one is tossed like a cork on the waves of the sea.... One day one wants this, the next day one wants that, at one moment one is pushed from this side, at another from that, now one lifts one's face to the sky (*Mother makes the movement*), now one is sunk deep in a hole. And so this is the existence one has!

First one must become a conscious, well-knit, *individualised* being, who exists in himself, by himself, independently of all his surroundings, who can hear anything, read anything, see anything without changing. He receives from outside only what he wants to receive; he automatically refuses all that is not in conformity with his plan and nothing can leave an imprint on him unless he agrees to receive the imprint. Then one begins to become an individuality! When one is an individuality, one can make an offering of it.

For, unless one possesses something, one cannot give it. First, one must be, and then afterwards one can give oneself.

So long as one does not exist, one can give nothing. And for the separative ego to disappear, as you say, one must be able to give oneself entirely, totally without reservation. And to be able to give oneself, one must first exist. And to exist one must be individualised.

If your body were not made in the rigid form it is — for it is terribly rigid, isn't it? — well, if all that were not so fixed, if you had no skin, here, like this, solid, if externally you were the reflection of what you are in the vital and mental fields, it would be worse than being a jelly-fish! Everything would fuse into everything else, like this.... Oh, what a mess it would be! That is why it was at first necessary to give a very rigid form. Afterwards we complain about it. We say, "The physical is fixed,

Questions and Answers

it is a nuisance; it lacks plasticity, it lacks suppleness, it hasn't that fluidity which can enable us to merge into the Divine." But this was absolutely necessary, for without this... if you simply went out of your body (most of you can't do it because the vital being is hardly more individualised than the physical), if you came out of your body and went into the vital world, you would see that all things there intermingle, they are mixed, they divide; all kinds of vibrations, currents of forces come and go, struggle, try to destroy one another, take possession of each other, absorb each other, throw each other out... and so it goes on! But it is very difficult to find a real personality in all this. These are forces, movements, desires, vibrations.

There are individualities, there are personalities! But these are powers. People who are individualised in that world are either heroes or devils!

And now, in the mind... (*Silence*) If only you become conscious of your physical mind in itself... Some people have called it a public square, because everything comes there, goes across, passes, comes back.... All ideas go there, they enter at one place, leave by another, some are here, some there, and it is a public square, not very well organised, for usually ideas meet and knock into one another, there are accidents of all kinds. But then one becomes aware: "*What can I call my mind?*" or "*What is my mind?*"

One needs years of very attentive, very careful, very reasonable, very coherent work, organisation, selection, construction, in order to succeed simply in forming, oh, simply this little thing, *one's own way of thinking!*

One believes one has one's own way of thinking. Not at all. It depends totally upon the people one speaks with or the books one has read or on the mood one is in. It depends also on whether you have a good or bad digestion, it depends on whether you are shut up in a room without proper ventilation or whether you are in the open air; it depends on whether you have a beautiful landscape before you; it depends on whether

there is sunshine or rain! You are not aware of it, but you think all kinds of things, completely different according to a heap of things which have nothing to do with you!

And for this to become a coordinated, coherent, logical thought, a long thorough work is necessary. And then, the best part of it is that when you have succeeded in making a beautiful, well-formed, very strong, very powerful mental construction, the first thing you will be told is, “You must break this so that you can unite with the Divine!” But so long as you haven’t made it, you cannot unite with the Divine because you have nothing to give to the Divine except a mass of things which are not yourself! *One must first exist in order to be able to give oneself.* I am repeating what I said a while ago.

Truly, in the present state of the world, the only thing one can give the Divine is one’s body. But that’s what one doesn’t give Him. Yes, one can try to consecrate one’s work! But still, here there are so many elements which are not true!

You want to merge your body in the Divine, eh? Just try! How are you going to do this? You can merge your mind, you can merge your vital, you can fuse all your emotions, you can fuse all your aspirations, you can fuse all that, but your body — how are you going to do that? You are not going to melt it in a boiling-pot! (*Laughter*) And yet it is the only thing about which you can say with certitude, “It is”, and give a name to it; yet even your name is a convention... but still, you are in the habit of calling yourself by a certain name — say, “This, this is I.” You look at yourself in a mirror, and although what you were twenty years ago is very different from what you are now... it is unrecognisable... still something makes you say all the same, “Yes, this is I.” Yes? “I am so-and-so” — Peter, Louis, Jack, André, whoever it may be....

(*After a silence*) And even this, if one were to look at oneself, every seven years all the cells are changed, and it is only by a kind of habit that it remains the same. Does it remain the same? Do you have photographs of the time you were very young? And

Questions and Answers

the photographs when you were ten, twenty, thirty years old — it is because one very much wants to do so that one recognises oneself; otherwise, truly, one is not at all the same.... When you were this height and now when you are this height, that makes a considerable difference! So, there we are...

All this... it is not in order to swamp you that I tell you all this. It is only in order to tell you that before speaking of merging one's ego in the Divine, one must first know a little what one is. The ego is there. Its necessity is that you become conscious, independent beings, individualised — I mean in the sense of independent — that you may not be the public square where everything goes criss-cross! That you may exist in yourselves. That is why there is an ego. It is like that; that is why also there is a skin, like that... though truly, even physical forces pass through the skin. There is a vibration which goes a certain distance. But still, it's the skin that prevents us from blending into one another. But everything else must be like that too.

(After a silence) And then, later, one offers all this to the Divine. Years of work are needed. You must not only... *(silence)*... become conscious of yourself, conscious in all details, but you must organise what you call "yourself" around the psychic centre, the divine centre of your being, so that it would make a single, coherent, fully conscious being. And as this divine centre is itself already consecrated *(Mother makes a gesture of offering)* entirely to the Divine, if everything is organised harmoniously around it, everything is consecrated to the Divine. And so, when the Divine thinks it proper, when the time has come, when the work of individualisation is complete, then the Divine gives you permission to let your ego merge in Him, to live henceforward only for the Divine.

But it is the Divine who takes this decision. You must first have done all this work, become a conscious being, solely and exclusively centred around the Divine and governed by Him. And after all that, there is still an ego; because it is

28 July 1954

the ego which serves to make you an individual. But once this work is perfect, fully accomplished, then, at that moment, you may tell the Divine, "Here I am, I am ready. Do you want me?" And the Divine usually says, "Yes." All is over, everything is accomplished. And you become a real instrument for the Divine's work. But first the instrument must be constructed.

You think that you are sent to school, that you are made to do exercises, all this just for the pleasure of vexing you? Oh, no! It is because it's indispensable for you to have a frame in which you can learn how to form yourself. If you did your work of individualisation, of total formation, by yourself, all alone in a corner, nothing at all would be asked of you. But you don't do it, you wouldn't do it, there's not a single child who would do it, he wouldn't even know how to do it, where to begin. If a child were not taught how to live, he could not live, he wouldn't know how to do anything, anything. I don't want to speak about disgusting details, but even the most elementary things he would not do properly if he were not taught how to do them. Therefore, one must, step by step... That is to say, if everyone had to go through the whole experience needed for the formation of an individuality, he would be long dead before having begun to live! This is the contribution — accumulated through centuries — of those who have had the experience and tell you, "Well, if you want to go quickly, to know in a few years what has been learnt through centuries, do this!" Read, learn, study and then, in the material field, you will be taught to do this in this way, that in that way, this again in this way (*gestures*). Once you know a little, you can find your own method, if you have the genius for it! But first one must stand on one's own feet and know how to walk. It is very difficult to learn it all alone. It's like that for everyone. One must form oneself. Therefore, one needs education. There we are!

(*To a child*) Do you have something to ask? No? Is there anyone who has something to ask?

Questions and Answers

Mother, last time you said that often there is in us a dark element which... which suggests to us... which makes us commit stupidities. So you said that when one is conscious of this element, it must be pulled out. But does pulling it out mean... For example, when one is conscious that this element comes to make us do stupid things, then, if by an effort of will one abstains from doing it, can one say that one has pulled it out?

That one doesn't commit stupidities?

By an effort of will. For example, one doesn't do that action which one shouldn't do.

Yes, yes.

Then, can one say that one has pulled out the element which was the cause?

One has sat upon it.

Then, how to pull it out?

For that, first of all, you must become conscious of it, you see, put it right in front of you, and cut the links which attach it to your consciousness. It is a work of inner psychology, you know.

One can see, when one studies oneself very attentively.... For example, if you observe yourself, you see that one day you are very generous. Let us take this, it is easy to understand. Very generous: generous in your feelings, generous in your sensations, generous in your thoughts and even in material things; that is, you understand the faults of others, their intentions, weaknesses, even nasty movements. You see all this, and you are full of good feelings, of generosity. You tell yourself, "Well... everyone does the best he can!" — like that.

Another day — or perhaps the very next minute — you will notice in yourself a kind of dryness, fixity, something that is bitter, that judges severely, that goes as far as bearing a grudge, has rancour, would like the evil-doer punished, that almost has feelings of vengeance; just the very opposite of the former! One day someone harms you and you say, “Doesn’t matter! He did not know”... or “He couldn’t do otherwise”... or “That’s his nature”... or “He could not understand!” The next day — or perhaps an hour later — you say, “He must be punished! He must pay for it! He must be made to feel that he has done wrong!” — with a kind of rage; and you want to take things, you want to keep them for yourself, you have all the feelings of jealousy, envy, narrowness, you see, just the very opposite of the other feeling.

This is the dark side. And so, the moment one sees it, if one looks at it and doesn’t say, “It is I”, if one says, “No, it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself”, one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face; and with the knowledge and light of the other, one doesn’t try so much to convince — because that is very difficult — but one compels it to remain quiet... first to stand farther away, then one flings it very far away so that it can no longer return — putting a great light on it. There are instances in which it is possible to change, but this is very rare. There are instances in which one can put upon this being — or this shadow — put upon it such an intense light that it transforms it, and it changes into what is the truth of your being.

But this is a rare thing.... It can be done, but it is rare. Usually, the best thing is to say, “No, this is not I! I don’t want it! I have nothing to do with this movement, it doesn’t exist for me, it is something contrary to my nature!” And so, by dint of insisting and driving it away, finally one separates oneself from it.

But one must first be clear and sincere enough to see the conflict within oneself. Usually one doesn’t pay any attention to

Questions and Answers

these things. One goes from one extreme to the other. You see, you can say, to put it in very simple words: one day I am good, the next day I am bad. And this seems quite natural.... Or even, sometimes for one hour you are good and the next hour you are wicked; or else, sometimes the whole day through one is good and suddenly one becomes wicked, for a minute very wicked, all the more wicked as one was good! Only, one doesn't observe it, thoughts cross one's mind, violent, bad, hateful things, like that... Usually one pays no attention to it. But this is what must be caught! As soon as it manifests, you must catch it like this (*Mother makes a movement*) with a very firm grip, and then hold it, hold it up to the light and say, "No! I don't want you! I — don't — want — you! I have nothing to do with this! You are going to get out of here, and you won't return!"

(*After a silence*) And this is something — an experience that one can have daily, or almost... when one has those movements of great enthusiasm, great aspiration, when one suddenly becomes conscious of the divine goal, the urge towards the Divine, the desire to take part in the divine work, when one comes out of oneself in a great joy and great force... and then, a few hours later, one is miserable for a tiny little thing; one indulges in so petty, so narrow, so commonplace a self-interestedness, has such a dull desire... and all the rest has evaporated as if it did not exist. One is quite accustomed to contradictions; one doesn't pay attention to this and that is why all these things live comfortably together as neighbours. One must first discover them and prevent them from intermingling in one's consciousness: decide between them, separate the shadow from the light. Later one can get rid of the shadow.

There we are, and now it is time. Anything urgent to ask? No?

Sweet Mother...

Ah!

28 July 1954

*... between mental preference and vital insistences, which
are the more dangerous for yoga?*

Those that one has! (*Laughter*)

4 August 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 5 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between a servant and a worker?

I don't think there is much difference; it is almost the same thing. Perhaps the attitude is not quite the same, but there is not much of a difference. In "servant" there seems to be something more: it is the joy of serving. The worker — he has only the joy of the work. But the work that is done as a service brings still greater joy.

What does "self-love" mean?

I think self-love is a pleasant word for vanity. Self-love means that one loves oneself more than anything else; and what he implies by this, you see, are exactly those reactions of a vanity which is vexed when one is not appreciated at one's true worth, when one does not receive the praise one thinks one deserves, or the reward one believes one has earned, and when one is not complimented for everything one does. Indeed, all these movements come from dissatisfaction, because one doesn't receive what one hoped to, what one thought one deserved to receive!

Sweet Mother, what is a "dynamic identification"?

It is the opposite of a passive or inert identification. It is an identification that is full of energy, will, action, enthusiasm; whereas one can be identified also in a kind of torpor.

4 August 1954

You have written in Words of Long Ago that we justify all our weaknesses when we lack self-confidence. Why do we do this?

Um! So! We justify all our weaknesses? It is not a positive want of self-confidence; it is a lack of confidence in what the divine Grace can do for us. To justify one's weaknesses is a kind of laziness and inertia.

Well, when one doesn't want to make an effort to correct oneself, one says, "Oh, it is impossible, I can't do it, I don't have the strength, I am not made of that stuff, I don't have the necessary qualities, I could never do it." It is absolute laziness, it is in order to avoid the required effort. When you are asked to make progress: "Oh, it is beyond my capacity, I am a poor creature, I can do nothing!" That's all. It is almost ill-will. It is extreme laziness, a refusal to make any effort. One accepts all one's defects and incapacities in order not to have to make the necessary effort to overcome them. One says, "I am like that, I can't be otherwise!" It is a refusal to let the divine Grace work in you. It is a justification of your own ill-will.

Has someone there a question? Or isn't there any?

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: "You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play...." What play?

The universe is called the play of the Divine!

Why?

Why? That's a way of speaking! You feel that it is not an amusing game? There are many who don't (*laughter*), who find that the play is not amusing. But still, it's a way of speaking.... One speaks of — without thinking that it is joyful — one speaks of "the play

Questions and Answers

of forces”; it is the movement, the interaction. All activities are the play of forces. So one can take it in that sense. But, you see, it means that the divine Force, the divine Consciousness, has exteriorised itself to create the universe and all the play of forces in the universe. That’s what it means, nothing else. I don’t mean necessarily playing in the Playground! It can mean many other things!

(Turning to the other children to induce them to ask questions) Nothing? You don’t have anything either?

What is the meaning of “keep yourself free from all taint of the perversions of the ego”?

Perversions of the ego?

(After a silence) Perversion is something that goes astray from the divine truth and purity. The moment you start living in ignorance and falsehood, you live in perversion; and the whole world is made of ignorance and falsehood at present. So this means that if you remain in the ordinary consciousness, you are necessarily in the perversion of the ego.

Mother, here it is said: “Even if the idea of the separate worker is strong in you and you feel that it is you who do the act, yet it must be done for her.” For example, our study of sports — we must think that it is for the Divine?

But surely...

How?

It is not even very difficult. You can first do it as a preparation so as to become capable of receiving the divine forces, and then, as a service, so that you may help in constructing the whole organisation of the Ashram. You can do it not with any personal

4 August 1954

gain in view, but with the intention of making yourselves ready to accomplish the divine work! This seems to me even quite indispensable if you want to profit fully from the situation. If you keep the ordinary point of view, well, you will always find yourselves in conditions which are not quite satisfactory, and incapable of receiving all the forces you can receive.

Mother, if for instance in the long jump one makes an effort to jump a greater and greater distance, how does one do the divine work?

Eh? Excuse me, it is not for the pleasure of doing the long jump, it is to make your body more perfect in its functioning, and, therefore, a more suitable instrument for receiving the divine forces and manifesting them.

Why, everything, everything one does in this place must be done in this spirit, otherwise you do not even profit by the opportunity given to you, the circumstances given to you. I explained to you the other day, didn't I, that the Consciousness is here, penetrating all things and trying to manifest in all movements? But if you, on your side, tell yourself that the effort you are making, the progress you are making, you make in order to become more capable of receiving this Consciousness and of manifesting it, the work will naturally be much better and much quicker. And this seems to me even quite elementary, to tell you the truth; I am surprised that it could be otherwise! Because your presence in an Ashram organised as it is organised would have no meaning if it were not that! Of what use would it be? There are any number of universities, schools in the world which are very well organised!

But if you are here, it is for *a special reason!* It is because here there is a possibility of absorbing consciousness and progress which is not found elsewhere. And if you don't prepare yourselves to receive this, well, you will lose the chance that's given to you!

Questions and Answers

Why, I have never spoken of this before, because it seemed so obvious to me that it was not at all necessary to say it.

Like that, Mother, one knows one must do all that! But when one does it, then the intention is different!

No, but... (*Silence*) What do you think, in a general way? It is by some kind of chance or luck — or just because your parents are here — that by chance you happen to be here, or what? I don't know! (*Laughing*) That you could as well be here as anywhere else, or what?

You are all old enough to have thought a little, and reflected a little. You have never asked yourselves, "Why am I here?" Have you asked yourselves this? Or is it something which... I indeed thought that you ought to take it as something quite... that it was understood, quite natural! So, I never spoke to you about it. Why, I would be interested in knowing... (*To a child*) Have you thought of this, you there?

I told you, Sweet Mother, the other day!

That's right, but you can repeat it. (*To another child*) And you? Have you thought about it? Or do you take it like that... because papa and mamma are here, so I am here? (*Laughter*) (*To another*) And you?

When you gave us "To the Children of the Ashram" — after that I understood.

Ah, you understood! Not before that?

I did not think about it before.

But how old are you all, on an average, here? Fifteen or sixteen? Seventeen? Twenty? No? It is not like that? The Red Group is

4 August 1954

between fifteen and twenty, isn't it? Are there some here who are younger?

No!

But one begins to think at thirteen. One begins to think, to ask oneself questions, one even wonders, "What is life, and why do we live?" And still more when one finds oneself in a place like this, which is not quite an ordinary place: "Why am I here?" and "What is the use of being here?" and "What is the reason for being here?" Eh? — You do not think? You do not think? I know two or three of you who think about it because you have told me. But (*laughing*) the others? You have never asked yourselves these questions, no?... Nobody is saying a word! (*Laughter*)

(*To a child*) So you, you have never thought about it? You have. (*Nobody replies.*) Ah! They don't want to say anything. All right, let's not talk any more about it then. (*Laughter*)

That's all? Is that enough?

Mother, what's interesting is this: What is there in us that has made us come here?

Ah, that is interesting! What is the reason of your being here? Well, it's for each one to find it. Have you found it, you? No, not yet? Why, that's another very interesting question!

If you... (*Silence*) If you asked yourselves this, you would be obliged to seek the answer somewhere, within — because it is *within* you, the answer. "What is there in us that has made us come here?" The answer is within. There is nothing outside. And if you go deep enough, you will find a very clear answer... (*silence*) and an interesting answer. If you go deep enough, into a sufficiently complete silence from all outer things, you will find within you that flame about which I often speak, and in this flame you will see *your destiny*. You will see the aspiration of centuries which has been concentrated gradually, to lead you

Questions and Answers

through countless births *to the great day of realisation* — that preparation which has been made through thousands of years, and is reaching its culmination.

And as you will have gone very deep to find this, all your incapacities, all your weaknesses, everything in you that denies and does not understand, all that — you will feel that it is not yourself, it is just like a garment which serves in some way and which you have put on for the time being. But you will understand that in order to be truly capable of profiting fully by the opportunity to do what you wanted to do, what you have aspired to do for such a long time, you must gradually bring the light, the consciousness, the truth into all these obscure elements of the external garment, so that you may be able to understand integrally *why you are here!* And not only that you may understand it, but that you may be able to do it. For centuries this has been prepared in you, not in this... (*Mother pinches the skin of her forearm*) this is quite recent, isn't it?... but in your true self. And *for centuries* it has been awaiting *this opportunity*.

And then you enter *immediately* into the marvellous. You see to what an extent it is extraordinary... that things which one has so long hoped for, things for which one has prayed so much, made so many efforts, suddenly a moment comes when *they are realised*.

It is the moment when great things are done. One must not miss the opportunity.

(*Long silence*)

On the 15th of August I shall give you something written by Sri Aurobindo which is precisely on this subject — it is called *The Hour of God*.

You will read it carefully and you will understand.

There we are.

11 August 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 6 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

At the very beginning is written: "The four Powers of the Mother." Which are these four powers, Sweet Mother?

These!

The aspects, aren't they, Mother?

(Long silence)

Yes.

What does this mean: "The Supreme is... manifested through her in the worlds as the one and dual consciousness of Ishwara-Shakti and the dual principle of Purusha-Prakriti...."?

What does this mean? It means what it says. (*Laughter*) It means that in the world the single force of the creating energy is divided in all the manifestations, even the most contrary manifestations, you see. It is this single force which, in the creation, is divided into Purusha and Prakriti and, also, energy and resistance. That's what it means; at the origin the force is single and in the manifestation it is divided, and it is divided in all the contraries, which are at the same time complementaries. Because, for creation, this division was necessary, otherwise there would have been only one single thing all the time.

What does "Vibhuti" mean?

Questions and Answers

It means the incarnation of an emanation. An emanation of the Mother incarnates in a being and this being becomes a Vibhuti.

Sweet Mother, here I do not understand this: “But something of her ways can be seen and felt through her embodiments and the more seizable because more defined and limited temperament and action of the goddess forms in whom she consents to be manifest to her creatures.”

This means, you see, that precisely there are different qualities, different ways of being which manifest in different forms and that each of these forms is one of the godheads whom men have worshipped and whom they understand because of the limitations. When something is limited it is more easily understandable for man than when it is unlimited, for man has a limited nature and he naturally understands what is limited. And so, to be comprehensible, things must be divided and limited. Otherwise the Power in its essence, which is indivisible and unlimited, is absolutely above human comprehension — for man as he now is, in his present state.

What is “the triple world of the Ignorance”?

“The triple world...”?

“...of the Ignorance”.

The Ignorance?

Matter, life and mind; that is, the physical, the vital and the mental, the triple world of the Ignorance.

What do Mahasaraswati and Mahalakshmi look like?

What?

11 August 1954

What do they look like?

My child, you must see them.¹ When you see them you will know... The aspect is different in each case, according to the people to whom she shows herself, according to the work she does... not the one seen in this body.

Are the images we see of Mahasaraswati true?

Oh, Lord! (*Laughter*) When a very small child tries to make someone's portrait, does it resemble that person? It is very much like this, sometimes worse! Because the child is frank and sincere, whereas the one who makes the images of the gods is full of fixed notions and preconceived ideas, or else of all that others have said about the subject and of what has been written in the scriptures and what has been seen by people. And so he is bound by all that. *At times, from time to time*, there are artists who have an inner vision, a great aspiration, a great purity of soul and of vision, who have made things which are reasonably good. But this is extremely rare. And generally, I believe it is almost the opposite.

I have seen some of these forms in the vital and mental worlds, which were truly human creations. There is a force from beyond which manifests. But in these triple worlds of falsehood, truly man has created God in his own image—more or less—and there are beings which manifest in forms which are the result of the formative thought of man. And here, you see, it is truly frightful! I have seen some of these formations... (*silence*) and all this is so obscure, so incomprehensible, inexpressive....

Some of the gods are more ill-treated than others. For example, that poor Mahakali, you know, what things are done to her!... It is so *frightful*, it is unimaginable! But this form lives

¹ Mother having spoken very softly here, some words of this passage have not been clearly recorded. We have left the sentences unfinished, as they were transcribed.

Questions and Answers

only in a very low world... yes, in the lowest vital; and what it possesses of the original being is something... a reflection so remote from the origin that it is unrecognisable. However, usually, it is this that is attracted by human consciousness. And when an idol is made, you see, and the priest brings down a form — when the ceremony takes place in a regular manner, he puts himself in an inner state of invocation and tries to bring down a form or an emanation of the godhead into the idol in order to give it a power — if the priest is truly a man with a power of invocation, he can succeed. But usually — there are exceptions to everything — but usually these people have been educated in the common ideas according to tradition. And so, when they think of the godhead whom they are invoking, they think of all the attributes and appearances that have been given to it, and the invocation is usually addressed to entities of the vital world or at best to those of the mental world, but not to the Being itself. And it is these small entities which manifest in one idol or another. All these idols in small temples or even in families — some people have their little shrines, you know, in their homes and keep an image of the godhead they worship — these entities manifest in them; sometimes the consequences are rather unfortunate, for these forms are precisely so remote from the original godhead that... they are awkward formations. Some of those Kalis they worship in certain families are veritable monsters!

I can tell you, believe me, that I have advised some people to take the statue and throw it in the Ganges in order to get rid of a thoroughly disastrous influence. In fact, this has succeeded very well.... Some of these are... unlucky presences. But this is man's own fault. It is not the fault of the godheads. It would be wrong to put the blame on the godheads. It is man's fault. He wants to fashion the gods in his own image. Some who are wicked make them still more autocratic; and those who are nice make them still more nice; that is, men have magnified their own defects a little more.

11 August 1954

How can human thought create forms?

In the mental world human thought is constantly creating forms. Human thought is very creative in the mental world. All the time when you are thinking, you are creating forms and you send them out in the atmosphere and they go and do their work. Constantly you are surrounded by a heap of small formations.

Naturally, there are people who can't even think clearly. So they form nothing at all except faint eddies. But people who think clearly are surrounded by a heap of little forms which, sometimes, go out to do some work in others; and when one thinks of them again, they return.

And we have instances of people who are troubled by their own formations, which return constantly as though to take possession of them, and which they can't get rid of because they don't know how to undo the formations they have made. There are more cases of this kind than one would think. When they have made a particularly strong formation — for themselves, you see, relatively — this formation is always tied up with the one who makes it and returns to knock at the brain to receive forces and ends up by truly acting as a necessity. It is a whole world to know; one truly lives in ignorance, one has powers one doesn't know about, so naturally one uses them very badly. One uses them somewhat unconsciously and very badly.

I don't know if you have ever heard of Madame David-Neel who went to Tibet and has written books on Tibet, and who was a Buddhist; and Buddhists — Buddhists of the strictest tradition — do not believe in the Divine, do not believe in his Eternity and do not believe in gods who are truly divine, but they know admirably how to use the mental domain; and Buddhist discipline makes you a good master of the mental instrument and mental domain.

We used to discuss many things and once she told me: "Listen, I made an experiment." (She had studied a bit of theosophy also.) She said: "I formed a *mahatma*; with my thought I formed

Questions and Answers

a *mahatma*.” And she knew (this has been proved) that at a given moment mental formations acquire a personal life independent of the fashioner — though they are linked with him — but independent, in the sense that they can have their own will. And so she told me: “Just imagine, I had made my *mahatma* so well that he became a personality independent of me and constantly came to trouble me! He used to come, scold me for one thing, give me advice for another, and he wanted to direct my life; and I could not succeed in getting rid of him. It was extremely difficult, and I didn’t know what to do!”

So I asked her how she had tried. She told me how. She said, “He troubles me a lot, my *mahatma* is very troublesome. He does not leave me in peace. He disturbs my meditations, he hinders me from working; and yet I know quite well that it is I who created him, and I can’t get rid of him!” Then I said, “That’s because you don’t have the ‘trick’....” (*Mother laughs*) And I explained to her what she should do. And the next day — I used to see her almost every day in those days, you see — the next day she came and told me, “Ah, I am freed from my *mahatma*!” (*Laughter*) She had not *cut* the connection because that’s of no use. One must know how to *reabsorb* one’s creation, that is the only way. To swallow up again one’s formations.

But, you see, in a smaller measure and less perfectly one is making formations all the time. When, for instance, one thinks of somebody quite powerfully, there is a small emanation of mental substance which, instantaneously, goes to this person, you understand, a vibration of your thought which goes and touches his; and if he is receptive, he sees you. He sees you and tells you, “You came last night to see me!” That’s because you made a small formation and this formation went and did its work, which was to put you into contact with this person or else to carry a message if you had something special to tell him; and that was done. This happens constantly, but as it is quite a constant and spontaneous phenomenon and done in ignorance, one is not even aware that one does this, one does it automatically.

11 August 1954

People who have desires add to the mental formation a kind of small envelope, a vital shell which gives it a still greater reality. These people are usually surrounded by a number of tiny entities which are their own formations, their own mental formations clothed with vital force, which come all the time to strike them to try to make them realise materially the formations they have made.

You have perhaps read the books of Maurice Magre; there are some in the library. He describes this; he had come here, Maurice Magre, and we spoke and he told me that he had always noticed — he was highly sensitive — he had always noticed that people who have sexual desires are surrounded by a kind of small swarm of entities who are somewhat viscous and rather ugly and which torment them constantly, awakening desire in them. He said he had seen this around certain people. It was like being surrounded by a swarm of mosquitoes, yes! But it is more gross, and much uglier still, and it is viscous, it is horrible, and it turns round and round the person and gives him no peace, and it awakens in him the desire that has formed these entities and they batten on it. It is their food. This is absolutely true. His observation was quite correct. His vision was very true. *It is like that.*

But everyone carries around himself the atmosphere of his own desires. So you don't at all require that people should tell you anything; you have only to look and you see around them exactly the state they are in. They may want to give themselves the airs of angels or saints but they can't deceive you, because that thing is there, turning around them. So, just imagine! (*Mother points to all those seated in front of her.*) You see what you are like, how many of you there, all of you here, and each one has his own little world in this way, of mental formations of which some are clothed in vital substance, and all these crawl together, mix with each other, knock against each other. There is a struggle to see which is the strongest, which tries to realise itself, and all this creates an atmosphere indeed!...

Questions and Answers

When we come before you what do these things do?

When you come to me, it is all this I see. It is exactly this I see, and that is why your coming is useful. Because, to give you a flower is of course very nice, but that's not anything much... there are things more important than that. But every time I see you, in a second — a flash is enough, a second — each one who comes appears with all his formations, and then I do just... I do just this... (*gesture*). The flower is an excuse, through the flower I give something.

And then, when sometimes, you know, I seem to go deep within, my eyes close, and then very slowly either I give something or I don't move for a moment — that's when the work to be done is urgent. Sometimes it is necessary to intervene for one reason or another, to help or to demolish something, or to push you towards some progress which is beginning, or other things like that.... So I just catch hold of your hand sometimes, you see: "Don't move!" So the person thinks: "Mother has gone into a trance." I feel quite amused.... (*Laughter*) I am busy working, putting things in order; sometimes I am obliged to perform a surgical operation, I take away certain things which are there and should not be there. A second is enough, you see, I don't need any time for this; sometimes the work takes a little longer, a few more seconds, a minute.... Otherwise, usually — in a general way — when things are as we would say "normal", it is enough just to see, you understand, and... the response? I give the flower... even without the flower, like this... simply I put just the little flash or sometimes the little red-hot iron, or a light, anything, and just at the right moment and the right place where it is needed... and "*Au revoir*"!

Mother, aren't these entities afraid of you?

Ah, my child, terribly afraid! (*Laughter*) All those which are ill-willed try to hide, and usually do you know what they do? They

11 August 1954

gather together behind the head of the one who comes (*laughter*) in order not to be seen. But this is useless, because, just think, I have the capacity to see through. (*Laughter*) Otherwise — they always do this, instinctively. When they can manage to get in, they try to get in. But then... I intervene with greater force, because that is nasty. These are people who have the instinct to hide, you see. So I pursue them, there inside. With others very little is needed, very little; but there are some — there are such people, you know, they themselves have told me — when they are about to come to me, it is as though there were something which pulled them back, which told them: “No, no, no, it’s not worthwhile, why go there? There are so many people for Mother to see, why add one more?” And they draw back, like that, so that they don’t come. So I always tell them what it is: “It would be better not to listen to that, for it’s not something with a very good conscience.” Some people cannot bear it. There have been instances like this, of people who were obliged to run away, because they themselves were too attached to their own formations and did not want to get rid of them. Naturally there is only one way, to run away!

There we are!

We shall stop now for today.

18 August 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 6 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, I didn't understand this: "This is the power of Mahalakshmi and there is no aspect of the Divine Shakti more attractive to the heart of embodied beings."

That means men. It is another way of saying human beings upon the earth, beings upon earth. There are also... it means animals also. She is very, very loving towards animals and animals love her very much; even the most ferocious ones become very gentle with her, and that is why instead of using the words "human beings", he has used "embodied beings", beings with a body upon earth.

(Silence)

Questions?

Sweet Mother, I did not understand: "She throws the spell of the intoxicating sweetness of the Divine...."

Did not understand? Because you don't have a poetic mind, so... It is a poetic image to express... You must not understand these things with a positivist mind; you must have a little feeling for the harmony of words and phrases.

"Maheshwari lays down the large lines of the world-forces...." What does this mean: "the large lines of the world-forces"?

18 August 1954

It means that she makes the plan of what the world ought to be. So she lays down the large lines of the plan, of what the world should be, of the universe. She has a vision of the whole, a global creation; instead of seeing the details she sees the totality of things, she lays down the large lines of the plan, and what the creation should be like, towards what it ought to advance, and then what the results will be. She has a universal vision, she is less concerned with the details than with the whole.

“All the work of the other Powers leans on her [Mahasaraswati] for its completeness...”

Mahasaraswati. Yes, because she is... (*silence*) precisely the goddess of perfection. For her everything must be done down to the last detail, and done in an absolutely perfect way. And she wants, she insists that it should be done physically, totally, materially, that it should not remain in the air, you see, like a mental or vital action, but that it should be a physical realisation in all its details, and all the details be perfect, that nothing be neglected. So all that the others undertake in the other domains she concretises and brings to its material perfection.

I have a question from the last lesson. Here Sri Aurobindo has written: “All the scenes of the earth-play have been like a drama arranged and planned and staged by her [the Mother as the Mahashakti] with the cosmic Gods for her assistants and herself as a veiled actor.” So this means that everything that happens here has already been staged on a higher plane. So everything is predestined Mother. Then there is no free-will?

It is not like that. It is put like that and it is one particular way of seeing things. But in fact, it is... (*After a silence*) It could be said with as much exactness, that at each moment the entire universe is recreated, and both are equally true.

Questions and Answers

(*Long silence*)

If we take the world as it is, like a chemical compound of a certain nature, with all the inevitable consequences resulting from the composition of this body, and if we think that in this composition there can enter at any moment a new element, it will necessarily change the composition of the whole, you understand? Well, it is something like that, on a greater and more complicated scale; but it is something like that.

The universe is a mass of elements which form a certain compound, and in accordance with this compound all things are organised — as in an internal organisation, you see (*Mother makes a movement as of holding a globe between her hands*), quite strictly. But this is not a culmination; it is something in the course of construction. And at any moment at all, through a certain kind of action, one or several new elements may be introduced into the whole, and *immediately* necessarily, all the internal combinations change. Well, the universe is something like that.

I am speaking of the material universe. The material universe is a concretisation of a certain aspect, a certain emanation of the Supreme. But this concretisation is progressive — and not necessarily constant, not necessarily regular, but answering to a much more subtle law of freedom.

In this compound new elements penetrate and change the whole organisation. So, this organisation which was in itself perfect and unfolding itself according to its own law, is almost suddenly changed and all the internal relations become different. So this gives the impression of something either incoherent or unexpected or of a miracle according to how one looks at the problem. And this makes for two concomitant things: a determinism which would be absolute in itself if there were not this freedom, absolute also, of the unexpected and additional in the universe. I don't know if you have followed, but I have tried to express that.

But how is this addition made?

Eh, this addition?...

This addition of a new element...

Yes. By the aspiration of the supreme Consciousness.

The aspiration of the supreme Consciousness?

Yes. It is at work in this world and, working in this world, for the necessity of the work, it works for a certain end, you see, to bring the darkened consciousness back to its normal state of divine consciousness. And each time in its work it meets with a new obstacle, a new thing to conquer or transform, it calls to a new Force. (*Mother opens her hand.*) And this new Force is like a new creation. And so, as everything has its correspondence, it may be said in the same way that each being has in its different domains — a human being — it has in its different domains a destiny which is, so to speak, *absolute*. But it has also the capacity, through aspiration, to enter into contact with a higher domain and introduce the action of this higher domain in these more material determinisms. And there it is still the same thing; these two things combined: a determinism which we could call “horizontal” (to make it understandable) in each domain, which is absolute, and the intervention of other domains or a much higher domain, in that determinism, which changes it completely. So, everyone *at the same time* is a set of determinisms which seem quite absolute, and has a total freedom to bring in the intervention of states of being or states of consciousness or forces of a higher domain; and calling these forces and bringing them into the external determinisms alters everything completely. And it is only thus that things can give the impression of the unexpected, the unknown and of freedom.

Questions and Answers

Mother is this what we call “Grace”?

(After a silence) From a certain point of view, yes. That is, without the Grace this could not happen. *(Silence)* But it is not... unless one brings everything back to the Grace. There is certainly a state of consciousness and a vision of things which make you refer everything back to the Grace and finish by discovering that it alone exists, and that it alone does everything. But unless one goes to this extreme, before this, one can very well imagine that there is an element of personal aspiration in the being and that the Grace answers. That’s a way of speaking. The other one also is a way of speaking. The thing is more subtle than that, more unseizable. It is very difficult to express these things in words, because, necessarily, it takes on a mental rigidity and there is a whole part of reality which disappears. But if one has the experience, one understands very well. The conclusion: one must have the experience.

Sweet Mother, what is a “divine disgust”?

Ah, my child! *(Silence)* It is a disgust that is full of a total compassion.

It is something that takes upon itself the bad vibration in order to cure others of it. The consequences... *(silence)* of a wrong and low movement — instead of throwing it back with cold justice upon the one who has committed the mistake, it absorbs it, in order to transform it within itself, and diminishes as far as possible the material consequences of the fault committed. I believe that the old story about Shiva who had a black stain on his neck because he had swallowed all that was bad in the world, is an imaginative way of expressing this divine disgust. It made a black stain on his neck.

Mother, when the Divine takes upon Himself human suffering...

Yes...

... does this suffering have the same effect upon Him as upon us? That is, does He feel pain and sorrow as we feel them?

No! I can say, *No!* For, obviously there is an essential difference between a state of ignorance and a state of knowledge. Something painful happens to you, let us say; and in the ignorance this painful thing takes on a particular quality. But if you receive this painful thing in a state of knowledge, it does not have the same effect. Let us take even a material thing, say, a very material blow, a good blow like this (*gesture*). Well, when one is in the ordinary human state of ignorance the blow has its full effect. It depends exclusively on its violence, on what has given the blow and who has received it, you see. But if the same blow is given in the same way and by the same thing to a being who has knowledge instead of ignorance, *instantaneously* the reaction of the body will be such as to make the consequences... reduce the consequences to the minimum. And this is a concrete fact! This can go to the extent of even annulling the consequences altogether sometimes. It can go as far as that; that is, it can abolish the consequences, because the reaction is one of knowledge, instead of being a reaction of ignorance. So one cannot say that it is the same thing.

In moral things this is quite obvious, you see, because instead of receiving an emotional shock, for instance, with all the egoistic blindness of ordinary emotion, one objectivises, sees what it is, sees the combination in the vibration; and instantly one throws upon it light, knowledge and truth, and all things are put back in their place. That happens *instantaneously*. But I insist that even on the most material body, and in the most material way, the effect is not the same. Besides, it is very simple to understand, for if the effect were the same, it would have no happy consequence of any kind for the Divine to take upon Himself bad things! Because they would remain just what they are, and the

Questions and Answers

universe would continue to be what it is. It is because He has the power of transforming these obscure vibrations into vibrations of light that He can take everything upon Himself. Otherwise, not only would this be useless, but it would be impossible, it would be an absurdity.

It is the material blow one receives...

Eh?

“Knowledge” means what, here?

“Knowledge” means what? If you have knowledge — the internal knowledge of the cells, of their existence, their composition, of the results of the blow, that is, the effect of the blow on the cells, and if at the same time you have the knowledge of what these cells ought to be and how they ought to react to the blow they receive, instead of a process like that of physical nature, which takes hours or days or months to mend something that is damaged, you can do it immediately. And, in fact, this is what happens!

(After a silence) It is all a... it is a description of a very tiny part of the action. For when the action is integral and perfect, to this purely material knowledge there is added an internal knowledge, and a power to bring into play forces like the supramental forces, which can do instantaneously what takes in the material world a fairly long time, you see. There too, when one succeeds in bringing in not only the material knowledge which allows you to put things in their place as quickly as possible but also in making a supramental power and knowledge intervene, so that the force of truth can be projected upon the place — in such a way that everything is put under the influence of this force, and that things, elements, the cells and everything, everything constituting them, all become receptive to this supramental power and the organisation is made according to a law of truth — then

18 August 1954

this may be even an opportunity not only of curing the effects of the blow, repairing the damage caused by the accident, but of making great progress in the general consciousness — and on the particular point also — a great progress in the receptivity of forces, in adaptation to these forces, in response to their influence.

This is how something bad can be turned into something very good, when one has the power. It is an unlimited power, this, in the sense that if one has made a mistake and done something serious, if one has the power to bring this truth-consciousness, this supramental force, and let it act, it is an occasion for a tremendous progress. (*Silence*) Which means that one should never feel discouraged; or even if one has made mistakes many a time, one must keep the will not to make them any longer, and be sure that one day or another one will triumph over the difficulty if one persists in one's will.

There we are!

Sweet Mother, why is Mahasaraswati the youngest of the four?

Because her work came last; so she came last. (*Silence*) It is in this order that they manifested, in the order given here. These aspects are like the attributes of the Mother, which manifested in succession according to the necessities of the work; and the necessity of perfection was the last, so she is the youngest.

But these four are independent of one another?

To a certain extent, but not totally. It is always the same thing. There is an independence which at times seems to be total, and at the same time a very close link and even one which is, so to say, absolute. The central consciousness, that is to say, here in the material world, is the Mahashakti, you know. Well, she always has the power to control the action of these different

Questions and Answers

aspects — though they are quite independent and act according to their own aspirations. And yet she can control them, in the sense that if...

Take, for example, the instance of Kali. If Kali decides that she is going to intervene and the Mahashakti, who has naturally a much more total and general vision of things, sees that the moment for intervention is not opportune or that it is too soon, well, she can very easily put a pressure upon Mahakali and tell her, “Keep quiet.” And the other is obliged to keep quiet; and yet she acts quite independently.

But why doesn't she let Mahakali act? For here he says that if Mahakali intervenes what would have taken centuries can take place now.

I say it is for this that Mahakali is there and does her work. But Mahakali has a particular way of seeing the work; and when one has the total vision, one can see that this, you know... She sees only her side of the work, and when one sees the whole, one may say, “Ah, no, this is not quite the time!” (*Silence*)

Ah! I think it is time to stop.

Last time you said that Madame David-Neel did not know how to swallow up her creation and that you taught her the “trick” of doing it.

(Pavitra repeating aloud) *Madame David-Neel did not know how to swallow up her creation...*

Ah, yes, and so?... You want me to give you the trick? (*Laughter*) First wait till you know how to make these creations and I shall give you the “trick” afterwards! (*Laughter*)

25 August 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 6 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

“There are other great Personalities of the Divine Mother, but they were more difficult to bring down and have not stood out in front with so much prominence in the evolution of the earth-spirit. There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation, — most of all one who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda which flows from a supreme divine Love, the Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secrecies the work of all the other Powers of the universe.”

Sweet Mother, what Personality is this and when will she manifest?

I have prepared my answer. I knew someone would ask me that, because of all things this is the most interesting in this passage, and I have prepared my answer. I have prepared my answer to this and my answer to another question also. But first I am going to read this one.

You asked: “What personality is this and when will she come?” (*Silence*) And this is my reply:

“She has come, bringing with her a splendour of power and love, an intensity of divine joy unknown to the earth so far.

The physical atmosphere was completely changed by it, saturated with new and marvellous possibilities.

Questions and Answers

But for her to be able to settle and act down here, she needed to meet with at least a minimum of receptivity, to find at least one human being having the requisite qualities in the vital and physical nature, a kind of super-Parsifal endowed with a spontaneous and integral purity, but at the same time having a strong and balanced body in order to bear the intensity of the Ananda she had brought without giving way.

Till now she has not obtained what was necessary. Men obstinately remain men and do not want to or cannot become supermen. They can only receive and express a love cut to their measure — a human love! And the marvellous joy of the divine Ananda escapes their perception.

So, at times, she thinks of withdrawing, finding that the world is not ready to receive her. And this would be a cruel loss. It is true that for the moment her presence is more nominal than active, for she does not have the opportunity to manifest herself. But even so, she is a powerful help in the Work. For, of all the aspects of the Mother, this is the one which has the greatest power for the transformation of the body. Indeed, the cells which are able to vibrate to the contact of divine joy, to receive and preserve it, are regenerated cells on the way to becoming immortal. But the vibrations of divine joy and those of pleasure cannot lodge together in the same vital and physical system. So one must have *totally* renounced experiencing all pleasure in order to be in a state to receive the Ananda. But very few are those who can renounce pleasure without, by the very fact, renouncing all participation in active life and plunging into a rigorous asceticism. And among those who know that it is in active life that the transformation must take place, some try to see pleasure as a more or less warped form of Ananda, and thus justify in themselves the quest for personal satisfaction, creating in themselves an almost insuperable obstacle to their own transformation.”

25 August 1954

Shall we stop here? We shall finish next time. That will give me time to find out.

There, then. Now, if you want to ask something... (*Long silence*) Speak!

Whoever wants to say something may speak... anybody who wants to say something, not only the students.

If one has not succeeded, Mother, one can try?

What?

If one hasn't succeeded so far, one can try?

Oh, one can always try.... The world is recreated at every moment. You can recreate a new world this very moment if you know how to create it, that is, if you are capable of changing your nature.

I have not said that she has gone away. I said that she thinks of going away, sometimes, from time to time.

But, Mother, she came down because she must have seen some possibility!

Eh?

She came down because there was a possibility, because things had come to a certain stage and the time had come when she could descend.

In fact she came down because I thought it was possible that... she could succeed. (*Silence*) There are always possibilities, only... they must materialise. You see, a proof of what I told you is that it happened at a given moment and during... for two or three weeks, the atmosphere, not only of the Ashram but of the earth, was surcharged with such power, precisely, with so intense a divine joy, which creates so wonderful a power that things which were difficult to do before could be

Questions and Answers

done almost instantaneously! There were repercussions in the whole world. I don't think there was one among you who was aware of it. You couldn't even tell me when it happened, could you?

When did it happen? (Laughter)

I don't know the dates. I don't know. I don't remember dates. I could tell you approximately, like that... *(Silence)* Perhaps if I consult my papers I would find the dates. But I don't know the dates. These, for me, are things which... All I know is that it happened before Sri Aurobindo left the body, that he had been told beforehand and recognised the fact...

(Silence)

There was a terrible fight with the inconscient; for, as I saw that the receptivity was not what it ought to be, I put the responsibility for it on the inconscient and it was there that I tried to give battle. I don't say that this had no result, but between the result obtained and the result hoped for, there was a great difference.

But I tell you this, you see... you are all so close, you bathe in the atmosphere, but... who was aware of anything? You continued to live your little life as usual, didn't you?

(Silence)

I think it was in 1946, Mother, for you told us so many things at that time!

Right!

25 August 1954

(Long silence)

Sweet Mother, now that she has come, what should we do?

Eh?

What should we do?

You do not know? You... *(Silence)* Try to change your consciousness.

(Long silence)

There! Now ask the questions you wanted to ask me... *(Turning to a child)* Nothing to say?

Mother, there isn't even a single person?

Eh?

There isn't even a single person?

I don't know!

So you waste your time with all these people in the Ashram now?

Oh, but you see, from the occult point of view, it is a selection! From the external point of view you may tell me that there are people in the world who are much superior to you, I won't contradict you. But from the occult point of view it is a selection. There are here... one can say without being mistaken that most of the young people who are here have come because they have been promised that they will be here at the time of

Questions and Answers

the Realisation. They do not remember this. (*Mother laughs.*) I have already said quite often that when one comes down upon earth one falls headlong and this stuns one. (*Laughter*) It's a pity. But still, one can get out of this stupefaction, can't one? What is necessary is to enter into oneself, find the immortal consciousness within, and then one becomes very keenly aware, one can remember very clearly the circumstances in which one aspired to be here when the Work is accomplished. But after all, to tell the truth, I think you have such an easy life that you don't take much trouble!... Are there many among you who really feel *an intense need* to find your psychic being, to know what you really are, what you have to do, why you are here? One just goes on living or even complains when things are not too easy. And then one takes things as they come, and sometimes, if some aspiration arises and one meets a difficulty in oneself, one says, "Oh, Mother is there, she will manage this for me", and then thinks of something else!

But Mother, formerly you were very strict in the Ashram; now you are not, why?

Yes. I have always said this: that happened since we were obliged to admit little children. You can't imagine an ascetic life with little children of this height! (*Gesture*) It is not possible. That was the gift of the war! When people found out that Pondicherry was the safest place on earth, naturally... when people came with a flock of babies, and asked if they could find shelter, as they could not be sent back, well!... That's how it happened, not otherwise.

At the beginning, first of all, the first condition was that one no longer had anything to do with one's family; if a man was married, he had to forget completely from that very moment that he had a wife and children, to cut off all relationship; he had nothing to do with them. And if ever a woman asked to come because her husband was here, she was told, "You have no business here."

25 August 1954

At the beginning we were very, very, very strict. For a long time the first condition was this: "You have no longer anything to do with your family." Well, we are now far from that, aren't we? And I tell you it was only in this way that it happened. It doesn't mean that we didn't see that it was necessary; it was a very necessary condition. So long as one keeps all the ties which bind one to life, you understand, which make you a slave of the ordinary life, how can you belong only to the Divine? That's childishness, it is not possible! But if you take the trouble to read the first rules of the Ashram, even friendship among people was considered dangerous and not very desirable. We had tried to create an atmosphere where only one thing counted, the divine life. But as I said, you know, little by little... it has changed.

This has one advantage. We were too much outside life. Many problems did not occur which, when the full manifestation is wanted, would suddenly appear. We have taken up the problems a little too soon. But it was necessary to solve them. One learns many things in this way. Many difficulties are overcome. But it becomes more complicated. And perhaps, in the present conditions, with such a large number of elements which don't have the least idea of the purpose for which they are here... it asks much more effort from the disciples than before.

Formerly, you see, we began with thirty-five, thirty-six; but even till a hundred and fifty, even till a hundred and fifty it was so much as though... they were as though held in an egg-shell in my consciousness, so close, you know, that I could direct all their movements, both inner and outer, all the time, everything was under complete control, at every moment, night and day. And naturally, I believe, in those days they made some progress. It was altogether true that I did the sadhana for them, *all the time!* But then, you see, with this invasion, one can't do sadhana for little chits of three or four or five, you understand. It is out of the question; all I can do is to put the consciousness

Questions and Answers

upon them and try to see that they grow up in the best possible conditions.

So, this has an advantage. It is that instead of being so totally and passively dependent, each one must make his own little effort and, truly speaking, this is excellent!

I don't remember now to whom I said today — I think it was a “birthday” person.... No, I don't know... it was someone who told me he was eighteen.

It is Jaya.

Yes, I know it is her birthday today. But I don't know if it was to her I said it. I said it to someone this morning.

I said that between the age of eighteen and twenty I had attained a conscious and constant union with the divine Presence and that I had done it *all alone*, with *absolutely nobody* to help me, not even books, you understand! When I found one — there came to my hands a little later Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* — it seemed to me so wonderful a thing, you see, that someone could explain something to me. This made me gain in a few months what would have perhaps taken me years to do.

I met a man. I was perhaps twenty-one then, I think, either twenty or twenty-one. I met a man who was an Indian, who came from here, and he spoke to me about the Gita. There was a translation, which, by the way, was quite bad, and he advised me to read it and gave me the key — his key, it was his key — he told me: “Read the Gita, this translation of the Gita which is not up to much, but still that's the only one in French.” At that time I wouldn't have been able to understand anything in any other language. Besides, the English translations were as bad and I did not have... Sri Aurobindo had not yet written his.

He said, “Read the Gita, and take Krishna as the symbol of the immanent God, the inner Godhead.” This was all that he told me. He said to me, “Read it with that — the knowledge that Krishna represents the immanent God in the Gita, the God

25 August 1954

who is within you.” Well, in one month the whole work was done!

Now you, just see, you have been here since your very childhood, some of you, everything has been explained to you, the whole work has almost been chewed up for you, you have been — not only with words but with psychic aids, with all kinds of... in all possible ways — you have been put on the path to this inner discovery, and still you let yourselves live, like that... (*gesture*) it will come when it comes... if you think about it at all!

There, then. But this does not at all discourage me. Why, I find it... quite amusing. Only, there are other things which I find much more serious. That is when you try to deceive yourselves.... That indeed is not nice. You must not take one thing for another. As it is said, you must call a spade a spade, and human instinct human instinct, and not speak to me about divine things when they are purely human. There! You must not pretend to have supramental experiences when you are living in an altogether ordinary consciousness.

So here we are. If you see yourself face to face and know what you are like, and if by chance you make up your mind...

I am even astonished that you don't feel an intense need for it: “How can one know?” For you know — you have been told, told repeatedly, it has been dinned into your ears — you know that you have a divine consciousness within you, and you can sleep night after night and play day after day and learn day after day, and not have the enthusiasm and intense will to enter into contact with yourself, yes, with yourself, here within!... (*Mother points to the centre of her chest.*) This, this indeed, is beyond me!

The first time I knew — and nobody told me this, I knew it by experience — the first time I knew that there was a discovery to make within me, well, that was *the most important* thing. This had to be put before everything. And when I found, as I said, a book, a man, just to give me a little indication, to tell me, “Here you are. If you do this the path will open before you”,

Questions and Answers

why, I rushed headlong like a... like a cyclone, and nothing could have stopped me.

And how many years you have been here, half asleep! You think about it, of course, from time to time, especially when I speak to you about it; at times when you read. But that ardour, that will which conquers all obstacles, that concentration which overcomes *everything!*

Who asked me just now what you should do?

I.

Well, this is what you should do, my child. I have just told you.

Sweet Mother, how can we be plastic to your touch?

I can't hear!

How can we become plastic to your touch?

Oh, plastic? When you are full of goodwill, when you know that you know nothing, that you have everything to learn, then you begin to become a little plastic and when there is a force which puts a pressure, you answer.

But, you see, the description here... you have only to take the book and re-read the last description, that's all. It is a very exact picture of the condition people are in. That's on the last page... the description of the physical, the description of the mind, of the vital, all that is here; besides, he gives it *very* often, doesn't he? (*Long silence. Mother takes the book and looks for the paragraph.*) Here it is, in this paragraph: "But be on your guard and do not try to understand and judge the Divine Mother by your little earthly mind that loves to subject even the things that are beyond it to its own norms and standards, its narrow reasonings and erring impressions, its bottomless aggressive ignorance and its petty self-confident knowledge." This you may

25 August 1954

re-read from time to time, it will bring you back to your good sense.

There we are. Is that all? Nothing more to ask? Nobody has anything to ask? Whoever wants to speak this evening may do so. (*To a child*) You have nothing to say? Nor you? No one? Nobody is saying a word!

Doesn't ascetic discipline help us to overcome attachment?

No, it inflates and strengthens your pride.

But you said, "Renounce pleasure." Then...

Renounce pleasure... but it isn't through an ascetic discipline that one renounces pleasure! It is through an inner illumination and a kind of sublimation of the being which makes you feel all that is gross and obscure and unpleasant in pleasure.

If we are living in gross pleasures, how should we overcome them?

But you are not living exclusively in gross pleasure; otherwise, I suppose you wouldn't be here.

But everything is pleasure, isn't it? Pleasure, that means... pleasure. We live comfortably, we eat, etc. All that, isn't that pleasure?

(*Surprised*) You do all that for pleasure? (*Laughter*) That's perhaps your conception, I have nothing to tell you. If you can't feel the difference between something that aspires to a higher life and something which finds itself altogether comfortable in the ordinary life, well, I cannot help you. You must first have found that in yourself.

Questions and Answers

But doesn't some outer discipline help?

If you impose a discipline upon yourself and if it isn't too stupid, it may help you. A discipline, I tell you — disciplines, tapasyas, all ascetic disciplines are, as ordinarily practised, the best means of making you proud, of building up in you such a terrific pride that never, never will you be converted. It will have to be broken down with hammer-strokes.

The first condition is a healthy humility which makes you realise that unless you are sustained, nourished, helped, enlightened, guided by the Divine, you are *nothing at all*. There now. When you have felt that, not only understood it with your mind, but felt it down to your very body, then you will begin to be wise, but not before.

What is that other thing, Mother, that you have written?

I thought someone would ask me, “Why doesn't she stay because of you, since she has come at your call; why doesn't she stay because of you?” But I have not been asked this.

Tell us, Mother!

For her this body is only one instrument among so many others in the eternity of times to come, not having for her any other importance than what is given to it by the earth and men and the measure in which it can serve as an intermediary to help in her manifestation and in her diffusion.

If I am surrounded by people who cannot receive her, I am useless — for her. This is very clear. So it is not that which will make her stay; and it is certainly not for any selfish reason that I can ask her to stay. And then, all those aspects, all those personalities constantly manifest, but never manifest for personal reasons. Not a single one among them has ever thought of helping my body and I do not ask them, for they do not come

25 August 1954

for that. But it is obvious that if I had around me receptivity and they could constantly manifest because there were people capable of receiving, this would help my body enormously. For, you see, all the vibrations would go through my body, and that would help it. But she has no opportunity to manifest, she has no chance. She only meets people who don't even feel that she is here, they are not even aware of it. It makes no difference at all to them! So, how could she manifest?

And I am not going to ask her, "If you please, come and change my body." We don't have that kind of relation... and the body itself would not want it. It has never thought of itself, it has never cared for itself. And it is only through work that it can be transformed. Yes, surely, when she came, if there had been a receptivity and if she could have manifested with the power she came with... Even before her arrival... I can tell you one thing, that is, when I began with Sri Aurobindo to descend for the yoga, to descend from the mind into the vital, when we brought down our yoga from the mind into the vital, within one month—I was forty at that time, I didn't look old, I looked younger than forty, but still I was forty—and after a month's yoga I looked exactly eighteen. And someone who had seen me before, who had lived with me in Japan and came here, found it difficult to recognise me. He asked me, "But really, is it you?" I said, "Obviously!"

Only when we descended from the vital into the physical, then it was gone, for in the physical the work is much harder. It was because there were many more things to change. But if a force like that could be manifested and received, it would have a tremendous action! Still, you see, it is... I am speaking about it because I thought you would ask the question... otherwise it is not... I am not in that kind of relation. You see, I mean, you take my body, this poor body; it is quite harmless, it does not at all try to draw either any attention or the forces, nor even to do anything else except its work as well as it can. And that's how it is, you know. Its importance for the work is in proportion to

Questions and Answers

its usefulness and the importance the world gives it, because the action is for this world. In itself it is one body among countless others.

If you could have taken a small decision to feel your psychic, I wouldn't have wasted my time.

That's all. There we are! Now it is over.

8 September 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1. The book is comprised of extracts from letters written in reply to the queries of disciples.

“The forces that stand in the way of sadhana are the forces of the lower mental, vital and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds. These can be dealt with only after the mind and heart have become one-pointed and concentrated in the single aspiration to the Divine.”

So ?...

Sweet Mother, what are the adverse powers of the subtle physical?

What are the adverse forces? There are as many of them as there are elements in the world. Only, unless they express themselves physically, we do not see them. So we are not aware of them. But I told you the other day that the atmosphere is full of countless formations which are usually made up of thoughts, desires, impulses, wills, and which are as mixed as men's thoughts. There are good ones, there are bad ones; and behind that there are all the formations of the vital world, a world *essentially* hostile to the Divine. Only the vital in man, under the psychic influence, can change and become a collaborator in the divine work. Otherwise, the vital world is essentially formed of beings *hostile* to the divine work, and those who open themselves to these forces without any control are naturally under the influence of the adverse forces. So, one can't say what these adverse forces are. It would be easier to say what they are *not*.

Questions and Answers

(*Speaking to the children in the first row*) Do you have a question? You have a question? And you? You?

It is outside the text.

Eh? It is outside the text? It is farther on? That will be for next time. (*Mother continues questioning.*) And you, nothing? Now then, you, you too have nothing to ask?

It comes a little later.

So I have read very little?

Pavitra: *No, Mother!*

I have received complaints because I read *The Mother* through too fast. I have been asked to read more slowly; so I read more slowly.

Sweet Mother, what is meant by “the substance of the mental being”?

My child, the substance means... how shall I put it?... it means the stuff of which the mental being is made. It could be said, for instance, that the cells are the substance of your body. It is not exactly matter, the mind is not quite material, but it is the very thing of which the mind is made. If there were no mental substance, there would be no mental being. It would be only a vibration; and even a vibration needs a medium to manifest itself.

But if your body were not made of material substance, you wouldn't have a body. This is what is called substance. It is the thing of which something is made. And precisely, what is important is that people usually think that mind is just a mode of activity, whereas there is a mental substance as there is a vital

substance and physical substance. And as there is a substance, there is a corresponding world with an autonomous existence, that is to say, there can be a mind without any physical support. The physical body may disappear and the mind can continue to exist. It is here that it is important to understand that there is a mental substance which, obviously, is much more... (*silence*) how to put it?... immaterial than physical matter.

Some people use a rather unclassical word, “rarefied”, but I don’t think it has exactly this sense. Well, you see, we say that substance has different densities, and the more material it becomes, the denser it is, the farther it moves away from matter, the less dense it is. But it is a substance all the same. There is even an etheric substance. I don’t say that this conforms with scientific theories; I don’t guarantee that I am not talking scientific heresies! But this is a *cosmic fact*. (*Mother laughs.*) It is exactly — I think I said this when I spoke about occultism — I said the first thing one must know before being able to practise occultism is that the different states of being have a different density, and they have an individual independent existence of their own, that they are existing realities, that they are truly real substances, that it is not just a way of being. There can be a mental being and mental activity and, for instance, a thought that is completely independent of the brain, whereas the materialistic theories say that it is the brain which creates mental activity. But this is not correct. The brain is the material transcription of the mental activity, and mental activity has its own domain; the mental domain has its reality, its own substance. One can think outside one’s brain, think, act, make formations outside one’s brain. One can even live, move, go from one place to another, have a direct knowledge of mental things in the mental world, in a word, absolutely independent of a body which, indeed, can be in a state of complete inertia, not only asleep but also in a cataleptic state. And moreover, it is quite certain that so long as one has not understood that one is made up of different states of being which have their own independent life, one can’t have a complete

Questions and Answers

control over one's being. There will always be something that escapes you.

(To a child) Do you have something to ask?

It is outside the book.

Eh? Not from the book? If it is interesting it doesn't matter!

*Mother, what is the significance of this abrupt change in the programme?*¹

Oh, but that — it is something altogether personal!

Well, I can tell you: it is different for each one and it is for you to find it out in yourself. And if you find it you will have made some progress....

(Silence)

(To a child) Something to say?

No.

(To another) You, do you have something to ask? No? No! You are dreaming! *(Laughter)* Nobody has a question? *(To another)* You?

When one wants to concentrate, why do all kinds of thoughts come, which never come otherwise?

What did you say?

¹ The reference is to Mother's having stopped the morning "Blessings" which she used to give to the students and to some disciples.

8 September 1954

When one wants to concentrate, why do all kinds of thoughts come which never came before?

Perhaps they came and you did not know it! Perhaps it is because you want to concentrate that you become aware that they are there. It may also happen that there is an element of contradiction in the consciousness and that when you want to be silent, something says, "No, I won't be silent!"

I think that many of you have an inner contradiction like this. When you have resolved to be good, there is something which would like to push you into being wicked, and when you want to be quiet, there is something which pushes you into being agitated, and when you want to be silent, immediately thoughts begin to wander. It is a contradiction inherent in man's nature. It may be this; it may be what I said: that all these thoughts are there but as you were not paying any attention to them, you were not aware of them.

It is quite certain that to create absolute silence is of all things the most difficult, for many things of which one was not aware, become *enormous*! There were all kinds of suggestions, movements, thoughts, formations which went on as though *automatically* in the outer consciousness, almost outside the consciousness, on the frontiers of consciousness; and as soon as one wants to be absolutely silent, one becomes aware of all these things which go on moving, moving, moving and make a lot of noise and prevent you from being silent. That is why it is better to remain very quiet, very calm and at the same time very attentive to something which is above you and to which you aspire, and if there is this kind of noise passing like that around you (*Mother moves her hands around her head*), not to pay attention, not to look, not to heed it. If there are thoughts which go round and round and round like this (*gestures*), which come and go, do not look, do not pay attention, but concentrate upwards in a great aspiration which one may even formulate — because often it helps the concentration — towards the light, the peace,

Questions and Answers

the quietude, towards a kind of inner impassiveness, so that the concentration may be strong enough for you not to attend to all that continues to whirl about all around. But if suddenly you say, “Ah, there’s some noise! Oh, here is a thought!”, then it is finished. You will never succeed in being quiet. Have you never seen those people who try to stop a quarrel by shouting still louder than the ones who are quarrelling? Well, it is something like that. (*Mother laughs.*)

Sweet Mother, may I ask you a question outside the subject?

What question?

In “The Brain of India” Sri Aurobindo has written that the Bengalis can think with their hearts...

Who can think with his heart? I can’t hear! The Bengalis can think with their hearts? That’s a poetic way of saying it. (*Laughter*) Where has he written this? It is indeed a very poetic description. That’s to say that they are essentially emotive beings and that their heart is conscious even in their thought, that their thought is not purely intellectual and dry, and that their heart is aware of their thought. That’s what he meant.

But I can also tell you that when I was in Japan I met a man who had formed a group, for... It can’t be said that it was for sadhana, but for a kind of discipline. He had a theory and it was on this theory that he had founded his group: that one can think in any part of one’s being whatever if one concentrates there. That is to say, instead of thinking in your head, you can think in your chest. And he said that one could think here (*gesture*) in the stomach. He took the stomach as the seat of *prāṇa*, the vital force. He used certain Sanskrit words, you know, half-digested, and all that.... But still, this does not matter, he was full of goodwill and he said that most human miseries come

from the fact that men think in their heads, that this makes the head ache, tires you and takes away your mental clarity. On the other hand, if you learn how to think here (*gesture indicating the stomach*), it gives you power, strength and calmness. And the most remarkable thing is that he had attained a kind of ability to bring down the mental power, the mental force *exactly* here (*gesture*); the mental activity was generated there, and no longer in the head. And he had cured a considerable number of people, considerable, some hundreds, who used to suffer from terrible headaches; he had cured them in this way.

I have tried it, it is quite easy, precisely because, as I told you a while ago, the mental force, mental activity is independent of the brain. We are in the habit of using the brain but we can use something else or rather, concentrate the mental force elsewhere, and have the impression that our mental activity comes from there. One can concentrate one's mental force in the solar plexus, here (*gesture*), and feel the mental activity coming out from there.

That man used to say, "Haven't you noticed that all men who have great power have a big belly? (*Laughter*) — Because they concentrate their forces there, so this makes their stomach big!" He always used to give the example of Napoleon; and he said, "These people stand up quite straight, always straight with their head erect, never like this (*Mother bends the head forward*), never like this (*Mother bends the head to the right*), never like this (*Mother bends the head to the left*); always quite straight up but with all their force here (*pointing to the stomach*), and so this makes them very powerful!" And he always spoke of Napoleon. He used to say, "Napoleon, you see..." (*Mother shows that Napoleon had a big stomach.*) And he had a visit from Tagore when Tagore was in Japan and he told me, "Have you observed how Tagore stands quite upright, like this, with his head erect?" Then I told him, "But he doesn't have a big stomach!" He said to me, "It will come." (*Laughter*)

There were hundreds of people at his meetings. They would

Questions and Answers

all sit on their knees as one does in Japan. He struck a table with a stick and everyone brought down his mental force to the stomach; and then they remained like that for... oh! at least half an hour. And after half an hour he struck the table a second time and they released their mental force and began chatting... not very much, for the Japanese do not chat much, but nevertheless they talk.

There now! But mark that there was something very true, in the sense that 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*), otherwise 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!

Any other question? Yes!

8 September 1954

How can we establish a settled peace and silence in the mind?

First of all, you must want it.

And then you must try and must persevere, keep on trying. What I have just told you is a very good means. Yet there are others also. You sit quietly, to begin with; and then, instead of thinking of fifty things, you begin saying to yourself, "Peace, peace, peace, peace, peace, calm, peace!" You imagine peace and calm. You aspire, ask that it may come: "Peace, peace, calm." And then, when something comes and touches you and acts, say quietly, like this, "Peace, peace, peace." Do not look at the thoughts, do not listen to the thoughts, you understand. You must not pay attention to everything that comes. You know, when someone bothers you a great deal and you want to get rid of him, you don't listen to him, do you? Good! You turn your head away (*gesture*) and think of something else. Well, you must do that: when thoughts come, you must not look at them, must not listen to them, must not pay any attention at all, you must behave as though they did not exist, you see! And then, repeat all the time like a kind of — how shall I put it? — as an idiot does, who repeats the same thing always. Well, you must do the same thing; you must repeat, "Peace, peace, peace." So you try this for a few minutes and then do what you have to do; and then, another time, you begin again; sit down again and then try. Do this on getting up in the morning, do this in the evening when going to bed. You can do this... look, if you want to digest your food properly, you can do this for a few minutes before eating. You can't imagine how much this helps your digestion! Before beginning to eat you sit quietly for a while and say, "Peace, peace, peace!" and *everything* becomes calm. It seems as though all the noises were going far, far, far away (*Mother stretches out her arms on both sides*) and then you must continue; and there comes a time when you no longer need to sit down, and no matter what you are doing, no matter what you are saying, it is

Questions and Answers

always “Peace, peace, peace.” Everything remains here, like this, it does not enter (*gesture in front of the forehead*), it remains like this. And then one is always in a perfect peace... after some years.

But at the beginning, a very small beginning, two or three minutes, it is very simple. For something complicated you must make an effort, and when one makes an effort, one is not quiet. It is difficult to make an effort while remaining quiet. Very simple, very simple, you must be very simple in these things. It is as though you were learning how to call a friend: by dint of being called he comes. Well, make peace and calm your friends and call them: “Come, peace, peace, peace, peace, come!”

Is that all, my children?

Mother, is the seat of understanding in the head?

The faculty of understanding? Is that what you are asking about, whether it is in the head? I have just said the opposite. A few minutes ago I said that all mental faculties are in the mind and it is only by habit that they are in the head. One can understand from any place whatever. One can understand from wherever the seat of the consciousness is.

You say “by habit”. One can’t change it, one is born like that!

Were you thinking when you were born?

It is natural to think with the head. How can one make a habit of it?

It has been a habit for a very long time — the parents of the parents of the parents, and so on — but not for everyone! It is like the habit of looking with the eyes, but it has been proved that it is possible to create centres of vision elsewhere than in

8 September 1954

the eyes — with a little concentration. I don't say that the brain is not made for thinking, I have never told you that, but I said that thought does not depend upon the brain, which is quite a different thing. If one knows how to handle mental forces, one sees clearly that the brain is very suitable for expressing oneself — it has evidently been made for that, for receiving thoughts and putting them into action, into expression, words — but it doesn't need to be exclusive.

(After a silence) I mean that this exclusiveness is a habit. However, when one has done a little yoga seriously, one knows very well that one can think here *(Mother shows the centre of the forehead between the eyebrows, then the right side, then the left)* one can think here, one can think here, one can think in front and, as I was saying just now, one can think much higher up — but naturally, one thinks that all thought-phenomena, concentration, are produced in the brain — and when one thinks up above, here *(Mother shows the space above the head)*, one thinks much better than when one thinks here. It is only that one has never tried to do otherwise. Not “never tried”, there are quite a number of people who have tried and have succeeded.

There you are, my children! I think that's all. It's enough for this evening.

15 September 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm–Peace–Equality".

When one detaches oneself from the thought-mind, does the mind continue to think?

Usually it continues to think, but this does not affect you any longer. It is not exactly "thinking", it is like a market-place, you see. Things come, circulate, turn around, go out, come back, cross, sometimes collide. It is absolutely like a market-place. These things go on like that (*gestures*).

The factory of thoughts is... this does not occur very often. Some people have a particular kind of occupation which lies in giving a particular form to the thought-force that comes from outside. These are usually the people who write, speak, teach, and others... It is quite rare; usually things come and go, come back, return, and if one detaches oneself, one can even look at it all from above as though one were looking at a market-place from the top of a tower. Then all this becomes very amusing. One can even see where thoughts come from, where they go, what they stir up, what the results are.

Mother, what does "vital mind" mean?

Well, you see, naturally these words are used for classification in order to make oneself understood; but truly, each part of the being is itself divided into four. There is a physical mind, a physical vital and a physical physical, and there is even a physical psychic which is behind. Well, there is a vital mind, a vital vital, a vital physical and also a vital psychic which is behind, hidden. And there is a mental mind, a mental vital, and

15 September 1954

a mental physical and a mental psychic which is hidden behind. And each one corresponds to a particular kind of activity, and also to a particular region, a zone of consciousness and being. And these zones or inner dimensions correspond to outer zones and dimensions, universal, or terrestrial if you like, to simplify the problem. There is a mental mind within you, there is a mental mind in the terrestrial atmosphere; and — how shall I put it? — the density of these inner and outer regions is the same, the vibratory mode is identical.

If you enter consciously into your mental mind, you can enter consciously the mental mind of the earth. We have explained this once, haven't we? We made some sort of drawings, didn't we? No, I am not speaking of the globe, I am speaking of... those in which we marked the regions, you know.

Sweet Mother, how can one obtain a mental control of these impulses by a struggle?

All educated people do it. Only the barbarian doesn't do it. This is the very substance of education, you know, for it is understood that if one lives in society — indeed even if one lives quite alone, but still much more so if one lives in society — one cannot do all that his impulses drive him to do. It is altogether impossible, you know. From the time you are quite young, the work of your educators is to teach you to control your impulses and obey only those which are in conformity with the laws under which you live or with the ideal you wish to follow or the customs of the environment in which you are. The value of this mental construction which will govern your impulses depends a great deal on the surroundings in which you live and the character of the parents or people who educate you. But whether it be good or bad, mediocre or excellent, it is always the result of a mental control over the impulses. When your parents tell you, "You should not do this", or when they say, "You have to do that", this is a beginning of education for the mind's control over the impulses.

Questions and Answers

So the man of real merit or the more civilised man has a whole mental construction to which he must conform in order to be in harmony with the ideal of the environment in which he lives. But someone who does not conform at least to the smallest part of this construction would be considered a savage and would be thrown out of the society immediately. In fact, people who are criminals or half-mad are those who obey their impulses without any mental control. There isn't a single person among you who gives way without control to all the impulses that get hold of him. You have only to observe yourselves living, you spend your time saying, "No, this I can't do", or "This I can", or in restraining one movement or encouraging another. This is mental control.

I think it is only the savage who doesn't have it, one who lives in a jungle, you know, who is not in contact with anybody. And yet, even he should control himself, for something will go terribly wrong with him if he doesn't control himself. In his case too the mind must act to prevent him from doing things which will cause him serious trouble. This is the nature of the human being: to have a kind of mental activity in him which governs the rest of his being, more or less. And his level of civilisation depends exactly on the point this control has reached, and naturally, as I said, on the value of the controlling mental construction.

Sweet Mother, is the physical mind the same as the mechanical mind?

Almost. You see, there is just a little difference, but not much. The mechanical mind is still more stupid than the physical mind. The physical mind is what we spoke about one day, that which is never sure of anything.

I told you the story of the closed door, you remember. Well, that is the nature of the physical mind. The mechanical mind is at a lower level still, because it doesn't even listen to the possibility of a convincing reason, and this happens to everyone.

15 September 1954

Usually we don't let it function, but it comes along repeating the same things, absolutely mechanically, without rhyme or reason, just like that. When some craze or other takes hold of it, it goes... For example, you see, if it fancies counting: "One, two, three, four", then it will go on: "One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four." And you may think of all kinds of things, but it goes on: "One, two, three, four", like that... (*Mother laughs.*) Or it catches hold of three words, four words and repeats them and goes on repeating them; and unless one turns away with a certain violence and punches it soundly, telling it, "Keep quiet!", it continues in this way, indefinitely.

Mother, do thoughts and ideas belong exclusively to the mental world?

There are ideas and thoughts which come from beyond and above, and then these are only given a form by the mind. In fact, this is what I was just going to say. The true writer, the true thinker, the true orator does not construct thoughts in his head, he receives an inspiration from above, and while entering his mind it is formulated into words. But the source of thought is very much higher.

But what you wanted to say was, "Are there thoughts which come from below?" These are not thoughts. They are just impulses which are translated into words in the consciousness, formulated in words, but these are not thoughts. They have a different nature.

What does "subconscious" mean, exactly?

Subconscious? It is what is half conscious, you see. And we say "sub", because that means "below" the consciousness. It is something more obscure than the consciousness, but which, at the same time, is like a lower substratum supporting the consciousness. It is like those stores from which one would

Questions and Answers

draw out something quite unformed, a formless substance which could be translated into forms or translated into actions or translated into impulses or even into feelings. But it is like those stores containing a considerable number of fairly mixed things, not very distinct, but which would be very rich in possibilities; only they would have to be drawn out into the light and organised, classified, put into shape so as to give them a value.

So long as they are there, it is a mass, a mixture, certainly subconscious, that is to say, half-conscious, semi-conscious, in which everything is muddled up. It lacks organisation and classification. It is the characteristic of consciousness to organise and classify... classification, putting into order, arranging logically... there are varieties of logic, but still, some logic, a beginning of logic. There are higher and higher kinds of logic, more and more superior. But even preliminary logic is the first work of the consciousness.

But consciousness is plunged — plunged as though by its roots — into this domain, and draws up as it would draw up sap; it constantly pumps this subconscious which it has to transform into something organised. That is why we spend our time re-doing the same work. If we had a small limited amount of consciousness which was our own, as some people imagine it, like a small bag full of consciousness, you know, which is one's own consciousness, well, when you have put it in good order and organised it well, your work will be done, and you can be quiet. But it is not at all like that, it is not at all like that.

Even as there are elements of consciousness which escape and evaporate, which spread out, there is this constant rising, as from a deep ground, of something that asks to be made conscious. And your work has to be perpetually re-done. But one can — if one is careful and attentive — instead of re-doing exactly the same thing each time, one can re-do it with a little progress. Then the movement is not rectilinear, but a movement which goes like this... you see (*gesture of spiral movement*). One

15 September 1954

seems at times to be going back, but that's in order to go farther and farther forward.

Can one have silence without having peace?

Perhaps, yes; that is to say, one may have silence in the mind and not have peace in the heart. It can very well happen that the mind is quite silent and immobile but that, all the same, here, in the heart something vibrates and throbs. This usually proves that one is pretty divided. But many people are divided. One can indeed have mental silence and not have peace in the heart. It can very well happen that the mind is quite silent and immobile, but that, despite this, there are still tremblings in the nerves which continue vibrating and jumping there, and yet the mind is quite silent. But if the silence is kept long enough, the rest must necessarily follow.

Are quietude and calm the same thing?

Quietude and calm? Yes, almost.

Of course there are very different kinds of calm and very different kinds of peace, and to each a different word could be given, another name, if one wanted to be quite precise and exact. But then, it is a work which means constructing a vocabulary for oneself and, obviously, when one has to speak always to the same people and the number is limited, one can build up a vocabulary precise enough for there not to be any need to explain the words used.

But if you are communicating with new people or those outside, you would have to begin your work all over again, for it is something, in short, quite... not only relative but quite arbitrary. My words are given a certain meaning, each one gives them a certain meaning, and people don't understand one another well unless they have the habit of speaking to each other and are in agreement, at least tacitly, about the meaning of the words

Questions and Answers

they use. You speak to a new person who comes from quite a different environment — say, someone who comes from another country than yours — and has, for instance, a very, very different trend of thinking. Well, you say something to him, he does not understand what you tell him. He understands something else which is in his head, because he doesn't give the same meaning as you to the words you use. It is when people have the habit of speaking to one another, when they have taken care to make their vocabulary precise, that they can speak to one another with the least lack of understanding or, if you like, the maximum understanding.

What is the way to accept the Grace with gratitude?

Ah! First of all you must feel the need for it.

This is the most important point. It is to have a certain inner humility which makes you aware of your helplessness without the Grace, that truly, without it you are incomplete and powerless. This, to begin with, is the first thing.

It is an experience one can very well have. When, you see, even people who know nothing find themselves in quite difficult circumstances or facing a problem which must be solved or, as I just told you, an impulse which must be overcome or something that has disturbed them... and then they realise they are lost, they don't know what to do — neither their mind nor their will nor their feelings help — they don't know what to do, then it happens; there is within them something like a kind of call, a call to something which can do what one cannot. One aspires to something which is capable of doing what one can't do.

This is the first condition. And then, if you become aware that it is only the Grace which can do that, that the situation in which you find yourself, from there the Grace alone can pull you out, can give you the solution and the strength to come out of it, then, quite naturally an intense aspiration awakes in you, a consciousness which is translated into an opening. If you call,

15 September 1954

aspire, and if you hope to get an answer, you will quite naturally open yourself to the Grace.

And later — you must pay great attention to this (*Mother puts her finger on her lips*) — the Grace will answer you, the Grace will pull you out of the trouble, the Grace will give you the solution to your problem or will help you to get out of your difficulty. But once you are free from trouble and have come out of your difficulty, don't forget that it is the Grace which pulled you out, and don't think it is yourself. For this, indeed, is the important point. Most people, as soon as the difficulty has gone, say, "After all, I pulled myself out of the difficulty quite well."

There you are. And then you lock and bolt the door, you see, and you cannot receive anything any more. You need once again some acute anguish, some terrible difficulty for this kind of inner stupidity to give way, and for you to realise once more that you can do nothing. Because it is only when you grow aware that you are powerless that you begin to be just a little open and plastic. But so long as you think that what you do depends on your own skill and your own capacity, truly, not only do you close one door, but, you know, you close lots of doors one upon another, and bolt them. You shut yourself up in a fortress and nothing can enter there. That is the great drawback: one forgets very quickly. Quite naturally one is satisfied with one's own capacity.

*But Mother, even when one tries to think that one is powerless, there is something which believes one is powerful.
So?*

Ah, yes, ah, yes! Ah, it is very difficult to be sincere.... That is why the blows multiply and sometimes become terrible, because that's the only thing which breaks your stupidity. This is the justification of calamities. Only when you are in an acutely painful situation and indeed before something that affects you deeply, then that makes the stupidity melt away a little. But as

Questions and Answers

you say, even when there is something that melts, there is still a little something which remains inside. And that is why it lasts so long...

How many blows are needed in life for one to know to the very depths that one is *nothing*, that one can do *nothing*, that one *does not exist*, that one is *nothing*, that there is no entity without the divine Consciousness and the Grace. From the moment one knows it, it is over; all the difficulties have gone. When one knows it integrally and there is nothing which resists... but till that moment... And it takes very long.

Why doesn't the blow come all at once?

Because that would kill you. For if the blow is strong enough to cure you, it would simply crush you, it would reduce you to pulp. It is only by proceeding little by little, little by little, very gradually, that you can continue to exist. Naturally this depends on the inner strength, the inner sincerity, and on the capacity for progress, for profiting by experience and, as I said a while ago, on *not forgetting*. If one is lucky enough not to forget, then one goes much faster. One can go very fast. And if at the same time one has that inner moral strength which, when the red-hot iron is at hand, does not extinguish it by trying to pour water over it, but instead goes to the very core of the abscess, then in this case things go very fast also. But not many people are strong enough for this. On the contrary, they very quickly do this (*gesture*), like this, like this, in order to hide, to hide from themselves. How many pretty little explanations one gives oneself, how many excuses one piles up for all the foolishnesses one has committed.

Does the number of blows depend on people, Sweet Mother?

Yes, it depends on people; it depends, as I said, on their capacity

15 September 1954

for progress, and on their strength and their resistance. But I know very few people who don't need blows at all.

Mother, is the blow which comes Mahakali's?

The blow? Not necessarily.

If you swallow a poison and are poisoned, it won't be Mahakali's fault. It is you who will have swallowed the poison. If one puts oneself into absolutely ridiculous conditions, one is in a state in which one is bound to break one's head or arm or back; because you are not in a state of true equilibrium, you can't accuse the divine forces. It is the normal mechanical consequence of the stupidity committed, of the inner state.

What is the nature of Mahakali's blow?

It makes you feel very happy. It gives you a sweet warmth in the heart, like that. You feel quite satisfied.

Does one have to aspire for it or does it come naturally?

Yes, one must have a sincerity in the aspiration, really want to progress. One must truly say, "Yes, I want to progress" with sincerity... "Whatever happens, I want to progress." Then it comes.

But as I said, it comes with a power of plenitude which holds an intense joy. When one has taken a decision, has decided to stop something in oneself, just not to repeat a stupidity one has committed, or to do something which one finds impossible or difficult to do and which, one knows, should be done, and when one has taken the decision and has put in the full sincerity of one's will, well, then if a terrible blow comes to compel you to do what you have decided to do, it is a blow, but you feel glorified, you are quite happy, it is magnificent, you see, you feel something magnificent here (*Mother points to the heart*).

Questions and Answers

There is such a big difference between the mishaps that come to you just because you are in a purely external, mechanical, physical consciousness and in a state of ignorance which makes you commit all possible follies which naturally bring their consequences, inevitably — there is such a great difference between this and the altogether higher state to which you rise when you have determined to master yourself, to live only in the consciousness of Truth, whatever the cost, no matter what the price of progress, to progress... and the things that happen to you then are so full of meaning, you see so clearly in them that shining truth, that light which illumines you on the path as though you had a beacon, here, to guide you... you see so clearly! It is no longer something that crushes you, like a block of stone falling on your back. It is an overpowering resplendence.

That is why one always says: it is only the first step that needs an effort. The first step means: come out from that level and climb to this one. After that everything, everything changes.

But one must come out completely from that level, one must not remain there, one must not try to keep one foot here and one foot there, for that will not do.

There you are, my children.

22 September 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm—Peace—Equality".

"Calm, even if it seems at first only a negative thing, is so difficult to attain, that to have it at all must be regarded as a great step in advance.

"In reality, calm is not a negative thing, it is the very nature of the Sat-Purusha and the positive foundation of the divine consciousness. Whatever else is aspired for and gained, this must be kept. Even Knowledge, Power, Ananda, if they come and do not find this foundation, are unable to remain and have to withdraw until the divine purity and peace of the Sat-Purusha are permanently there.

"Aspire for the rest of the divine consciousness, but with a calm and deep aspiration. It can be ardent as well as calm, but not impatient, restless or full of rajasic eagerness.

"Only in the quiet mind and being can the supramental Truth build its true creation."

Sweet Mother, what is the Sat-Purusha?

The Purusha? What is it in the being? Knowledge. The conscious being.

What is this true supramental creation?

True creation means the new supramental creation, the one we want to realise here. When we speak of a new transformed world, it is the supramental creation.

Questions and Answers

What does “rajasic eagerness” mean?

“Eagerness”? It is vehemence, it is violence. It is an excessive ardour; and “rajasic” — it is the over-active and violent element, it is the turbulent element in the being. Rajasic — that’s the nature of all transports, flarings-up and enthusiasms, and of all violences and passions, and all over-activity also, in contrast to *tamas* which is inert, and to *sattwa* which is balanced. This is the over-active and violent element.

Mother, does “keeping one’s consciousness high” mean trying to have higher thoughts?

This is rather a consequence than a fact. When one keeps one’s consciousness on a higher level, naturally it serves as a filter for thoughts and allows only thoughts of a higher nature. But it is rather a consequence than a fact. To keep one’s consciousness in a higher state is to raise it above the lower levels in the being, it is to keep it in the light, in the peace, in the higher knowledge and harmony; that is, to place one’s consciousness as high as possible in one’s being, at the level where one is liberated from all lower movements. Then naturally, if the consciousness is there, the thoughts it receives are those of a higher order. And thought is only one form of activity of the consciousness, it is not the stuff of consciousness. There is a consciousness without thought, there is a very much higher state of consciousness in which there are no thoughts. It is a consciousness that can have a very perfect knowledge of things, without it being expressed in thoughts and words. Thought is only one form of activity.

“Silence is... more easily established by a descent from above.” “From above” means what, Sweet Mother?

From the higher regions of consciousness. You see, if you open to the higher regions of consciousness and the force descends from

22 September 1954

above, quite naturally it establishes a silence in the lower regions, for they are governed by this higher power which descends. This comes from higher regions of the mind or from beyond, even from the supermind. So when this force and consciousness come down and enter into the consciousness of a lower plane, this consciousness becomes naturally quiet, for it is as though invaded, flooded by that higher light which transforms it.

In fact, this is even the only way of establishing a constant silence in one's mind. It is to open oneself to higher regions and let this higher consciousness, force, light descend constantly into the lower mind and take possession of it. And here, when this happens, this lower mind can remain constantly quiet and silent, because it is this one which acts and fills the whole being. One can act, write and speak without the mind being active, with this force which comes from above penetrating the mind and using it; and the mind itself becomes just a passive instrument. And in fact, this is the only way of establishing silence; for once this is established, the silence is established, the mind does not stir any longer, it acts only under the impulsion of this force when it manifests in it. It is like a very quiet, very silent field and the force when it comes puts the elements into movement and uses them, and it finds expression through the mind without the mind's being agitated. It remains very quiet.

*Sweet Mother, how can we empty the consciousness of its mixed contents?*¹

By aspiration, the rejection of the lower movements, a call to a higher force. If you do not accept certain movements, then naturally, when they find that they can't manifest, gradually they diminish in force and stop occurring. If you refuse to express

¹ "Keep the quietude and do not mind if it is for a time an empty quietude; the consciousness is often like a vessel which has to be emptied of its mixed or undesirable contents; it has to be kept vacant for a while till it can be filled with things new and true, right and pure."

Questions and Answers

everything that is of a lower kind, little by little the very thing disappears, and the consciousness is emptied of lower things. It is by refusing to give expression — I mean not only in action but also in thought, in feeling. When impulses, thoughts, emotions come, if you refuse to express them, if you push them aside and remain in a state of inner aspiration and calm, then gradually they lose their force and stop coming. So the consciousness is emptied of its lower movements.

But for instance, when undesirable thoughts come, if you look at them, observe them, if you take pleasure in following them in their movements, they will never stop coming. It is the same thing when you have undesirable feelings or sensations: if you pay attention to them, concentrate on them or even look at them with a certain indulgence, they will never stop. But if you absolutely refuse to receive and express them, after some time they stop. You must be patient and very persistent.

In a great aspiration, if you can put yourself into contact with something higher, some influence of your psychic being or some light from above, and if you can manage to put this in touch with these lower movements, naturally they stop more quickly. But before even being able to draw these things by aspiration, you can already stop those movements from finding expression in you by a very persistent and patient refusal. When thoughts which you do not like come, if you just brush them away and do not pay them any attention at all, after some time they won't come any longer. But you must do this very persistently and regularly.

You have said that one must know that without the divine Grace one is nothing. Then why make such a great effort to know that one is nothing?

Why make such a great effort? In what sense? You want to make this effort for a personal reason? Is it for your personal satisfaction that you want to make this effort? It is like those

22 September 1954

people who say, “But if it is not *I* who work and if it is not *my* work, how can I work?” It is the same thing, and yet it is like that. If you feel like that, it means that you still need, need very much, your ego and that if your ego were suddenly taken away from you, you could no longer do anything. If you need a personal motive in order to do something, it means that you are still entirely in your ego, you understand. So long as it is necessary, one has to remain in it. Only, you must not then think that you can go fast. It takes a very long time, sometimes several lives, sometimes a great number of lives. If you need personal reasons for doing things, you have only to wait till you grow out of it and understand that it is not for a personal reason that you must do things.

For example, it is not for a personal reason that you must want perfection, it is not for a personal reason that you must want union with the Divine, it is not for a personal reason that you must want the supramental transformation. If it is for your own good and for a personal reason, well, follow your path; I tell you, you will get there — after a certain number of lives. You see, there is a state in which one can’t even understand how one can exist without a personal reason. So long as it is like that... If perchance I were suddenly to take away from you your personal consciousness and reason, you would exist no longer. So you must wait quietly till you can realise within yourself that this is not the true cause of things.

Is there nothing to be done but to wait?

Eh? Nothing to be done but wait? For me!... It is *I* who mark time waiting for you to be ready! (*Mother laughs.*)

It is a very delicate problem, because for a very long time if someone does not feel, does not have this personal aspiration to perfect himself, the personal aspiration to enter into contact with the Divine, the personal aspiration to realise the supramental consciousness, well, he says as you were just saying,

Questions and Answers

“Then what’s the use of doing anything? The only thing is to remain quiet.” Well, as long as it is like that, and as long as you have not developed in yourself enough consciousness for it to be otherwise, there is nothing to say and nothing to do. I have only to wait.

“Wait” means some lives?

Yes.

For some it can go faster; if suddenly something is reversed within them and they have an experience — even if it be only the experience of identification with the psychic — then all of a sudden they understand. Identification with the psychic means an identification with the divine Consciousness. So, immediately they understand; they understand and this even makes them laugh. One feels how foolish one was! (*Mother laughs.*)

This sense of one’s own person becomes a kind of cage, a prison which shuts you in, prevents you from being true, from knowing truly, acting truly, understanding truly. It is as though someone had put you in a very hard shell and you were compelled to stay there.

This is the first sensation you have. Afterwards you begin to tap against the shell in order to break it. Sometimes it resists very long. But still, when you begin to feel this, that what you believed to be yourself, the person doing things and for whom they are done, the person who exists and makes you what you are, yes, when you pass from this to the consciousness that this is a prison preventing you from being truly yourself, then you have made great progress, and there is hope. You feel yourself stifled, crushed, absolutely shut up in a prison without air, without light, without an opening, and then you begin pushing from inside, pushing, pushing, pushing so that it may break.

And the day it breaks, the day it opens, suddenly, you enter the psychic consciousness. And then you understand. And then,

22 September 1954

truly, if you have a sense of humour, you laugh; you realise your stupidity.

Mother, you said one day that before being able to identify oneself with the Divine, one must first become an individual.

Yes, well, that's it, exactly. You are in the period of becoming an individual. And so long as one is in this period of becoming an individual, well, one must wait until this period passes, that is, till you have become a conscious individual. Perfectly. It is that.

Mother, you said there are very few, one in a million perhaps, who are really conscious.

Oh, if you take humanity at large, certainly! And the great mass of mankind will never become individuals, it will always be an amorphous mass, all intermingled, like that (*gesture*). To become an individual is what Sri Aurobindo calls becoming truly a mental man. Well, if you have read *The Human Cycle*, you will see that already it is not so easy to become a truly mental man who thinks by himself, is free from all outer influences, who has an individuality, who exists, has his reality; even that is not so easy.

But, by a kind of Grace, it can happen that before becoming an individual, if someone has within himself an aspiration, if he feels the need to awaken to something which would want more, want something better, which feels how very small it is to be an individual, something which really seeks beyond the ordinary limits, well, even before becoming an individual, he may suddenly have the experience of a contact with his psychic which opens all the doors for him. They close again later, but once they have opened you never forget it. The remembrance remains very vividly; and this helps. It should happen to you here.

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, is identification with the psychic the same thing as the psychic coming in front?

That is, the first step is the identification, and then, once you can keep this identification, the psychic governs the rest of the nature and life. It becomes the master of existence. So this is what we mean by the psychic coming in front. It is that which governs, directs, even organises the life, organises the consciousness, the different parts of the being. When this happens, the work goes very fast. Very fast, well... relatively very fast.

In the human consciousness everything is *very slow*. When we compare the time that is necessary to realise something with the average length of human existence, it seems interminable. But happily there comes a time when one escapes from this notion, when one begins to feel no longer according to human measures. As soon as one is truly in touch with the psychic, one loses this kind of narrowness and of anxiety also, this anxiety which is so bad: "I must be quick, I must be quick, there is not much time, I must hurry, there is not much time." One does things very badly or doesn't do them at all any more. But as soon as there is a contact with the psychic, then indeed this disappears; one begins to be a little more vast and calm and peaceful, and to live in eternity.

Sweet Mother, why are we so attached to our ego?

As I said just now, probably because you still need it very much, isn't that so? In order to become a conscious, individualised being, one needs his ego; that is why it is there. It is only when one has realised his own individuality sufficiently, has become a conscious, independent being with its own reality, that he no longer needs the ego. And at that time one can make an effort to get rid of it. Unfortunately most people, as soon as they become real individuals, have such a sense of their importance and their ability that they no longer even think at

22 September 1954

all of getting rid of their ego. But that of course is something else.

Here I don't let you go to sleep. I remind you from time to time of the true thing. But you are all very young, you see, and a certain number of years are *needed*, years of intensive inner formation, to become a being who thinks for himself, is conscious of his own will, and conscious of his own nature, his purpose of existence, independent of the human mass. A certain time is necessary. Some children begin when *very small*. If one begins very early, when one is twenty one can be quite formed. But you must begin when very small, and consciously, very consciously; you must begin with a sense of observation of all the movements in yourself, of their relation with others, of — precisely, of your degree of independence, real individuality, of knowing where impulses come from, where other movements come from: whether it is contagion from outside or something that arises from within yourself. A very profound study of all the movements in oneself is necessary in order to succeed simply in crystallising a being who is a little conscious, *a little* conscious. But when you live fluidly, so to say, when you don't even know what goes on inside you, have some sort of vague impressions, if you question yourself, at least ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if you ask yourself, "Why did I think like that? Why did I feel like that?", even "Why did I do that?", then the reply is almost always the same: "I don't know. It came like that, that's all." That is to say, you are not at all conscious.

Are you able to know, when you are with others, what comes from you and what from the others? To what extent their way of being, their particular vibrations act upon you? You are not aware of this at all. You live in a kind of "approximate" consciousness, half-awake, half-asleep, in something very vague, where you have to grope like this in order to catch things. But do you have a precise, clear, exact notion of what goes on in you, why it goes on in you? And then, this: the vibrations which come to you from outside and those which come from within you? And

Questions and Answers

then, again, what can come from others, changing all this, giving another orientation? You live in a kind of hazy fluidity, certain small things suddenly crystallise in your consciousness, you have just caught them for a moment; and it is just clear enough like that, as though there was a projector, just something passing on the screen and becoming clear for a second: the next minute everything has become vague, imprecise, but you are not aware of this because you have not even asked yourself the question, because you live in this way. It stops here, begins here, ends here. That's all. You do from day to day, minute to minute, things which you do, like that... it happens to be like that.

It will come. It will come. Surely it will come. I am not going to leave you like that.... Shake you up a little—I am going to shake you up a little. I shall do what is necessary for this.

So there we are.

Sweet Mother, what is the effect of an aspiration which comes from rajasic eagerness?

The effect of an aspiration? Well, it takes away your quietude, that is the first effect. It makes you agitated, nervous, impatient and dissatisfied when you don't immediately obtain what you have asked for, and usually as vehement in your despair and dissatisfaction as in the aspiration, with a strong sense of your helplessness.

Then is it desire?

It is not quite the same thing. It is not a matter of desire, it is a question of aspiration. But aspirations can be of this kind. Desire is altogether something else. Desire is something which acts completely horizontally.

In your ordinary consciousness you want something; you do not have the least idea of aspiring for some existing thing or some progress or a higher knowledge or greater realisation. You see

22 September 1954

an object in a shop and want it. That's it. Or it crosses your mind that it would be good to eat a certain thing, and you want it. These are desires; they concern things on the same plane as you. Moreover, in desires also some people are obstinate, vehement, and some have fugitive and weak desires. There are both types.

But what Sri Aurobindo speaks about here is truly an aspiration, it is about someone who aspires for the spiritual life but with a vehement passion; and naturally this upsets everything. Besides, the result he obtains — if he does obtain a result at all — is very mixed; and it is muddy, as he says, altogether impure, ordinary. We must not confuse what he calls “rajasic eagerness” with intensity, because intensity can be very vast, very calm and very pure and give a considerable strength to the aspiration. But this has nothing to do either with a rajasic movement or with desire.

And, to take an example, you can understand it in this way: if you have an aspiration, say, suddenly you think of the possibility of progress and have an aspiration for progress; but if a desire is mixed with your aspiration, you will have the desire to progress for the powers this will give you or the importance it will give you or the improvement in your living conditions. You go and immediately mix all kinds of little very personal reasons with your aspiration. And to tell the truth, very few people have a very pure aspiration. An aspiration, a will to progress, just that; it stops there. Because one aspires for progress and then, there we are, let us not go farther. We want progress. But usually there get mixed up with it all kinds of desires for the results of this progress. And so desire comes in, you see; this brings exactly what he says, a consciousness which is impure and muddy, and inside this nothing higher can come. This must be completely eliminated to begin with. If one looks at oneself very sincerely, very straightforwardly and very severely, one very quickly perceives that very few things, very few movements of consciousness are free from being mixed with desires. Even in what you take for a higher movement, there is always... no,

Questions and Answers

happily not always, but most often there is a desire mixed. The desire of the sense of one's importance, if only this, that kind of self-satisfaction, the satisfaction of being someone superior.

This is of course much better than those who want to become yogis in order to astound their neighbours and exercise authority over others, and so that others may be full of admiration and of respect for them. How many things are truly *pure*? Pure aspiration? You must have already attained a very high level, that level I spoke of, on which one can look at oneself with a smile, a slightly ironic smile, and have the feeling that one was so small, so small, so small, so petty, so *insignificant* and so *foolish*. After that things go better. But for what a *long* time *all* the movements are always turned back upon themselves! You start off in a sweep, as though you were springing forward in the face of this universe, and you turn back upon yourself, expecting a small result, a small satisfaction, a very tiny satisfaction, even if it be just your own self-appreciation: "Oh, what a fine aspiration I had!"

There you are.

29 September 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm – Peace – Equality".

"It is good for the physical to be more and more conscious, but it should not be overpowered by these ordinary human reactions of which it becomes aware or badly affected or upset by them. A strong equality and mastery and detachment must come, in the nerves and body as in the mind, which will enable the physical to know and contact these things without feeling any disturbance; it should know and be conscious and reject and throw away the pressure of the movements in the atmosphere, not merely feel them and suffer."

Sweet Mother, how can the physical "throw away the pressure of the movements in the atmosphere"?

You must first of all be conscious and become aware that they are coming, that these movements... that there is a pressure; and then, you must have a will, the will not to accept them; and then again you learn, it is... how to put it?... it is a little trick one must learn, a movement of the consciousness, of the will, and at the same time as though you were using a force that emanates from the body; and finally do this (*gesture of pushing away*), to push back the movement and not accept it.

But first of all you must be conscious. If you are not conscious you can do nothing. You must first see the pressure, the influence, the suggestion, whatever it may be, the thing coming from outside; you must feel it coming, see it, observe it and then take a decision, refuse, not want it. These are three consecutive things.

Questions and Answers

*What is “the right spirit”?*¹

It depends on the case, my child. The right spirit is the will to perfect oneself, or the will to be calm, or... it depends, you see, depends on the circumstances. That is why he has not stated it precisely, in this way or that; it means that in each circumstance there is a spirit which is the suitable spirit, the one you ought to have, the attitude you must inwardly take. It depends on the case.

For example, you see, as soon as one feels a wave of physical disequilibrium, of ill health coming, well, to concentrate in the right spirit is to concentrate in an inner calm, a trust in the divine Grace, and a will to remain in physical equilibrium and good health. This is the right spirit. In another case, one may feel a wave of anger or a fit of temper coming from outside; then one should withdraw into an inner calm, a detachment from superficial things, with a will to express only what comes from above and always be submissive to the divine Will. This is the right spirit. And in each case it is something like that. Naturally it always comes back to the same thing, that one must remember the Divine and put oneself at His service and will what He wills.

But in one case you may want the calm, in the other you may want the force, in another still you may want health, in yet another something which resists the pressure from outside.

When one is perplexed, when one has to make a choice, when one doesn't know what the right thing to do is — you see, one has to choose among two or three or four possible decisions and doesn't know which is the right one, then one must put oneself as far as possible in contact with one's psychic being and the divine Presence in one, present the problem to this psychic consciousness and ask for the true light, the true decision, the

¹ “Aspire, concentrate in the right spirit and, whatever the difficulties, you are sure to attain the aim you have put before you.”

29 September 1954

one most in accordance with the divine Will, and try to listen and receive the inspiration.

In each case, you see, it is the right attitude.

“The Divine must always come first.”² I don’t understand. What does “come first” mean?

You do not understand the French expression “passer”.³ However, in English it is the same thing; I don’t know what the text is in English, but “comes first”, do you understand what “comes first” means? It means that before every other consideration it is the Divine who is the first consideration — that all other considerations which are not the Divine are secondary, without importance. That is, as we have just explained for instance: when you have to make a choice, you must choose according to the divine inspiration or what will bring you closer to the Divine or put you in the best situation to attain to the Divine, because it is the Divine who comes first, all personal interest or personal satisfaction must come afterwards. First the Divine. And consecration to the Divine must come first, everything else comes afterwards. If it comes, it comes; if it doesn’t, it does not matter. What matters is the seeking for the Divine, this is the first thing, the thing that comes before everything, the most important thing. This is what it means.

There is “something truer in you”.⁴ It is the psychic, isn’t it?

Something...? Ah, it must be... You see, these are answers to letters. People used to write something and Sri Aurobindo copied

² “For those who wish to lead the spiritual life, the Divine must always come first, everything else must be secondary.”

³ The French translation of the phrase, “*passer d’abord*”, was not clear to the child.

⁴ “It is in the peace behind and that ‘something truer’ in you that you must learn to live and feel it to be yourself.”

Questions and Answers

what they said, you understand; and probably this person said that he felt within him “something truer”. And so he says: this “something truer” in you is certainly the psychic.

Sweet Mother, how can we find the Divine who is hidden in us?

This we have explained many, many times. But the first thing is to want it, and know precisely that this comes first, before all other things, that this is the important thing. That is the first condition; all the rest may come later, this is the *essential* condition. You see, if once in a while, from time to time, when you have nothing to do and all goes well and you are unoccupied, suddenly you tell yourself, “Ah, I would like so much to find the Divine!” — well, this — it may take a hundred thousand years, in this way.

But if it is the important thing, the only thing that matters, and if everything else comes afterwards, and you want nothing *but this*, then — this is the first condition. You must first establish this, later we may speak of what follows. First this, that all the rest does not count, that only *this* counts, that one is ready to give up everything to have this, that it is the only thing of importance in life. Then one puts oneself in the condition of being able to take a step forward.

Sweet Mother, one day you said that if one makes mistakes knowing that one is making a mistake, one pushes the divine Grace away and builds a wall, a veritable wall between the Divine and oneself.

I don't remember exactly what I said, but there is one thing: if you make a mistake *knowing* that it is a mistake and committing it all the same, then you do that. If through ignorance you make a mistake because you don't know that it is a mistake, you may have very unpleasant consequences but you won't push away

29 September 1954

the Divine, because you have done the thing through ignorance. That's not to say that the fault is not a fault! It is a fault all the same, but as I said, you are not in the state in which you push away the divine Grace. But if you know that it is a fault and commit it all the same, each time you do so you are pushing away the divine Grace, and you push it away a little farther.

Mother, there are mistakes... one knows they are mistakes, but still it is as though one were pushed into making them. Then?

Pushed by what? Ah, this is exactly what happens! It is the lower nature, the instincts of the subconscious which govern you and make you do things you should not do. And so it is a choice between your will and accepting submission. There is always a moment when one can decide. It goes to the point where as I said there is even a moment when one can decide to be ill or not to be ill. It even goes so far that a moment comes when one can decide to die or not to die. But for that one must have an *extremely* awakened consciousness because this speck is infinitesimal in time and like the hundredth part of a second, and because before it one can do nothing and after it one can do nothing; but at that moment one can. And if one is absolutely awake, one can, at that moment, take the decision.

But for ordinary things, as for example, giving way before an impulse or refusing it, it is not a space, not even the space of a second; one has plenty of time before one, one certainly has several minutes. And it is a choice between weak submission and a controlling will. And if the will is clear, if it is based on truth, if truly it obeys the truth and is clear, it always has the power to refuse the wrong movement. It is an excuse you give yourself when you say, "I could not." It is not true. It is that truly you have not wanted it in the right way. For there is always the choice between saying "yes" and saying "no". But one chooses to be weak and later gives oneself this excuse, saying, "It is not

Questions and Answers

my fault; it was stronger than I.” It is your fault if the thing was stronger than you. Because you are not these impulses, you are a conscious soul and an intelligent will, and your duty is to see that *this* is what governs you and not the impulses from below.

Sweet Mother, is “truth in thought” the same thing as purity in thought?

These of course are just definitions. It depends on the sentences, the context, the way the words are used, etc.

Then what does truth of thought mean?

It simply means thought expressing the truth.

Then what does purity of thought mean?

Inevitably a thought which expresses the truth is necessarily a thought which is pure, for otherwise it could not express the truth.

Sweet Mother, how can we make our consciousness vast?

Vast? Ah, there are many ways of doing this.

The easiest way is to identify yourself with something vast. For instance, when you feel that you are shut up in a completely narrow and limited thought, will, consciousness, when you feel as though you were in a shell, then if you begin thinking about something very vast, as for example, the immensity of the waters of an ocean, and if really you can think of this ocean and how it stretches out far, far, far, far, in all directions, like this (*Mother stretches out her arms*), how, compared with you, it is so far, so far that you cannot see the other shore, you cannot reach its end anywhere, neither behind nor in front nor to the right or left... it is wide, wide, wide, wide... you think of this and then

29 September 1954

you feel that you are floating on this sea, like that, and that there are *no* limits.... This is very easy. Then you can widen your consciousness a little.

Other people, for example, begin looking at the sky; and then they imagine all those spaces between all those stars, and all... that kind of infinity of spaces in which the earth is a tiny point, and you too are just a very tiny point, smaller than an ant, on the earth. And so you look at the sky and feel that you are floating in these infinite spaces between the planets, and that you are growing vaster and vaster to go farther and farther. Some people succeed with this.

There is a way also by trying to identify yourself with all things upon earth. For example, when you have a small narrow vision of something and are hurt by others' vision and point of view, you must begin by shifting your consciousness, try to put it in others, and try gradually to identify yourself with all the different ways of thinking of all others. This is a little more ... how shall I put it?... dangerous. Because to identify oneself with the thought and will of others means to identify oneself with a heap of stupidities (*Mother laughs*) and bad wills, and this may bring consequences which are not very good. But still, some people do this more easily. For instance, when they are in disagreement with someone, in order to widen their consciousness they try to put themselves in the place of the other and see the thing not from their own point of view but from the point of view of the other. This widens the consciousness, though not as much as by the first ways I spoke about, which are quite innocent. They don't do you any harm, they do you much good. They make you very peaceful.

There are lots of intellectual ways of widening the consciousness. These I have explained fully in my book. But in any case, when you are bored by something, when something is painful to you or very unpleasant, if you begin to think of the eternity of time and the immensity of space, if you think of all that has gone before and all that will come afterwards, and that this second

Questions and Answers

in eternity is truly just a passing breath, and that it seems so utterly ridiculous to be upset by something which in the eternity of time is... one doesn't even have the time to become aware of it, it has no place, no importance, because, what indeed is a second in eternity? If one can manage to realise that, to... how to put it?... visualise, picture the little person one is, in the little earth where one is, and the tiny second of consciousness which for the moment is hurting you or is unpleasant for you, just this — which in itself is only a second in your existence, and that you yourself have been many things before and will be many more things afterwards, that what affects you now you will have probably completely forgotten in ten years, or if you remember it you will say, “How did I happen to attach any importance to that?”... if you can realise that first and then realise your little person which is a second in eternity, not even a second, you know, imperceptible, a fragment of a second in eternity, that the whole world has unfolded before this and will unfold yet, indefinitely — before, behind — and that... well, then suddenly you sense the utter ridiculousness of the importance you attach to what happened to you.... *Truly* you feel... to what an extent it is absurd to attach any importance to one's life, to oneself, and to what happens to you. And in the space of three minutes, if you do this properly, all unpleasantness is swept away. Even a very deep pain can be swept away. Simply a concentration like this, and to place oneself in infinity and eternity. Everything goes away. One comes out of it cleansed. One can get rid of *all* attachments and even, I say, of the deepest sorrows — of everything, in this way — if one knows how to do it in the right way. It immediately takes you out of your little ego. There we are.

Sweet Mother, how can we make our resolution very firm?

By wanting it to be very firm! (*Laughter*)

No, this seems like a joke... but it is absolutely true. One

29 September 1954

does not want it truly. There is always, if you... It is a lack of sincerity. If you look sincerely, you will see that you have decided that it will be like this, and then, beneath there is something which has not decided at all and is waiting for the second of hesitation in order to rush forward. If you are sincere, if you are sincere and get hold of the part which is hiding, waiting, not showing itself, which knows that there will come a second of indecision when it can rush out and make you do the thing you have decided not to do...

But if you *really* want it, *nothing* in the world can prevent you from doing what you want. It is because one doesn't know how to will it. It is because one is *divided* in one's will. If you are not divided in your will, I say that nothing, nobody in the world can make you change your will.

But one doesn't know how to will it. In fact one doesn't even want to. These are velleities: "Well, it is like this.... It would be good if it were like that... yes, it would be better if it were like that... yes, it would be preferable if it were like that." But *this* is not to will. And always there at the back, hidden somewhere in a corner of the brain, is something which is looking on and saying, "Oh, why should I want that? After all one can as well want the opposite." And to try, you see... Not like that, just wait... But one can always find a thousand excuses to do the opposite. And ah, just a tiny little wavering is enough... pftt... the thing swoops down and there it is. But if one *wills*, if one really *knows* that *this* is the thing, and truly wants this, and if one is *oneself* entirely concentrated in the will, I say that there is *nothing* in the world that can prevent one from doing it, from doing it or being obliged to do it. It depends on what it is.

One wants. Yes, one wants, like this (*gestures*). One wants: "Yes, yes, it would be better if it were like that. Yes, it would be finer also, more elegant."... But, eh, eh, after all one is a weak creature, isn't that so? And then one can always put the blame upon something else: "It is the influence coming from outside, it is all kinds of circumstances."

Questions and Answers

A breath has passed, you see. You don't know... something... a moment of unconsciousness... "Oh, I was not conscious." You are not conscious because you do not accept... And all this because you don't know how to will.

To learn how to will is a very important thing. And to will truly, you must unify your being. In fact, to be a being, one must first unify oneself. If one is pulled by absolutely opposite tendencies, if one spends three-fourths of one's life without being conscious of oneself and the reasons why one does things, is one a real being? One does not exist. One is a mass of influences, movements, forces, actions, reactions, but one is not a being. One begins to become a being when one begins to have a will. And one can't have a will unless one is unified.

And when you have a will, you will be able to say, say to the Divine: "I want what You want." But not before that. Because in order to want what the Divine wants, you must have a will, otherwise you can will nothing at all. You would like to. You would like it very much. You would very much like to want what the Divine wants to do. You don't possess a will to give to Him and to put at His service. Something like that, gelatinous, like jelly-fish... there... a mass of good wills — and I am considering the better side of things and forgetting the bad wills — a mass of good wills, half-conscious and fluctuating...

Ah, that's all, my children. That's enough for today. There we are.

Only, put this into practice; just a little of what I have said, not all, eh, just a very little. There.

6 October 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm—Peace—Equality".

"Absolute faith — faith that what is for the best will happen, but also that if one can make oneself a true instrument, the fruit will be that which one's will guided by the Divine Light sees as the thing to be done — kartavyam karma."

Faith that what happens is always for the best. We may for the moment not consider it as the best because we are ignorant and also blind, because we do not see the consequences of things and what will happen later. But we must keep the faith that if it is like that, if we rely on the Divine, if we give Him the full charge of ourselves, if we let Him decide everything for us, well, we must know that it is always what is best for us which happens. This is an absolute fact. To the extent to which you surrender, the best happens to you. This may not be in conformity with what you would like, your preference or desire, because these things are blind: it is the best from the spiritual point of view, the best for your progress, your development, your spiritual growth, your *true* life. It is always that. And you must keep this faith, because faith is the expression of a trust in the Divine and the full self-giving you make to the Divine. And when you make it, it is something absolutely marvellous. That's a fact, these are not just words, you understand, it is a fact. When you look back, all kinds of things which you did not understand when they happened to you, you realise as *just* the thing which was necessary in order to compel you to make the needed progress. *Always*, without exception. It is our blindness which prevents us from seeing it.

Questions and Answers

Is blaming oneself a good method of progressing?

Blaming oneself? No, not necessarily. It may be useful, it is indeed useful from time to time in order to get out of the illusion of one's own perfection. But one wastes much energy in self-criticism. It is much better to use this same energy in making progress, a concrete progress, something more useful. For example, if you have thoughts which are unpleasant, ugly, vulgar and disturbing, and you say, "Ah, ah, how intolerable I am, I still have such thoughts, what a nuisance it is!", it would be much better to use this very energy simply to do this (*gesture*) and drive away the thoughts.

And this is only the first step. The second is to try to have other thoughts, to take interest in something else: either read or reflect, but in any case try to fill your mind with something more interesting, to use your energy in constructing rather than in destroying.

It is of course necessary from time to time to recognise one's faults; it is altogether indispensable. But to dwell too much upon them is not necessary. What is necessary is to use all one's energy in order to build up the qualities one wants to have and do what one wants to do. This is much more important.

"At present your experiences are on the mental plane...."

This is in reply to someone, I don't know to whom. Someone who wrote a letter and to whom Sri Aurobindo has replied: "At present your experiences are on the mental plane." I don't know what letter it was nor this person.

But what does "only on the mental plane" mean?

What does it mean? Well, these are experiences concerning thought, mental activity, the understanding of things, the observation of things, thought, deduction, reasoning, the contact

6 October 1954

with teaching, knowledge, the result of this knowledge on your understanding — all these things which are purely mental. And in fact one should always begin with that.

If one has vital experiences — for example, visions — certain vital experiences without having a sufficient mental preparation, this may result in destroying one's balance and, in any case, one understands nothing of what is happening and it is practically useless, if not harmful. On the other hand, if to begin with, one has developed his understanding, has studied, has understood and knows the reasons for things, and the goal of yoga, for instance, and if one has studied the methods of attaining it — indeed, the whole mental approach to the subject — then, when an experience comes one has a chance of being able to understand what it is; otherwise one understands nothing. A sufficient mental preparation is needed — if not a complete one at least a sufficient one — to be able to understand a little the experiences which come.

On what do experiences depend, Mother?

Ah, it depends on many things.... Some people have experiences quite spontaneously and it is understood that this depends on their former lives or the way in which they were formed, the forces which presided over the construction of their present physical being, and the influence they came under even before their birth. These people have experiences spontaneously. There are not many of these, but there are some. There are others for whom it is the result of a very sustained effort. They aspire to have experiences and impose a discipline upon themselves or adopt a discipline so as to be able to have them. Sometimes it takes very long to obtain something. It depends altogether upon the way one is built. I knew people who were ignorant, yes, and who had quite remarkable experiences of clairvoyance, of inner perception. They understood nothing of what was happening to them or of what they saw. But they had the gift.

Questions and Answers

But then this has no effect on their outer life, has it?

No.

Then what's the use of having experiences?

It is not a question of “use”. Not everything in the world is utilitarian. It's like that because it's like that. Yes, you can say “what's the use” to someone who is exclusively preoccupied with having experiences, who has no inner intellectual and spiritual preparation, and who through some sort of fantasy would like to have experiences. You could say to him, “Yes, what's the use? It is not this that will lead you to the spiritual life. It can help you if you have taken up the path. And if you have taken up the path in all sincerity, well, they will come to the extent that they are useful. But to seek experience for experience's sake is altogether useless.” And you can tell people, “What's the good? It is a fantasy, a fantasy on another plane; it is another kind of desire, but it is a desire.”

However, in the normal course, to the degree that you progress inwardly, every step that you take towards the true consciousness is accompanied by a certain number of experiences corresponding to it which allow you to understand the situation you are in: this of course is normal. It ought to be like that.

But these usually are not such sensational experiences as to be made much of. People often have all of a sudden an illumination of consciousness, an inner indication, an unusual perception. But when they are not turned exclusively towards the desire to have experiences, they don't attach much importance to it. Sometimes they don't even attach enough importance. The indication came, showed them something, but they were not even aware of it. Yet it is not these things which give you the impression that you are living in a wonderful world. These things are quite normal. Suddenly an opening in the mind, a

6 October 1954

light that comes, one understands something which he did not before. You take that for a very natural phenomenon. But it is a spiritual experience — or the clear seeing of a situation, the understanding of what is happening in oneself, of the state one is in, the indication of the exact progress one ought to make, of the thing that's to be corrected. This too is an experience and an experience that comes from within; it is an indication given to you by the psychic. People take this also as quite a natural fact. They do not attach any importance to it.

Usually people mean by “experience” either altogether extravagant phenomena, levitation and things like that, or else sensational visions: being able to see the future or seeing at a distance or maybe ordinary things like being able to tell where a lost object can be found or all kinds of little tricks like that. This is what people call “experiences”.

Well, usually people who have these faculties are not well educated, but for some reason they are born with a gift, as some are born musicians, others painters, and others scientists. These are born clairvoyants, and so it may be, when they are in need they use this faculty to earn their living, and they spoil it completely. If they happen to be in comfortable circumstances and do not need to earn their living, then they become famous among their friends. In any case, this is always an opportunity for a certain kind of commercialism. There are very few who can have these gifts without using them either to make a name for themselves or to earn money. But these gifts are not of a very high level. One can have them without having a very spiritual life. They do not depend at all on an inner spiritual height. One should not mistake them for signs of progress.

Besides, one thing is certain: those who do not have these faculties and want to acquire them, for instance the capacity of foresight, foreseeing what is going to come, which is analogous to prophecy, the capacity to know events before they happen — as I said, there are people who have this spontaneously because of some peculiarity from birth — and if one wants to acquire

Questions and Answers

them himself, that is to say, enter into contact with regions where these things can be seen — and not by chance or accidentally or without having any control over the thing, but on the contrary to see them at will — then this indeed means a *formidable* work. And that is why some people attach a very great value to these things. But they have some value only when they are under one's control, done at will and the result of an inner discipline. In this case, yes, because this proves that you have entered into contact with a certain region where it is difficult to enter consciously, at will, and permanently. It is very difficult, it requires much development. And then, for you to be sure of what you have seen... because I haven't told you that with these people who make a profession of their clairvoyance, it becomes... I said "commercialism", but it is worse than that, you know, it is a fraud! When they do not see anything, they invent. When they make a profession of it, and people come to ask them something about the future, and they can see nothing at all, they are obliged to invent something, otherwise they would lose their reputation and their clientele. So this becomes a deception, you see, a falsehood, fraud or falsification.

But when one wants to have a pure, correct information, to be in contact with the truth of things, and see in advance — not according to one's petty mental construction, but how things are decreed, in the place where they are decreed and the time when they are decreed — then that requires a *very great* mental purity, a *very great* vital equilibrium, an absence of desire, of preference. One must never want anything to be of one kind or another, for this falsifies your vision immediately.

All who have visions usually deform them, *all*, almost *without exception*. I don't think there is one in a million who doesn't deform his vision, because the minute it touches the brain it touches the domain of preferences, desires, attachments, and this indeed is enough to give a colouring, a special look to what you have seen. Even if you have seen correctly, you translate it wrongly in your consciousness. This truly asks for a great

6 October 1954

perfection. But you can have perfection without the gift of vision. And the perfection can be as great without the gift as with it. If it interests you specially, you can make an effort to obtain it. But only if it interests you specially. If you lay great store by knowing certain things, you can undertake a discipline; you may undertake a discipline also in order to change the functioning of your senses. I think I have already explained to you how one can hear at a distance, see at a distance, even physically; but this means considerable effort, which perhaps is not always in proportion to the result, because these are side issues, not the central, the most important thing. These are side issues which may be interesting, but in itself this is not the spiritual life; one may have a spiritual life without this. Now, the two together can give you perhaps a greater capacity. But for this too you must tell yourself, "If I ought to have it — if I take the true attitude of surrender to the Divine and of complete consecration — if I ought to have it I shall have it. As, if I ought to have the gift of speech, I shall have it." And in fact, if one is truly surrendered, in the true way and totally, at every minute one is what one ought to be and does what one ought to do and knows what one ought to know. This... but naturally, for this one should have overcome the petty limitations of the ego, and this does not happen overnight. But it can happen.

Another question?

Sweet Mother, what is the "vital desire-soul"?

My child, the vital soul is what animates the body, the life which animates the body. You see, in ordinary language it is said, "You die when your soul leaves your body" or "Your soul leaves your body when you die", in one way or the other; but it is not the soul, it is not only this soul — what we call soul, I mean the psychic being — it is the vital being. When the vital being leaves the body for whatever reason, the body dies or death cuts off the

Questions and Answers

vital being from the body... So it is in the sense of animating, that is, giving life.

Is this the “vital desire-soul”, Sweet Mother?

Yes, the vital soul is full of desires. The vital being is full of desires. It is built of desires.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “A spiritual atmosphere is more important than outer conditions; if one can get that and also create one’s own spiritual air to breathe in and live in it, that is the true condition of progress.” How can one get that and also create one’s true spiritual atmosphere?

Get what? This — it is by... precisely by inner discipline; you can create your atmosphere by controlling your thoughts, turning them exclusively towards the sadhana, controlling your actions, turning them exclusively towards the sadhana, abolishing all desires and all useless, external, ordinary activities, living a more intense inner life, and separating yourself from ordinary things, ordinary thoughts, ordinary reactions, ordinary actions; then you create a kind of atmosphere around you.

For example, instead of reading any odd thing and chatting and doing anything whatever, if you read only what helps you to follow the path, if you act only in conformity with what can lead you to the divine realisation, if you abolish in yourself all desires and impulses turned towards external things, if you calm your mental being, appease your vital being, if you shut yourself against suggestions coming from outside and become immune to the action of people surrounding you, you create *such* a spiritual atmosphere that nothing can touch it, and it *no longer* depends *at all* on circumstances or on whom you live with or on the conditions you live in, because you are enclosed in your own spiritual atmosphere. And that is how one obtains it: by turning

6 October 1954

one's attention *solely* to the spiritual life, by reading only what can help in the spiritual life, by doing only what leads you to the spiritual life, and so on. Then you create your own atmosphere. But naturally, if you open all the doors, listen to what people tell you, follow the advice of this one and the inspirations of that one, and are full of desires for outside things, you cannot create a spiritual atmosphere for yourself. You will have an ordinary atmosphere like everybody else.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their opposition. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal." Imposed by the Divine?

He has not put it that way, has he? You must take it in the way it helps you most. This is a very difficult question.

Oh, I have already explained to you very often that when you live in an ordinary consciousness, and to the extent you remain on a certain plane which is a combination of the most material mind, vital, physical, that is, the ordinary plane of life, you are subject to the determinism of this plane and it is this subjection to the determinism of this plane which puts you exactly in these conditions, for you have deep within you something which aspires for another life but doesn't yet know how to live that other life, and which pushes from inside in order to get the conditions necessary for this other life. These are inner conditions, they are not outer conditions. But this takes its support on outside obstacles in order to strengthen itself in its will to progress; and so, if you look at it from within, you can even say that it is you yourself who create the difficulties to help you to go forward.

Now, if you enter another plane and tell yourself (but this is a thing subject to many explanations and discussions), if you say that there is nothing in the universe that is not the work of the Divine, which is essentially true, though not true here, then

Questions and Answers

you say, “Good. It is the Divine who organises everything; consequently it is He who has organised the difficulties also.” But this is indeed a very childish way of putting things — oversimple. Only, as I said at the beginning, “If it helps you to think in this way, think in this way.” You see, thought is so approximate a thing, it is so far from *the* truth... it is only a kind of vague, incomplete, confused reflection, full of falsehood, even at its best. So, in truth, it is the moment to be practical and tell yourself, “Well, I shall adopt this thought if it helps me to progress.” But if you think that it is the absolute truth, you are sure to go wrong, for there is not a single thought which is the absolute truth.

Ah, yes, we are going to put into the books of the lending library of the University one of Sri Aurobindo’s short reflections, which is wonderful — I had it printed today — in which he says that any teaching, however great it may be, however pure, noble, true it may be, is only one aspect of the Truth and not the Truth itself (I am commenting, the text¹ is not exactly this), it is not the entire Truth. Well, that is it. Whatever your thought may be, even if it is very high, very pure, very noble, very true, it is only a very tiny microscopic aspect of the Truth, and consequently it is not entirely true. So in that field one must be practical, as I said, adopt the thought for the time being, the one which will help you to make progress when you have it. Sometimes it comes as an illumination and this helps you to progress. So long as it helps you to make progress, keep it; when it begins to crumble, not to act any longer, well, drop it, and try to get another which will lead you a little farther.

Many miseries and misfortunes in the world would disappear if people knew the relativity of knowledge, the relativity of faith, the relativity of the teachings and also the relativity of circumstances... to what extent a thing is so relatively important! For the moment it may be capital, it may lead you to life or to death — I am not speaking of physical life and death, I am

¹ “But thought nor word can seize eternal truth.” — Sri Aurobindo

6 October 1954

speaking of the life and death of the spirit — but this is for the moment; and when you have made a certain progress, when you have grown a few years older from the spiritual point of view, and you look back on this thing, this circumstance or idea which perhaps has decided your life, it will seem so relative, so insignificant to you... and you will need something much higher to make new progress.

If one could always remember this, well, one would avoid much sectarianism, much intolerance, and annul all quarrels immediately, because a quarrel means just this, that one thinks in one way and the other in another, that one has taken one attitude and the other another, and that instead of trying to bring them together and find out how they could be harmonised, one puts them over against each other as one fights with one's fists. It is nothing else.

But if you become aware of the complete relativity of your point of view, your thought, your conviction of what is good, to what an extent it is relative in the march of the universe, then you will be less violent in your reactions and more tolerant. Here we are.

13 October 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm–Peace–Equality".

Sweet Mother, what does "the reduction of the mental being to the position of a witness" mean?

Have you never felt this? As though you were a little behind or above things, and were looking at them taking place but were not doing anything yourself? Witness means an observer, someone who looks on and does not act himself. So, when the mind is very quiet, one can withdraw a little in this way from circumstances and look at things as though he were a witness, a spectator, and not participating in the action himself. This gives you a great detachment, a great quietude, and also a very precise sense of the value of things, because it cuts the attachment to action. When you know how to do this with yourself, when you can withdraw and watch yourself acting, you learn many things about yourself. When you are all mixed up and take part in the action, you do not observe yourself acting, you don't know what you are like. But when you draw back and look at yourself, you can perceive many imperfections which you wouldn't have seen otherwise.

(To a child) Do you have a question to ask?

Here it is written: "The experience of this 'solid block' feeling indicates the descent of a solid strength and peace...."

It is always the same thing: people writing letters, you understand; they describe their experiences. So he uses the same words that they use for answering. This "solid block" feeling within

13 October 1954

oneself — he explains what it means: he says that it indicates the descent of a strength.

Sweet Mother, what does “solid peace” mean?

You see, there is a negative peace, that is, an absence of disturbance; but solid peace is a positive peace. One may feel a peace which is absolutely positive, which is not the negation of the absence of peace, a peace that is something solid, concrete, very... almost active, you see, that is, having a power of contagion, of spreading through the whole being and bringing peace even in places where there is none. This becomes something very positive and concrete... as though one were touching a solid object. This indeed is true peace. The other is just the preceding step — the negation of the disturbance — that is to say, one remains untroubled, one has no vibration which shows any disturbance.

(To a child) And then? Your question today?

Mother, it is not a question from this book.

Eh? It is not from this book? Oh! But we don't have an entire library here. *(Laughter)*

(To another) So, you have a question?

What does “the experience of the silent Self” mean?

Everyone has in himself a being which he calls the “Self”, and which is completely silent and immobile. So, if one becomes conscious of this being in himself, one has the experience of the silent Self. It is an immobile and silent being which is within, which is like an aspect of the true being and also an aspect of the witness we were just speaking about. It is this silent being which, when it turns to things and looks at them, becomes the witness. But it can turn inwards, not look on, be in its silent

Questions and Answers

contemplation. It depends on which side one turns to. It is a solid point in the being, in which the light of truth shines.

If one feels that there is a calm in the atmosphere and everywhere, does this mean that the calm is within oneself?

Eh? Yes. The first thing that comes is that... for example, if one has a certain experience of a particular kind — as one may have an experience of peace, an experience of calm, one may also have an experience of perfect benevolence, an experience of understanding or of compassion — the thing, the experience is as though the consciousness were possessed by one of these movements; and so there occurs this thing which seems strange afterwards, but which for the moment is altogether natural — one feels everywhere, in everyone, in the whole atmosphere, all around himself and, if the consciousness is vast enough, in the entire earth, exactly the *same* peace or the *same* compassion or the *same* benevolence. And so one can say in all sincerity, with a completely living experience: “The universe is perfect benevolence.”

If you come out of it, naturally this does not apply any longer. But while you are in the experience, it is altogether true — at that time. And then, if you push this, these experiences, farther (and this is exactly what happens to people who try to identify themselves consciously with the Divine), when you attain this identification and have the consciousness of the Divine in you, instantly you feel that the Divine is everything and everywhere, in all things, that there is nothing but the Divine. And people who have had this experience have said this, they have said, “But there is only the Divine, all is Divine, the Divine alone exists.” Yet, when one comes out of the experience, if one continues to say it, he almost tells a lie, in the sense that this no longer corresponds at all to the state of consciousness he is in.

When one is in an ordinary external consciousness, everything is not at all divine, far from it. So those who come and tell

you that in this external consciousness all is divine, are humbugs! But when they are in the experience and live the Divine, when they have become the Divine, then for them everything is divine. They perceive nothing but the Divine, and they may say, "All is divine", because they perceive only the Divine. But as soon as they come out of this experience, they can no longer say it.

But one may say anything. One may say, "All is peace, all is equanimity, all is compassion, all is comprehension, all is light."

Each time one sincerely has an experience and is entirely absorbed in the experience, all that one sees becomes identical with one, because in fact it is everywhere and when one becomes conscious of it in oneself, one becomes conscious of it in everything. It is true.

But it is not solely true, all the rest is also there. And the opposite is also true: when you enter a state of hatred and have the experience of hatred, the whole world for you is full of hatred; at that time almost nothing else exists but hatred.

The more your experience becomes absorbing for you, the more does all the rest become identical.

Then, Mother, is there not any true reality, does all depend on oneself?

No, it is just the opposite!

One becomes conscious of the reality only when one becomes conscious of it in oneself. All this is true. Indeed, it is true: you cannot say that it exists unless you experience it yourself. When you do not experience it, if you say, "It is like this", well... You can say, "There was a time when it was like this for me"; then that's right. But if you say, "It is like this", at a time when you don't feel it, it is quite simply a mental statement.

But everything is there! Everything is there... all the things which you can experience and infinitely more which you cannot, because a being is not absolutely complete in himself. If he were complete in himself, he could have the experience of the whole,

Questions and Answers

without any exception. And in fact, potentially it is like that. Only, each one develops according to his own line. It comes to saying this: that one is conscious of the universe only to the extent to which the universe is in his consciousness. For you the universe stops at your consciousness, no matter what others may say. Everything that you read, for example, all the descriptions you are given, all the sentences you hear, you can understand only as far as they correspond to something in your consciousness; and if they are not in your consciousness, you do not understand them, and consequently they do not exist for you. But this does not mean that they do not exist outside you.

You were saying that there is this experience when one sees the Divine everywhere.

Yes.

One sees the Divine everywhere means what? Is it...?

Because one has become the Divine in oneself; so, in this case, the Divine is everywhere.

No.... When you say, "One sees the Divine everywhere"...

Yes.

What does that mean, what does one see exactly? Does one see a...

What does one see? (*Laughter*) One perceives, if you like; one can see, but not see with a physical image. There is not only the physical sight, it is not seeing with... And in fact, one can see with one's eyes, if the eyes are plastic enough to allow the higher Consciousness, the divine Consciousness to pass through them.

One can see also, one can see also, but one no longer sees things as they are physically, that's natural.

If you keep a tiny part of your outer consciousness, if you are not entirely absorbed in the experience, you may see the two superimposed. But then the perception is not as clear and total. Yet it may happen that, for example, there is something in you which keeps the outer physical consciousness, and at the same time there is something which is sufficiently absorbed in the experience of the Divine for the Divine alone to count for you and the rest to be as if you were seeing a thing through a fine veil, a very thin tissue or a transparent paper. Then the paper or tissue exists, but it does not prevent you from seeing things in the other way.

So one can, one can have the perception of the Divine in the world, in others, and at the same time see a kind of vague appearance of these things, and it gives you this experience — which may then remain very vividly in your consciousness — of the unreality of external forms; to what an extent it is only... yes, it is like a sheet of thin paper, it has no consistency, no body, it is something altogether superficial and unreal; and the divine Presence, the divine Splendour behind, is the only thing which exists, which is true, solid, durable. This experience one can have.

Mother, the psychic being in us is always in contact with the Divine: so one should have this experience all the time, for...

If one were in contact with one's psychic being all the time, yes. But it is a fact: from the moment one is in contact with one's psychic being all the time, one is in contact with the divine Presence all the time. And you may reverse the statement and say, "I shall know that I am in contact with my psychic being all the time, when I am in contact with the divine Presence all the time, in all things. This will be a proof for me that I am in contact with my psychic being."

Questions and Answers

This changes the state of consciousness totally, totally, one cannot...

You know, there are people who come and ask you, “Am I conscious of my psychic being?” One can tell them, “This itself is the proof that you are not.” Because if you are, you can no longer ask this. It changes your state of consciousness completely.

Is that all? Then... (*Turning to the child who wanted to ask a question outside the book*) If we don't need the text, you can ask your question.

Mother, there are people who suffer from certain illnesses year after year, we know. Now, if we observe this illness, we see that it comes at a particular time of the year and this goes on the next year also, and it is like that. But the time is fixed. Then what is the reason, and how can one get rid of this?

What is...?

The reason...

There could be many reasons. It depends on the person you ask. If you ask an astrologer he will tell you, “It is the stars, when the stars come into the same position, the same conditions recur.” Well, this is not so wrong. It can be like that. It can also be the individual's reaction to certain types of climate, you see, or to the sun's position; or it may be quite simply a bad habit. That's all. (*Laughter*)

And if one forms... If by chance it has happened to you twice consecutively, then you form... you have a good formation, you see, which remains like that (*gesture*) in the subconscious, without showing itself — if you don't observe it! And then, just when the time draws near, quite gently it pushes up from within and tells you, “Take care, the time is coming, the time is coming,

13 October 1954

the time is coming!” So naturally, that comes along too. Usually these things are like that.

But almost everything that happens in the physical is like that. The first time it may be quite simply a concurrence of circumstances; then, the mind intervenes and makes a construction. Now, if one accepts the construction, one is sure that it functions with clockwork precision. But even if one says, “Oh, nonsense, it is only an idea!” and does this (*gesture*), still the idea, instead of going away, enters inside, into the subconscious, simply the subconscious mind, and there it remains quietly. And then, when the time comes to manifest itself, from inside, like this, it makes a kind of... as though it were tickling the memory a little, nothing more than that, just that. If it rubs the memory just a little, like that, then suddenly one day you remember: “Why, last year, at this time I was ill.” And crash! There it is, it has entered. It has entered the zone of the active consciousness, and a few days later the thing happens.

But when you have had either an experience or, like this, some kind of phenomenon or an illness (above all in the case of illness or even an accident), the body remembers for a very long time. If you want to be completely cured, you must cure this memory in the body, this is absolutely indispensable. And whether you know it or not, you work in order to cure the memory in the body. When the remembrance is effaced, the body is truly healed.

Unfortunately, instead of destroying the remembrance, you push it back. Most of the time you push it down into the subconscious and sometimes into the inconscient, still more deep. Well now, if it is pushed back, if it is not completely effaced, then very gently, very gently, without seeming to do so at all it comes up to the surface; and something of which you have been cured for years, if by chance it crosses your mind simply like that, just like a little dart, as fast as that, like a passing dart: “Why, at this time I had that”, you may be sure that sooner or later — a few seconds, a few minutes, a few hours or days later,

Questions and Answers

it will return. You can... It may come back in a much milder form, it may come back in the same form, it may come even more strongly. That depends on your inner state. If you are in a pessimistic state, it will come back more strongly. If you are in an optimistic state, it will be much weaker. But it will come back and you will have to begin the battle all over again against the memory of your body so as to destroy it — if this time you are more attentive. If you can destroy it, you are cured. But if you don't destroy it, it will return. It will take a longer or shorter time, it will be more or less total, but it will return. It can come back in a flash. If you are wide awake and, when it returns, if you have enough knowledge and indeed enough clear-sightedness to tell yourself, "Well, here is that wretched remembrance come back again to play its tricks", then you can give, can strike a violent blow and indeed destroy its reality. If you know how to do this, then it is an opportunity to get rid of the thing immediately. But it is not very easy to do this.

Pavitra: *How to do it?*

How to do it? (*Mother laughs.*) How to do it? It is the same thing as, the same method as, knowing how to destroy a formation, you understand.

It is a certain strength to dissolve things, which can undo formations. It depends on the nature of the formation. If it is like this, a formation of an adverse kind, then you need the force of a perfectly pure constructive light. If you have this at your disposal, all that you have to do is to bombard the thing with it, and you can dissolve it. But it is an operation which must be performed with inner forces; it cannot be done physically.

That is why all physical remedies, you see, are simply palliatives; they are not cures, because they are not strong enough to touch the living centre of the thing.

13 October 1954

(Silence)

The same phenomenon occurs with moral difficulties. If one could succeed in destroying their remembrance, destroying in oneself the memory of the state one is in when in that difficulty, if one is sincere it would be the end of all difficulties for ever.

(Long silence)

Mother, for instance, when one makes a resolution to do something, one finds that sometimes one comes into conflict with the feelings of others. Then what should be done in this case?

When...?

When one has decided to do something...

Yes.

... then one finds that sometimes one comes into conflict with another's feelings.

Into conflict?

That is to say...

Yes, yes, I understand quite well.

So what should be done?

It depends absolutely on the case. It is difficult to say... First of all... *(Silence)* If it is just an external and superficial decision based on the little knowledge one has, and the little qualities and little defects one has, then naturally, if one comes into conflict

Questions and Answers

with other wills of a similar quality — you see, the wills may be different but the quality is the same, then one has to decide according to the circumstances and in accordance with the inner result one wants to get. It is very difficult to say, in each case the decision must be different.

But if one is one of those people who act only when they feel within that it is an order from the higher truth-consciousness, that “This I have decided to do because it has to be done whatever the consequences”, then if one comes into conflict with the preferences, wills, opposition of others, one must quite simply do this (*Mother makes a movement as of turning her back*) and continue on one’s way. But it is only in this case that one has the right to do it.

When it is just a personal movement, moved by one’s personal preferences, one’s personal desires or even one’s personal conceptions, well, as soon as one meets with oppositions one must weigh the problem, see the facts and act according to... (*silence*) the best goodwill one has, the best perception one has. And this depends absolutely on what one wanted to do, and the opposition one meets with. So it is impossible to make a rule of a general kind.

There is only one thing that gives you the right to go straight on your path without caring for *anything*: that’s if you have been set going, set in motion by a higher truth. But you must be *sure* of that. You must not take your desire for the higher truth, you understand, because one very easily makes a mistake. You must know it, and have solid proofs to support it, and know that it is usually something which does not touch you personally. If you are in the least interested in it, one way or another, be on your guard and think twice before being convinced that it is the higher will and the expression of a truth.

However, there are cases where it is like that. “*This* is what ought to be done; this indeed is the truth.” And then, whatever the opposition, one goes straight on one’s way, without worrying about circumstances or consequences. But it is only in this case

13 October 1954

that one has the right to do it; that is, at the time the Divine acts in *you*, you ought no longer to care for *anything* except the divine Will. But if it is not the divine Will, each problem must be resolved according to the case, the circumstances and...

For instance, one has decided not to chat, then...

One meets somebody who chatters?

No...

One just turns one's back and goes away! (*Laughter*) Very simple!

Then the other person will be very angry.

Eh?

The other person will be very angry.

So much the worse for him! (*Laughter*) So much the worse for him. This is exactly the instance, one of the instances I spoke about: not to care. One can, if one likes the person very much and doesn't want to displease him too much, one can tell him gently, "No, please, let us not talk uselessly, it is bad for everybody." That's all. If it is someone you don't care for or who is not important for you, you have only to turn your back upon him and go away.

Especially if he is a friend, someone who, like you, ought to know that this should not be done.... In this case you must be categorical. If it is someone who, through a set of circumstances, ought to know like you that it is something that ought not to be done and if he begins to do it in spite of that, he is *dishonest*. Because when one does something one knows one should not do, one becomes dishonest from that minute; and you are not

Questions and Answers

to have any consideration for such a person. You have only to turn round and walk away; and if he gets angry, so much the worse for him. He will only have to... the result will be that he will have to overcome his anger. That's all. This will perhaps do him some good.

There is a great weakness in social relations, a *very* great weakness; and that is why, in fact, one gets angry and gets carried away and says things one should not say. If one were not weak, one would never be violent. Weakness and violence are two things that go together. He who is truly strong is never violent. This is something one should always remember. Violence is *always* a sign of a weakness somewhere. Of course, one sees a man with bulging muscles who is very strong, knocking down another with all his might, and one says, "He is strong!" It is not true. He has muscles, but morally he is very weak. So, he may be strong here and weak there. Usually this is what happens.

But I say, and also people who have observed animals, for example, animals which are very strong: how quiet they are. Naturally, when they run after their prey they put out all their energy; but it is not violence, it is energy. But if you have ever seen a lion — when it has nothing to do, it does not fidget. If it is ill, it is restless. But if it is well, in good health, if it has nothing to do, it will not move, it will be quite still. It will look like a sage. (*Laughter*)

Agitation, violence, anger, all these things are always, without exception, signs of weakness. And especially when one gets carried away in one's speech and says things one should not say, *this* indeed is the sign of a frightful mental weakness — mental and vital — frightful. Otherwise you may hear all the insults in the world, people may tell you all possible stupidities; if you are not weak, you may perhaps not smile outwardly, for it is not always good taste to smile, but deep within you, you are smiling, you let it pass, it does not touch you.... Simply, if your mind has formed the habit of being quiet as it is recommended here, and you have the perception of truth within yourself, you can hear

13 October 1954

anything at all. It does not even produce the semblance of a vibration — everything remains absolutely immobile and quiet. And then if the witness we were speaking about a while ago is there, looking on at the comedy, he surely smiles.

But if you feel the vibrations which come from the other person who throws on you all his violence and anger, if you feel this... at first it does... and then, suddenly, there is a response; and then if you yourself begin to get into a temper, you may be sure that you are as weak as he.

Here you are, my children.

I think this is enough for today.

20 October 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm—Peace—Equality".

Sweet Mother, what is "the freedom of the Self"?

It means that in the true inner being one feels perfectly free, and is free from everything. One has the feeling of a complete freedom — free from all external influences, free from all lower impulses, free from all bondage of thoughts, habits... (*Silence*) There, then.

(*To a child*) Do you have a question?

Here I did not understand: "not to stand back for any reason from her [the Mother's] solicitude".

What? For no reason to stand back from her solicitude? You do not understand that? Why! Why don't you understand? You don't understand what this means or what? "Stand back" — do you not know what that means?

No.

Ah, all right. Well, stand back means to withdraw, go farther away, escape, refuse, reject — all this.

"Solicitude" — do you know what that means?

Not very well.

Not very well? It is... well, it is "care" in English, that is, attention, help, concern, precisely the concern to help and do good; this is solicitude. When you feel solicitude for someone, you

20 October 1954

do... you find out his needs and try to satisfy them; you have good thoughts, good feelings, you want to help, support, make him happy. This is solicitude. So, to stand back from solicitude is to refuse these things when they come, either to disregard them or refuse them.

However, very often one does it without knowing it. For example, every feeling of independence, of the need to look after oneself, of not wanting to submit to any discipline, any rule, of standing on one's own feet, not wanting any support except one's own, and being free, independent in one's movements: this is to stand back from the divine solicitude. To want to do what one likes, one's own will, in quite a free and independent way — "only doing what I want" — this is to stand back from the divine solicitude.

One does it quite frequently!

(To a child) You?

Sometimes when we ask you a question, you do not understand it. Is it because of a fault in our language or in the consciousness?

Usually the consciousness.

There is an experience like this: some people may speak to me for half an hour, I don't understand a tenth part of what they say; there are others who speak very softly, very slowly, very gently, and I don't miss a single word. In one case, it is... it does not depend on the elocution and it does not depend on the expression, because I am used to understanding people even when they express themselves badly. I have been used to this for years. It is not that. It is that either they do not think clearly, or rather, to put it positively: those who think quite clearly, no matter what they say or how they say it, I understand them; while with those who do not think clearly it becomes more difficult; and then, those who are in the habit of disguising their thought, who are not frank, who don't say exactly what they think or

Questions and Answers

feel, who try to present things in a particular way, here, they may give me long speeches, I understand nothing. And I know what they are thinking but I don't know what they are saying. This happens very frequently: people talk to me, I hear nothing. It happens like that, I don't hear... "What? what? what?" And then, when it recurs twice or thrice, I am sure that it is this kind of thing, you know: they are not saying what they think, they are saying something with the intention of making some sort of impression, you see. They say this so that I may think so. So there it is useless, I don't hear them. There are different degrees.

Is that all? (*To a child*) And you? Nothing? Nobody has any questions? It is not raining here, we see! (*Laughter*)

(In a low voice) *Sweet Mother, is passion a weakness...*

Ah, listen! I do not hear!

Is passion a weakness of the heart?

I have not yet understood. "*Pensée*", that's all I have heard. (*The child hesitates*) Eh? Say, say, speak, but think of what you are saying.

(In a loud voice) *Passion.* (The child laughs).

Ah!

(Another child) *Passion!*

(Pavitra) *Passion!*

Passion! And I heard "*pensée*"! Good. So what about passion?

Is it a weakness of the heart?

Weakness? No, it is a disorder of the vital. (*Silence*) The feeling

20 October 1954

comes from the heart and then the vital gets hold of it and turns it into a passion. (*Silence*) And one step farther, and it becomes a madness. (*Silence*) So?

Sweet Mother, how can we call down calm when we are too agitated?

(*Silence*) Repeat that. How...?

How can we call calm...?

Oh, "call"? Well, well. Make calm come to us, you mean? How? Simply as when you want to call someone, you call him, don't you? (*Laughter*) It is the same thing. You must remain as calm as you can and wish for calm, aspire for calm, call calm, like that, remaining as calm as you can at that moment. Ask to be yet calmer. Want calm. But all this calmly, because if you want it agitatedly, calm will not come.

Sometimes when one wants to concentrate, usually there are disturbing thoughts, but often some kind of images pass before...

Do you see images when you meditate?

Sometimes.

When the eyes are open or closed?

Closed.

Closed. And what images? Colours or images?

Sometimes colours, sometimes images.

Well... Always or only sometimes?

Questions and Answers

Not always.

And so? You are asking what it is? It can be many, many things. It can be simply that, your physical eyes being closed, your inner eyes open and begin to see in their domain or in the subtle physical or the most material vital, it may be that.

It can be a projection of your own thoughts, that is, when you begin reflecting on something, certain images pass before you, like that; they pass rather before your mind than your eyes, and it is like an imaged objectivisation of your thought, your state of thought or state of consciousness. But then, it becomes quite clear, coherent and it is interesting. It can serve as an indication.

It can be something else also. If you are truly quiet and your mind is quiet, it can be... how shall I put it?... some kind of messages coming to you from other people or other worlds or other forces, which come to tell you something, to show you something; usually, if you see colours which are... pulsating, and then suddenly it is as though you were absorbing them: this usually indicates forces sent by someone or something, which come with some sort of power. They are some kind of messages. So, if you are very quiet in your mind, sometimes they bring an indication of what they mean.

Many things are possible and you must observe very attentively, but very quietly, without any mental activity, without seeking to understand at that time; because as soon as your mind becomes active and tries to understand, it will jam everything and probably you will not see anything any more.

But if you remain very quiet, only if you observe — as though you were silently looking at something, you understand — then you will begin seeing more precisely, and little by little distinguishing between different categories of things. You will be able to know what one thing is and what another etc., whether it comes from you or from outside, whether it is on a material plane or on another plane. All this is learnt through a very

20 October 1954

quiet observation, quiet but very sharp, you understand; because there are very tiny shades, very tiny, between different things, and when you get used to distinguishing these nuances, you can discern exactly what it is.

It is always the same thing. One must be very quiet, very attentive, calm the mind as much as possible, because as soon as it begins to stir, the phenomenon is distorted.

In any case, in a very general way, this proves that the inner vision is beginning to develop or is developed.

(Silence)

Nothing more? Do you have another question?

Regarding the film we saw, what is the place of suffering in artistic creation?

The film?

We saw that through suffering...

Oh,oh, oh, oh!... the film about Berlioz?

His music matured through suffering...

Yes, yes, so what place...? Where does it come from?

Suffering — how does it help artistic creation?

How does it help? That depends on people. Some people are very powerfully helped by it. I consider that man one of the purest expressions of music. It is almost... I could say that he is an incarnation of music, of the spirit of music. Unfortunately his body was a little frail; that is, he did not have that solid base which yoga gives, for instance. So this shook him up too

Questions and Answers

much, and made him too emotional, nervous, agitated, emotive. You see, it was a serious weakness. But from the point of view of creation, I have always felt — and the other day it was very strong — that truly he was in contact with the spirit of music, you know, the very meaning of music, and that this entered into him with such a force that it shook him up; but truly, truly he was like an incarnation of music.

The notion that it was suffering that made him create is purely human; it is not true. What, on the contrary, is very remarkable is — to turn the thing around — that there was no physical pain which was not instantaneously translated into music in him; that is, the spirit of music was much stronger than human pain, and each blow which he received from life — and as he was indeed too sensitive to have the power of resisting, he was shaken — all the same, instantly, it was translated into music. It is something very rare.

People — all creators — usually require a little... how shall I put it?... time and quietness to be able to begin creating again, while with him it was spontaneous. The painful blow brought musical expression instantaneously. Truly for him his whole life began with music, finished with music. It was music and it was a... he had such a sincerity and such an exclusive intensity in his attachment to music that I feel that the spirit of music expressed itself through him. Perhaps what he has written is not the *most* beautiful music, because of that kind of weakness of what we call the “*ādhāra*” here. He was... his physical make-up was a little too weak. But from the point of view of music, it is very beautiful, very beautiful. (*Silence*) And even with his power he had a very great simplicity. There is a kind of limpidity of line in what he has written, with a very great technical knowledge, of course. His power of orchestration was very, very remarkable. When one can orchestrate something for six hundred performers, it means a science as complicated as the most complicated mathematics. And in fact they come very close.

20 October 1954

I knew a musician who was not at all his equal but was still a very good musician, and he used to compose. He composed operas, musical comedies, and music for... well, not concert music. In front of a sheet of paper... you see, he had a large sheet of paper and on it he wrote the names of the different instruments; and beside each one he wrote simply, just like that, what it had to play. He was a friend of mine, you know, I used to see him at work. It was as though he was writing equations, like that. When it was finished, it had only to be given to an orchestra, it became something magnificent. Sometimes even... The other man, you noticed how he played his theme on the piano, didn't you? He played a few notes, almost nothing, it seemed just two or three notes, like that: it was his theme. And on this theme, then, suddenly he began to write. But this man usually did not even play his theme on the piano, he wrote directly. It is a particular cerebral formation. There are others who compose exclusively on the piano and someone else has to write for them. Another person has to do this work of giving the different notes and organising the notes to reproduce the harmony created. But this man I am talking about — great musicians like Saint-Saëns, for example, the musicians of his time, gave him their compositions for orchestration. They wrote them, you see, as one writes for the piano, for two hands; and he changed that into orchestra music. He orchestrated just as I said, like that, separating the different groups of instruments and putting down beside each the part it had to play.

(Silence)

Mother, when one hears music, how should one truly hear it?

For this — if one can be completely silent, you see, silent and attentive, simply as though one were an instrument which has to record it — one does not move, and is only something that

Questions and Answers

is listening — if one can be absolutely silent, absolutely still and like that, then the thing enters. And it is only later, some time later, that you can become aware of the effect, either of what it meant or the impression it had on you.

But the best way of listening is this. It is to be like a still mirror and very concentrated, very silent. In fact, we see people who truly love music... I have seen musicians listening to music, musicians, composers or players who truly love music, I have seen them listening to music... they sit completely still, you know, they are like that, they do not move at all. Everything, everything is like that. And if one can stop thinking, then it is very good, then one profits fully... It is one of the methods of inner opening and one of the most powerful.

(Long silence)

Is that all?

Mother, when one gets a shock, some kind of pain, should one try to express it either through music or poetry, unless it comes spontaneously?

Express it? If one has the gift; otherwise it is not worthwhile. But if one has the gift it is good.

There are different depths in these shocks. They are not all on the same plane. Usually people receive emotional or sentimental shocks altogether superficially, and that is why they weep, they cry, they... sometimes gesticulate. Anyway, these are shocks in the outer crust. But there is a greater depth where usually you receive silently, but which awakens in you a creative vibration and a need to formulate. Then, if one is a poet he writes poetry, if one is a musician he composes music, if one is a writer he writes a story, and if one is a philosopher he expresses his state, describes his state.

Now, there is a greater depth of pain which leaves you in

20 October 1954

an absolute silence and opens the inner doors to greater depths which can put you in immediate touch with the Divine. But this indeed is not expressed in words. It changes your consciousness; but usually a long time elapses before one can say anything about it.

Berlioz, of course, was in the second category.

(Long silence)

There then, is that all?

Mother, every Sunday you play the organ and you always play well. But sometimes we feel that you play better!

Eh?

Every time you play well, no doubt, but sometimes we feel that you play better.

Sometimes you feel, sometimes you don't, sometimes you like it, sometimes you don't, sometimes you understand, sometimes you don't understand, and sometimes I play well and sometimes I play badly. *(Laughter)*

This depends on many things, above all on the state you are in yourself. It may depend a great deal on the region which seeks expression in the music. There are some which are accessible, there are others which are more difficult to understand or receive; but usually it depends almost exclusively on the condition you yourself are in. The day you are well disposed, you like it; the day you are ill-disposed you don't understand. There are days when it puts you to sleep, there are days when it pleases you; on some days you have the feeling that it opens a horizon before you, on others you say, "don't know, don't understand"! So, there. It depends altogether on one's own condition.

Questions and Answers

Mother, when you play, do you decide beforehand from which region the music has to come?

Eh?

On Sundays, when you play, do you decide beforehand from what region the music has to come?

I?

From where does it come?

Before sitting down I don't even know what notes I am going to play. The region? It is always the same region. This is why I can speak with some experience about the origin of Berlioz's music, because it is a region very well known to me, one I frequent assiduously. But I do not at all know what will come. Nothing at all, nothing. I don't even decide what feeling or idea or state of consciousness is going to be expressed, nothing. I am like a blank page. I come and sit down, concentrate for a minute and let it come. Afterwards, sometimes I know, not always. But when I hear it a second time here, in the afternoon or evening, then I know; because it is no longer I, it is something that comes from outside. So then I know quite well what it is like.

But one day, Sweet Mother, you told everybody what you were going to play.

Yes, that day I knew what I was going to play. This may happen.

There are times when I know, others when I don't. Only, there are days when, if I had at my disposal an orchestra of two hundred players, it would be very interesting. The means are poor; that is, the music I sense, which comes to me, would be expressed very well as... by what we saw the other evening in the film. It would need, you see, an expression of that kind

20 October 1954

to be expressed fully. So it has to be collected as in a dropper, you know, and then given out drop by drop, like that. And so naturally it is much impoverished. It doesn't come to much. The greater part escapes.

There. Now I think it is finished. Nothing else that's important, interesting, urgent? (*Looking at a child searching her text*) Oh dear! She still has her nose in her book.

Here I did not understand...

Did not understand! There are many things you have not understood. (*Laughter*)

"What is happening in you is that the consciousness is trying to fix itself in this liberation."

So, what did you not understand?

"What is happening in you is that the consciousness is trying..."

He is answering—it is always the same thing—answering something the person writing the letter has asked... an experience he had or something he has described. He is answering that and says, "This is..." the explanation of what happened. So it doesn't mean anything else except what it says. It is an explanation. What the experience was he doesn't say. Don't understand, eh?

Mother, there are many elements in our being of which we are not conscious. Isn't that so?

Yes, many.

Questions and Answers

Can there be some parts which serve the Divine without our being aware of it?

Yes, yes. In fact there are some which not only always seek the Divine but have an intense aspiration, and one is not aware of them. The psychic being is like that, and it is always there. But one becomes aware of it only very rarely. It is so veiled, you see. I spoke a while ago of the outer crust. It is really like a crust. It is something hard, thick, without any transparency, which lets no vibrations pass, and one lives so constantly inside this that one is not even aware that there is something else. But there is, there is indeed right in the depths of the being — specially of those who are predestined, that's understood, but still — a being which not only presides over one's destiny, not only aspires for identification with the Divine, but has the power to govern the circumstances of life and, in fact, to organise them in spite of the outer will which very often revolts and does not want the circumstances as this inner consciousness — which is fully clear-sighted — has organised them. And it is only much later, when one becomes aware of it and looks back at his life, that one realises that all this was wonderfully organised with a complete clear-sightedness of what was necessary, in order to lead him there, just where he had to go.

Most often the things which you took for accidents or misfortunes or even tragedies or even for the blows of fate, for attacks of the adverse forces, all this, almost all without any exception, was a marvellously perspicacious and admirably executed plan to lead you just where you had to go by the shortest road.

Of course this is not always absolute, because it depends on the importance of the individual in relation to the importance of the surrounding circumstances. That is why I said at the beginning: every predestined being. What I mean by "predestined" is a being who has come down upon earth to accomplish a precise mission and who, naturally, will be helped in the

20 October 1954

accomplishment of this mission. It may be a very modest mission but it is a precise one that he has to accomplish upon earth. Well, all these beings... their life is organised in this way; but ninety-nine and a half per cent are not aware of it, and they revolt or lament or... And then, above all, they pity themselves greatly and lament their own difficulties, their own miseries, their own sufferings, and caress themselves gently: "Oh, my poor little one, how unhappy you are!" But it is their inner being which has done everything.

There we are.

Au revoir, my children.

3 November 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith – Aspiration – Surrender".

"In this Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the influence or not. If there is a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come."

*"The opening in one form or another is sure to come" ...
Are there many kinds of openings?*

Oh, yes! First of all there are many different parts of the being and each one can open in its own way, you see; the mental opening and the vital opening are very different in nature and the physical opening is still more different.

What is the physical opening?

That's when the physical body opens to the divine influence and receives the divine forces.

For example, you see, there's a moment when the divine forces come and penetrate all the cells. To begin with, it is the physical consciousness, the body consciousness which opens first to the influence of the Divine and understands and wants nothing else but *this*, the divine Presence, the divine influence. There are also the body's feelings, and the very cells of the body, which can open to receive the force. For instance, when at a certain moment one feels a kind of very intense vibration spreading through the whole body and at that time one feels filled with a strength, an unusual force, a consciousness also, and all things become clear

3 November 1954

and perceptible, then that's an opening of the body; it is when the body knows, you see, and has succeeded in opening to the influence.

*Mother, why is it better to concentrate in the heart?*¹

He says here that it is easier. For some people it is more difficult, it depends on one's nature. But it is better because if you concentrate there, deeply enough, it is there that you enter into contact with the psychic for the first time; while if you concentrate in the head you have to pass later from the head to the heart to be able to identify yourself with the psychic being. And if you concentrate by gathering the energies, it is better to gather them here, because it is in this centre, in this region of the being that you find the will to progress, the force of purification, and the most intense and effective aspiration. The aspiration that comes from the heart is much more effective than that from the head.

“Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers.” What is the meaning of “keep the being on its side”?

“To keep on its side” — it is, for instance... you see, there is on one side — how shall I put it? — let us take the army, the army of the divine forces, on the other side the army of the forces of ordinary nature; so whether to keep on the side of this army or of that, that's what it means.

You do not understand? That is to say, to go to this side, join this or that side. If I keep on the side of the divine forces I join those who are fighting for the divine forces like an army. If

¹ “There is no other method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening.”

Questions and Answers

I put myself on the side of the ordinary vital forces of life, I go over to that side and forsake the others, I go over to that side.

Sweet Mother, what does the “knot of the ego” mean?

Knot? Oh! It is an image, you see. But it is something that clings to you and holds you as tightly as a well-made rope knot. And so it is always said that in order to progress truly the first thing to do is to cut the knot of the ego. It is very expressive and makes a good image, doesn't it? — one is tied up, one is shut up in oneself, bound as in a prison by knots which tie up all the parts of the being together; it is this which produces a cohesion. But at the same time it is a limitation, a limiting. You cannot receive all the forces you would like to, because you are enclosed in this shell made of a heap of knots in the rope that's tying you.

Sweet Mother, how can we cut the knot of the ego?

How to cut it? Take a sword and strike it (*laughter*), when one becomes conscious of it. For usually one is not; we think it quite normal, what happens to us; and in fact it is very normal but we think it quite good also. So to begin with one must have a great clear-sightedness to become aware that one is enclosed in all these knots which hold one in bondage. And then, when one is aware that there's something altogether tightly closed in there — so tightly that one has tried in vain to move it — then one imagines one's will to be a very sharp sword-blade, and with all one's force one strikes a blow on this knot (imaginary, of course, one doesn't take up a sword in fact), and this produces a result. Of course you can do this work from the psychological point of view, discovering all the elements constituting this knot, the whole set of resistances, habits, preferences, of all that holds you narrowly closed in. So when you grow aware of this, you can concentrate and call the divine Force and the Grace and strike a good blow on this formation, these things so closely held,

3 November 1954

like that, that nothing can separate them. And at that moment you must resolve that you will no longer listen to these things, that you will listen only to the divine Consciousness and will do no other work except the divine work without worrying about personal results, free from all attachment, free from all preference, free from all wish for success, power, satisfaction, vanity, all this.... All this must disappear and you must see only the divine Will incarnated in your will and making you act. Then, in this way, you are cured.

Mother, how can one strengthen one's will?

Oh, as one strengthens muscles, by a methodical exercise. You take one little thing, something you want to do or don't want to do. Begin with a small thing, not something very essential to the being, but a small detail. And then, if, for instance, it is something you are in the habit of doing, you insist on it with the same regularity, you see, either not to do it or to do it — you insist on it and compel yourself to do it as you compel yourself to lift a weight — it's the same thing. You make the same kind of effort, but it is more of an inner effort. And after having taken little things like this — things relatively easy, you know — after taking these and succeeding with them, you can unite with a greater force and try a more complicated experiment. And gradually, if you do this regularly, you will end up by acquiring an independent and very strong will.

Sweet Mother, are there different aspirations, like mental or vital aspiration?

Yes, each part of the being has its own aspiration which has the nature of the aspiring part. There is even a physical aspiration; the body can... The cells of the body understand what the transformation will be, and with all their strength, all the consciousness they contain, they aspire for this transformation.

Questions and Answers

The very cells of the body — not the central will, thought or emotion — the cells of the body open in this way to receive the Force.

Is the psychic being in the heart?

Not in the physical heart, not in the organ. It is in a fourth dimension, an inner dimension. But it is in that region, the region somewhat behind the solar plexus, it is there that one finds it most easily. The psychic being is in the fourth dimension as related to our physical being.

What does “a negative Nirvana” mean?

Negative Nirvana? It is not in today’s lesson.

Negative Nirvana means quite simply a Nirvana which contains nothing positive. It means a nought containing nothing positive, an absolute nought.

Here we are, my children, that’s all.

(Mother turns towards Vishwanath who is busy with the tape-recorder, and asks him:) You have a question? *(Laughter)* You want to put a question? Put, put, put your question! *(Laughter)* What is it? No?

That’s all.

10 November 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith – Aspiration – Surrender".

What does this mean exactly: "In Yoga it is out of the inner victory that there comes the outer conquest"?

Yes. First you must attain the true consciousness, be in contact with the Divine and let Him govern your action; and then you can act upon outer circumstances, even actions, and overcome outer difficulties. You must have the inner experience first before hoping to be able to [...] ¹ something external. In fact everything is founded upon an awareness of the divine Consciousness, and unless this is done all the rest is uncertain. Nothing can be permanently established. It is only after one has become conscious; then one can follow one's path rapidly, without fear. Otherwise there are always... one always risks making mistakes, going on a false track.

Sweet Mother, what does "psychic poise" mean?

Psychic poise means the poise of the being which comes from the fact that the psychic, which governs the movements of the being, is the master of all the movements of the consciousness. The psychic is always well poised. So when it is active and governs the being, it inevitably brings a balance.

Mother, last time we read: "It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force."

¹ Word missing in transcript.

Questions and Answers

Mother, if one has defects, how can one open to the Force?

I think everyone has defects. So if it were necessary not to have any defects in order to be open, nobody could be open. One always has defects, to begin with. One is not made of a single piece. This is the main reason. There are many different parts in the being which sometimes are quite independent of one another and take hold of the consciousness almost in turn and sometimes even in an altogether regular order. So, when part of the being has goodwill and already a kind of perception of what the divine force is, you see, this opens the being and puts it into contact with this force. But it is not always there. There are other parts which come to the front, which have defects, bad habits, and which can veil the consciousness completely. But if one keeps the memory of the part which was open, one can keep the opening all the same, though outwardly the part that is active is not particularly interested and not even able to understand. But the other part can continue to be open and receive the force.

Can one have faith through aspiration?

What? Faith through aspiration? I think so, because it is rare to have it spontaneously, to be born with it. Very few people have this good luck to have a spontaneous faith. But if one is very sincere in one's aspiration, one gets it. Aspiration can bring everything, provided it is sincere and constant. One always has a tiny element of faith within oneself, whether it be faith in what one's parents have said or in the books one has studied. After all, all your education is based upon a faith of this kind. Those who have educated you have told you certain things. You had no means of checking, because you were too young and had no experience. But you have faith in what they told you and you go forward on that faith. So everyone has a tiny bit of faith, and to increase it one can use one's aspiration.

10 November 1954

Mother, in your symbol the twelve petals signify the twelve inner planes, don't they?

It signifies anything one wants, you see. Twelve: that's the number of Aditi, of Mahashakti. So it applies to everything; all her action has twelve aspects. There are also her twelve virtues, her twelve powers, her twelve aspects, and then her twelve planes of manifestation and many other things that are twelve; and the symbol, the number twelve is in itself a symbol. It is the symbol of manifestation, double perfection, in essence and in manifestation, in the creation.

What are the twelve aspects, Sweet Mother?

Ah, my child, I have described this somewhere, but I don't remember now. For it is always a choice, you see; according to what one wants to say, one can choose these twelve aspects or twelve others, or give them different names. The same aspect can be named in different ways. This does not have the fixity of a mental theory. (*Silence*)

According to the angle from which one sees the creation, one day I may describe twelve aspects to you; and then another day, because I have shifted my centre of observation, I may describe twelve others, and they will be equally true.

(*To Vishwanath*) Is it the wind that's producing this storm? It is very good for a dramatic stage-effect.... The traitor is approaching in the night... yes? We are waiting for some terrible deed....

Sweet Mother, when does the psychic being lose its poise?

What?... *Never.*

Then why is it said: "The psychic poise is necessary"?

Yes. This means that the help of the psychic poise is necessary.

Questions and Answers

It is not that the psychic being has to become balanced: it is that one must be under the influence of the psychic poise. The psychic is always balanced. But the being is not always under the influence of the psychic which brings the balance. The influence of the psychic gives the balance. (*Silence*)

How can one know that the psychic being is in front?

My child, when it happens, one understands. Precisely, so long as one doesn't understand it means that it hasn't come. This is like people asking you, "How can I know whether I am in contact with the Divine?" That itself is enough to prove that they are not. For if they are they can no longer ask the question. It is something understood. For the psychic it is the same thing. When the psychic is in front one knows it, and there is no possibility of any doubt. Consequently one no longer asks the question.

How can we make the mind and vital a "clear field"?

Make what?... Yes, it is difficult. (*Laughter*) It is a great task. Well, it is always the same thing; first of all you must understand what is meant by being clear. And then you must aspire, and with persistence; and each time something comes to obstruct you, you must brush it aside, push it back, not accept it.

The mind and vital have a very bad habit: when one has succeeded through aspiration in having an experience, being in contact with the divine force, immediately they rush forward to make it their own property, you see, like that (*gesture*), as a cat jumps on a mouse. And then they catch it and say, "It is for me." And then the mind turns it into all kinds of speculations and affirmations and constructions and takes great pride in it, and the vital uses the power to fulfil its own desires.

So, in order to avoid this it is said that they must be clear, quiet, peaceful, and must not rush at the force which is trying

10 November 1954

to manifest and make of it a tool for their personal use. For the mind to be clear it must be silent — at least to a certain extent, and for the vital to be clear it must give up its desires, have no desires and impulses and passions. This indeed is the essential condition. Later, if one goes into details, neither of them should have any preferences, attachments, any particular way of being or particular set of ideas.

Sweet Mother, what does “sincerity” mean, exactly?

There are several degrees of sincerity.

The most elementary degree is not to say one thing and think another, claim one thing and want another. For example, what happens quite often: to say, “I want to make progress, and I want to get rid of my defects” and, at the same time, to cherish one’s defects in the consciousness and take great care to hide them so that nobody intervenes and sends them off. This indeed is a very common phenomenon. This is already the second degree. The first degree, you see, is when someone claims, for example, to have a very great aspiration and to want the spiritual life and, at the same time, does completely... how to put it?... shamelessly, things which are most contradictory to the spiritual life. This is indeed a degree of sincerity, rather of insincerity, which is most obvious.

But there is a second degree which I have just described to you, which is like this: there is one part of the being which has an aspiration and says, even thinks, even feels that it would very much like to get rid of defects, imperfections; and then, at the same time, other parts which hide these defects and imperfections very carefully so as not to be compelled to expose them and get over them. This is very common.

And finally, if we go far enough, if we push the description far enough, so long as there is a part of the being which contradicts the central aspiration for the Divine, one is not perfectly sincere. That is to say, a perfect sincerity is something extremely

Questions and Answers

rare. And most commonly, very very frequently, when there are things in one's nature which one does not like, one takes the greatest care to hide them from oneself, one finds favourable explanations or simply makes a little movement, like this (*gesture*). You have noticed that when things move like this you can't see them clearly. Well, where the defect is seated, there is a kind of vibration which does this, and so your sight is not clear, you no longer see your defects. And this is automatic. Well, all these are insincerities.

And perfect sincerity comes when at the centre of the being there is the consciousness of the divine Presence, the consciousness of the divine Will, and when the entire being, like a luminous, clear, transparent whole, expresses this in all its details. This indeed is true sincerity.

When, at any moment, whatever may happen, the being has given itself to the Divine and wants only the divine Will, when, no matter what is going on in the being, at any moment whatever, always, the whole being in perfect unanimity can say to the Divine and feels for the Divine, "Let Thy Will be done", when it is spontaneous, total, integral, *then* you are sincere. But until this is established, it is a mixed sincerity, more or less mixed, right up to the point where one is not at all sincere.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into a movement of the Divine Force. If you feel conscious of the Divine Force, then call it in more and more to govern your effort, to take it up, to transform it into something not yours, but the Mother's." But if one is not conscious of the Divine Force?

You must become conscious. Aspire, ask, aspire sincerely.

You see, generally speaking, you are here, we have a class, we have just read something, you have questions to ask; while you are here you ask questions and think of the subject. But as

10 November 1954

soon as you go out or go home, you think of a thousand other things, don't you? So, how do you expect that you will become conscious of the divine Force? We have hardly about half an hour here, that's not a very long time to become conscious of the Force.

But if it is your sole preoccupation, if truly, with all your being, you want to become conscious of the divine Force, you will be able to. You can't, simply because you think about it from time to time; when the subject comes up, you ask yourself, "Why, it is true, how can I do it?" And then, the next minute you don't think about it any more. So, how do you expect this to happen? You must be very attentive, you must be very silent, must observe yourself very clearly. And you must be very humble; that is, be willing not to play a great part in all this story. The misfortune is that usually either the vital being or the mental being or even the physical being is very anxious to play a part, very anxious. So it swells up, takes up a lot of place, covers the rest; and it covers it so well that one can't even become aware of the presence of the divine Force because the personal movement of the physical, the body, the vital, the mind, covers everything with its own importance.

Listen: if every evening before going to sleep you take off only a tiny minute, like that, and in this little minute, with all the concentration you are capable of you ask to become conscious of the divine Force, simply like that, nothing more; in the morning when waking up, before beginning your day, if you do the same thing, take a minute off, concentrate as much as you can and ask to become conscious of the divine Force, you will see, after some time, it will happen. Nothing but these small things which are nothing at all and take no time.

One day it will happen. Only, you must do it with concentration, intensity and sincerity; that is, it must not happen that while you are asking for this, another part of your being is telling itself, "After all, this has no importance." Or maybe you think of something else, what you are going to put on or the

Questions and Answers

person you will meet, anything at all, a thousand desires. You must be there, fully, for *one minute*. Of course if you multiply the minute, it goes so much the quicker. But as I also said, if one is able not to contradict the next minute the aspiration one had the minute before, it is easier; if not, it pushes sincerity away.

17 November 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith – Aspiration – Surrender".

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "The Truth for you is to feel the Divine in you, open to the Mother and work for the Divine till you are aware of her in all your activities." Why has he said "the Divine" once and another time "the Mother"?

Probably he considers these the two aspects of the problem. The truth is that there are people who can more easily get into contact with an impersonal Divine than with a personal Divine. For them, for certain minds, certain types of intelligence, it is easier; they understand better or think they understand better.

You see, there are certain... what we could call certain attributes of the Divine which it seems to them impossible to give to a personal being, and so they prefer to have a relation with an impersonal conception of the Divine. So, for them, he says this.

There are others who are able to have both at the same time, one completing the other; but for others still it is an antinomy, a contradiction. So, they prefer to choose one or the other. I think this is why he has put it like that, so that each one may choose the approach that's easiest for him and the most expressive also. Essentially it is the same thing; in the human mind it becomes different. And then, man's mind fashions man's consciousness; and as for the human consciousness, well, it depends on one's inner attitude and one's tastes. The mind always needs to make divisions, otherwise it thinks that it does not understand. Probably it is to help him in his work, so that there may not be someone who says, "Ah, no, I don't want the personal Divine!" — so he says, "It is all right, turn to an impersonal God."

Questions and Answers

Mother, when we make an effort, there's something in us which becomes very self-satisfied and boastful and contented with this effort, and that spoils everything. Then how can we get rid of this?

Ah, that's what looks on at what it is doing! There is always someone who observes when one is doing something. Now sometimes, he becomes proud. Obviously, this takes away much strength from the effort. I think it is that: it is the habit of looking at oneself acting, looking at oneself living. It is necessary to observe oneself but I think it is still more necessary to try to be absolutely sincere and spontaneous, very spontaneous in what one does: not always to go on observing oneself, looking at what one is doing, judging oneself — sometimes severely. In fact it is almost as bad as patting oneself with satisfaction, the two are equally bad. One should be so sincere in his aspiration that he doesn't even know he is aspiring, that he becomes the aspiration itself. When this indeed can be realised, one truly attains to an extraordinary power.

One minute, one minute of this, and you can prepare years of realisation. When one is no longer a self-regarding being, an ego looking at itself acting, when one becomes the action itself, above all in the aspiration, this truly is good. When there is no longer a person who is aspiring, when it is an aspiration which leaps up with a fully concentrated impulsion, then truly it goes very far. Otherwise there is always mixed up in it a little vanity, a little self-complacency, a little self-pity also, all kinds of little things which come and spoil everything. But it is difficult.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "In this Yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence." What does it mean exactly: "to open oneself to the Divine Influence"?

How many times I have explained this to you! At least thirty

17 November 1954

times. What is the use of explaining? You must try, you must make an effort yourself. To explain is simply to try to give a formula to the mind which allows the thing to be done without any effort. One has a fine explanation in his head and believes that it is enough for the thing to be realised. But if one does just a little — even very awkwardly — gradually one progresses, one does better and better. When one does it really well, one understands what one is doing, and one also knows how one has learnt to do it, by doing it step by step, by trying.

What are the conditions in which there is a descent of faith?

The most important condition is an almost childlike trust, the candid trust of a child who is sure that it will come, who doesn't even ask himself about it; when he needs something he is sure that it is going to come. Well, it is this, this kind of trust — this indeed is the most important condition.

To aspire is indispensable. But some people aspire with such a conflict inside them between faith and absence of faith, trust and distrust, between the optimism which is sure of victory and a pessimism which asks itself when the catastrophe will come. Now if this is in the being, you may aspire but you don't get anything. And you say, "I aspired but didn't get anything." It is because you demolish your aspiration all the time by your lack of confidence. But if you truly have trust... Children when left to themselves and not deformed by older people have such a great trust that all will be well! For example, when they have a small accident, they never think that this is going to be something serious: they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be over, and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.

Well, when one aspires for the Force, when one asks the Divine for help, if one asks with the unshakable certitude that it will come, that it is impossible that it won't, then it is sure to come. It is this kind... yes, this is truly an inner opening,

Questions and Answers

this trustfulness. And some people are constantly in this state. When there is something to be received, they are always there to receive it. There are others, when there is something to have, a force descends, they are always absent, they are always closed at that moment; while those who have this childlike trust are always there at the right time.

And it is strange, isn't it, outwardly there is no difference. They may have exactly the same goodwill, the same aspiration, the same wish to do good, but those who have this smiling confidence within them, do not question, do not ask themselves whether they will have it or not have it, whether the Divine will answer or not — the question does not arise, it is something understood... "What I need will be given to me; if I pray I shall have an answer; if I am in a difficulty and ask for help, the help will come — and not only will it come but it will manage everything." If the trust is there, spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better than anything else, and the results are marvellous. It is with the contradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils everything, with this kind of notion which comes when one is in difficulties: "Oh, it is impossible! I shall never manage it. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I am in, which I don't want, is going to grow still worse, if I continue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if, if..." like that, and one builds a wall between oneself and the force one wants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has it wonderfully, without a shadow, without an argument, without a contradiction. And when it is like that, there is not a prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration which is not realised.

How can we get rid of abhimana?¹

Oh, good heavens! First of all, see how utterly disastrous it is: it is very petty, it is destructive; and then take a step farther and hold

¹ Hurt pride, self-pity because one feels ill-treated.

17 November 1954

yourself up to ridicule, see to what extent you are ludicrous. So, in this way you get rid of it. But so long as you take it seriously, so long as you justify the movement, so long as somewhere in the mind there's the idea, "After all, it is quite natural, I was ill-treated and I suffer from the ill-treatment", then it is finished, it will never go. But if you begin to understand that it is a sign of weakness, of inferiority — naturally, of a very considerable egoism, a narrow-mindedness, and above all of a pettiness of the feelings, a small-heartedness — if you understand that, you can fight it. But your thought should be in agreement. If there is the attitude, "I have been hurt, I am suffering, I am going to show that I am suffering", then it is like that. I am not going so far as to mention people who nurse a fairly secret spirit of vengeance and say, "I have been made to suffer, I shall make them suffer." This indeed becomes nasty enough for people to notice that it should not exist — though it is not always easy to resist. It indicates something very petty in the nature. It may be very sensitive, it may be very emotional, it may have a certain intensity but it is quite petty, it is all turned back on oneself, and is quite petty.

Of course, you can use your reason, if you have one which works. You can make use of the reason and can tell yourself something which is very true: that in our being it is only egoism which always suffers, and that if there was no egoism there would be no suffering, and that if one wants the spiritual life, one must overcome his egoism. So the first thing to do is to look straight at this suffering, perceive to what an extent it is the expression of a very petty egoism and then sweep the place clean, make a clean ground and say, "I don't want this dirt, I am going to clean my inner chamber."

Are even physical sufferings ascribable to the ego?

Physical sufferings? No, she² is not speaking of physical suffer-

² The child who asked the question.

Questions and Answers

ings. Physical sufferings? One thing is certain, you know; I think this was in the system, in the nature, that it was invented as an indicator; because, for example, if the body was disorganised in some way or other and this caused no suffering at all, one would never look for a way to stop the disorganisation. One thinks of curing an illness only because one suffers. If it caused you no unpleasantness, you would never think of being cured of it. So, in the economy of Nature I think that the first purpose of physical suffering was to give you a warning.

Unfortunately, there is the vital which pokes its nose into the affair and takes a very perverse pleasure in increasing, twisting, sharpening the suffering. Now this deforms the whole system because instead of being an indicator, sometimes it becomes an occasion for enjoying the illness, for making oneself interesting, and also having the opportunity to pity oneself — all kinds of things which all come from the vital and are all detestable, one more than another. But originally I think that it was this: “Take care!” You see, it’s like a danger-signal: “Take care, there’s something out of order.”

Only, 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

17 November 1954

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, on the part which hurts, 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 and that all of a sudden... you know, don’t you?... and then, when it stops, it begins to vibrate again terribly. 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

Questions and Answers

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. (*Laughter*)

24 November 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith – Aspiration – Surrender".

"To keep the psychic awake and in front": what does "in front" mean, Sweet Mother?

That is to say, in the forefront of the consciousness, instead of being pushed behind, in a background which is only very rarely seen; to keep it right in front of the consciousness, in the active consciousness. In any case, you must want it and try to do it.

"Desire... leads to pulling down the force": what does this mean?

You see, one has an aspiration for Light, for Knowledge, for all kinds of things. Now, if a desire is mixed with your aspiration, instead of simply aspiring and awaiting the answer, you begin to pull, as one draws things when one desires them — you draw them to yourself. So instead of waiting for the Force and Light and Consciousness and Truth to answer your aspiration, you pull them down like that, towards yourself with a very egoistical movement, as though you were pulling a rope or something, and so anything at all can come in answer. Instead of its being, for example, a true light, it can be a false light which takes brilliant appearances to deceive you; instead of its being a true force, it can be an adverse force of the vital which wants to take possession of you. It means that when one has an aspiration, it is better that no desires get mixed up in it, because desires always spoil everything.

What does "inner tapasya" mean, exactly?

Questions and Answers

Inner tapasya? It means the tapasya for the character, and for changing the psychological movements of the being, precisely to conquer the desires, conquer the passions, overcome egoism, get rid of fears. This is the inner tapasya.

Outer tapasya is all the ascetic or hathayogic methods; to make use of physical means for one's yoga is an outer tapasya. But inner tapasya consists of attending to one's character and trying to change it.

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between willing and desiring?

They are not at all the same thing. When you see that something ought to be done, for instance, that it is good to do it — take your reason: say your reason decides that this ought to be done — then your will starts working and makes you do the things required for this thing to be done. Your will is an executing power, which ought to be at the disposal, the service of what was decided by the reason or a higher force. It is something coordinated, organised, which acts in accordance with a plan, precisely in a fully controlled way.

Desire is an impulse. It takes hold of you... it doesn't necessarily hold you with any conscious thought. It is an impulse which pushes you to get possession of something. You can put your will at the service of your desire, but desire is not will. Desire is an impulse. There are people who are full of desires and who have no will. So they simply are eaten up, as we say, by their desires; but this leads to nothing, because they don't even have the will to realise them. Most people always put the little bit of will that's at their disposal at the service of their desires. But will is a force with a power of organisation and it can be put at the service of any purpose whatever. It is something that, when one has will-power, one has [. . .]¹ to a definite purpose. This is will.

¹ Words missing in transcript.

24 November 1954

You must not mistake desire for will. Desire is an impulse: it seizes you, you know, it clings to you, holds you. And then, if you let desire do what it likes, well, it makes you do anything at all, and it makes use of your will. But usually, a desire is something violent, passionate and transient. Rarely is it very sustained; it does not have the stuff, the organisation of a sustained effort. When a desire seizes you, it can make you do anything whatever — but impulsively, not methodically.

Sweet Mother, why do some children have the habit of always asking for things?

What things?

Material things, like sweets, everything they see...

Oh, because they are full of desires. They were probably formed with vibrations of desires, and as they have no control over themselves it is expressed freely. Older people are also full of desires, but usually they have a kind of... how do we call it?... they are a little shy of showing their desires or they feel a bit ashamed or perhaps are afraid they will be laughed at; so they don't show them. Well, they too are full of desires. Only children are more simple. When they want something they say so. They don't tell themselves that perhaps it would be wiser not to show this, because they don't yet have this kind of reasoning. But I think, generally speaking, with very few exceptions, that people live in perpetual desires. Only, they don't express them, and sometimes they are ashamed also to acknowledge it to themselves. But it is there, this need of having something... you know, one sees something pretty, it is immediately translated into a desire for possession; and this is one of the things... it is absolutely childish. It is childish and indeed it is ridiculous, because at least ninety times out of a hundred, when the one who had a desire for something possesses it, he doesn't even look at it any longer. It

Questions and Answers

is very rarely that this thing continues to interest him once he has it, whatever the nature of the object.

Sweet Mother, how can we help a child to come out of this habit of always asking?

There are many ways. But first of all you must know whether you will not just stop him from freely expressing what he thinks and feels. Because this is what people usually do. They scold, even sometimes punish him; and so the child forms the habit of concealing his desires. But he is not cured of them. And you see, if he is always told, “No, you won’t have that”, then, simply, this state of mind gets settled in him: “Ah, when you are small, people don’t give you anything! You must wait till you are big. When I am big I shall have all that I want.” That’s how it is. But this does not cure them. It is very difficult to bring up a child. There is a way which consists in giving him all he wants; and naturally, the next minute he will want something else, because that’s the law, the law of desire: never to be satisfied. And so, if he is intelligent, one can tell him, “But you see, you insisted so much on having this and now you no longer care for it. You want something else.” Yet if he was very clever he would answer, “Well, the best way of curing me is to give me what I ask for.”

Some people cherish this idea all their life. When they are told that they should overcome their desires, they say, “The easiest way is to satisfy them.” This kind of logic seems impeccable. But the fact is that it is not the object desired that has to be changed, it is the impulse of desire, the movement of desire. And for this a great deal of knowledge is needed, and this is difficult for a very young child.

It is difficult. Indeed, they don’t have the capacity for reasoning; one can’t explain things to them, because they don’t understand the reasons. So you see, when it is like that the parents usually tell the child, “Keep quiet, you are a nuisance!” In this way they get out of the difficulty. But this is no solution. It

24 November 1954

is very difficult. It asks for a sustained effort and an unshakable patience. Some people are like that all their life; they are like babies throughout their existence and it is impossible to make them see reason. As soon as one tells them that they are not reasonable and that one can't all the time be giving them things to satisfy their desires, they simply think, "These people are unpleasant. This person is not nice." That's all.

In fact, perhaps one should begin by shifting the movement to things which it is better to have from the true point of view, and which it is more difficult to obtain. If one could turn this impulsion of desire towards a... For example, when a child is full of desires, if one could give him a desire of a higher kind — instead of its being a desire for purely material objects, you understand, an altogether transitory satisfaction — if one could awaken in him the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to become a remarkable person... in this way, begin with that. As these things are difficult to do, so, gradually, he will develop his will for these things. Or even, from the material point of view, the desire to do something difficult, as for example, construct a toy which is difficult to make — or give him a game of patience which requires a great deal of perseverance.

If one can orient them — it requires much discernment, much patience, but it can be done — and if one can orient them towards something like this, to succeed in very difficult games or to work out something which requires much care and attention, and can push them in some line like this so that it exercises a persevering will in them, then this can have results: turn their attention away from certain things and towards others. This needs constant care and it seems to be a way that's most — I can't say the easiest, for it is certainly not easy — but the most effective way. To say "No" does not cure and to say "Yes" does not cure either; and sometimes it becomes extremely difficult also, naturally.

I knew people, for example, whose children wanted to eat everything they saw. They were allowed to do it. So they fell

Questions and Answers

very ill. After that, they felt disgusted. But this is a little risky, isn't it? There are children who fidget with everything. Now, one day, you see, one child got hold of a box of matches. Then, instead of telling him, "Don't touch it", they let him do it: he burnt himself. He never touched them again.

But it is a little dangerous, because some children are altogether unconscious and very bold in their desires: for example, those who like to walk on the edge of a wall or the top of a roof or have the desire to plunge into water when they see it or to dive into a river... you see, this becomes sometimes very difficult... or those who have the mania for crossing the street: each time they see a car coming... they try to cross it. So if they are allowed to do so, the experience may one day be fatal.

Well, I knew people who did this. I don't know if they succeeded much in it. As I said, the child was burnt, but this was a nuisance because it left scars. And then too, one who played quite unthinkingly on the railing of a staircase and fell and half-broke his head... you see, this has its consequences. But to say "No" to them too doesn't cure them, quite the contrary. And to tell them, "Especially don't take this, this will harm you" — they don't believe it; they think it is just to get rid of their desire.

It is a very difficult problem. There was someone who had ideas like this, on freedom in education and who made theories to tell me that individual freedom should be respected to the extent of never making use of past experience for new people, and that we ought to leave them to make all their experiments themselves. This goes very far and they criticised me very much because I was trying to prevent accidents. So they told me, "You are absolutely wrong in preventing them." So I said, "But if someone dies?" — "Well, it means he had to die. You have no right to intervene in their destiny and the freedom of their development. They want to commit stupidities, let them do stupid things. When they realise that these are stupidities, they won't do them." And there are cases in which one is sure never to do it again, because one has gone beyond the limit.

24 November 1954

It is a very difficult problem, if one wants to make a theory of it. But each case is absolutely different and asks for a different procedure. And in fact, if one truly wanted to give the best education to a child, well, one would have to spend all his time on it. One could not do anything else, because, even considering that one should not watch over him visibly, in order to do the right thing at the right time, one should always observe him, even without his knowing it. One would not be able to do anything else.

So, probably, one needs to find a middle term between the two, between the two extremes: that of watching over him all the time and that of leaving him absolutely free to do what he likes, without even warning him against the accidents which are likely to occur. An adjustment to make every minute! Difficult.

Here it is written: "It is very unwise for anyone to claim prematurely to have possession of the supermind or even to have a taste of it." What is a foretaste of the supermind?

It is still more unwise to imagine that one has it. That's it. Yes, because some people, as soon as they find a phrase in a book, in a teaching, immediately imagine that they have realised that. So, when Sri Aurobindo began speaking about the supermind — in what he was writing — everyone wrote to him: "I have seen the supramental Light, I had an experience of the supermind!" Now, it is better to keep the word "supermind" for a later time. For the moment let us not speak about it.

Somewhere he has written a very detailed description of all the mental functions accessible to man. Well, when we read this, we say that merely to traverse the mental domain to its highest limit there are so many stages which have not yet been crossed that truly we don't need to speak about the supermind for the time being.

Questions and Answers

When he speaks of the higher ranges of the mind, one becomes aware that one very rarely lives in these places. It is very rare for one to be in this state of consciousness. On the contrary it is in what he calls the altogether ordinary mind, the mind of the ordinary man, that we live. And to the ordinary consciousness the reason seems to belong to a very high region; and the reason for him is one of the average faculties of the human mind. There are mental regions very much higher than that, which he has described in detail. And it is quite certain that those correspondents, if they had... Suddenly they said that they were having wonderful supramental experiences, because one is rarely in these regions which lie beyond the reason, which are regions of direct perception, intuition and other faculties of intuition of the same kind, which go far beyond the reason; and these are still mental regions, they have nothing of the supramental.

Mother, you said that between the supermind and the mind there are many stages, didn't you? And it is written that the next logical stage in the evolution of Nature is the superman. Why not a race which is...

Intermediary? We shall see that later.

Does this mean that from the mind we can go to the supermind without passing through the intermediary stages?

I did not say that they were between the mind and the supermind. I said it is in the mind itself, without coming out of the mind, that there are all these regions which are almost inaccessible for most human beings. I did not say *between* the mind and supermind. You mean this evening or at some other time? What are you speaking of, of something I said this evening or something I said on another day?

24 November 1954

This very evening, you were saying...

No, you did not hear. I said in the mind itself. Before reaching the extreme limit of the mind, there are so many regions and mental activities which are not at all accessible to most human beings. And even for those who can reach them, they are not regions where they constantly live. They must make an effort of concentration to get there and they don't always arrive. There are regions which Sri Aurobindo has described which only very rare individuals can reach, and still he speaks of them as mental regions. He does not use for them the word supramental.

It can very well happen — besides, when he spoke of the supermind he said that there are many regions in the supermind itself and that it would naturally be the first ones, the lowest regions, which would manifest to begin with — it can very well happen that there are still a number of intermediary states of being, this is possible — intermediary stages.

Certainly the perfect race will not come spontaneously. Very probably not. But already, even the first attempts... in comparison with the present human being, it will make a great difference, great enough for one to feel that this is something miraculous.

It can very well happen that the first supramental manifestations will be altogether incomplete. But even to these, man as he is at present will seem something absolutely gross. There is no halt in the universal development and even the thing which would seem at a certain time absolutely perfect and finished, will still be only a stage for future manifestations. But men very much like to sit down and say, "Now I have done what I had to do."

But the universe is not like that; it does not sit down, it does not rest, it always goes on. One can never say, "Now it is over, I close the door and that's all." One may shut the door but then one cuts himself off from the universal movement. Expressions are always relative, and the first being which is no longer a human animal but begins to be a divine human, a divine man, will seem something absolutely marvellous, even if he is

Questions and Answers

still very incomplete as the perfect type of this new race. One must get accustomed to living in a perpetual movement. There is something which likes very much — perhaps it is necessary for facilitating the action — to fix a goal and say, “This indeed is the end”, but not at all. “This is perfection” — there is no absolute perfection. All things are always relative and constantly they are changing.

There we are. I think this is enough. There are no important questions? That’s good.

8 December 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith – Aspiration – Surrender".

Sweet Mother, what is the meaning of "the psychic surrender in the physical"?

Why, we spoke about it last time, didn't we? I think so. It is the psychic surrender expressing itself in the physical consciousness; that is, the physical consciousness takes an attitude of psychic surrender. The physical consciousness receives the influence of the psychic and takes the attitude which psychic surrender gives. We said that; I am sure I said something very much the same.

(*To a child*) And you, you said you had something?

*Here it is said: "Develop the cosmic consciousness."
How can we do it?*

Cosmic? Why, I have been asked this before. Someone asked me, "How can we teach the children to develop the cosmic consciousness?" And so I replied, "Develop it first in yourself."

How can you do it? You know what the cosmic consciousness is? You must first begin by knowing that. The cosmic consciousness means that, instead of feeling that one is an altogether separate, isolated being, different from all others, one feels that he is only a part of an immense whole and in relation with the whole totality, receiving the movements and vibrations of all others and transmitting to all others its own vibrations, that the movements of consciousness, the psychological vibrations do not stop inside a small individual enclosed in himself, who is as in a shell, without any contact with the rest; the forces pass across, going from one to another, touching one here, another

Questions and Answers

there, and these forces are so complex and multiple that we can no longer tell where one begins and another ends. One has exactly the impression of an immense whole moving within itself. It is something like that — the cosmic consciousness.

So, first of all, you must think of this; you must first become aware that you are a point in the universal immensity, and not isolated but altogether joined with it. And then you must study yourself, observe yourself. You will immediately have the opportunity of seeing the vibrations which come from outside and pass through you but are not generated in you, which you receive and express. So gradually, by studying, looking, observing, you become aware of that which is not limited. This is how you begin to acquire the universal or cosmic consciousness. Cosmic and universal mean the same thing.

Here it is written: “No snatching or clutching at realisation.” What does that mean — “snatching and clutching at realisation”, Sweet Mother?

No snatching, no...?

Clutching.

You know what “clutching” means? (*The child expresses the meaning by a gesture. Mother laughs.*)

All right, it means... Does he say one should not or one cannot?

One should not, Sweet Mother.

That means one must not try to do it, because it does not obey this kind of movement. These people try to progress through violence. They have no patience, they have no persistence; and when a desire arises in them they must realise it immediately. Now, they want to have something — let us say a change in

their character or a change in the circumstances or a set of things — and then, they want it at once; and as this usually does not happen all at once, they pull it down from above. This is what he calls “clutching”. They seize it, pull it towards themselves. But in this way one has neither the real thing nor the true movement; one mixes violence with one’s aspiration and this always produces some confusion somewhere, and moreover one cannot have the true thing, one can only have an imitation of the true thing; because this is not how it comes, not by pulling it as though one were pulling it by the tail; it will not come. Clutching! One clutches the rope when one wants to climb up. That’s how it is when one pulls! That’s exactly the movement one should not have once one holds the rope. That’s all.

Mother, on what does the central will of the being depend?

Eh? On what does it depend? That means? What exactly do you want to say? On what does its manifestation depend, or on what does it itself depend for its existence?

It itself.

The central will? It depends on the divine Will.

It is the individualised expression of the divine Will; and the divine Will is the expression of the divine Consciousness seeking to manifest itself, to realise itself.

How can one become aware of the central will?

Ah, this of course is another side of the problem. First of all one must become aware of what is highest, most true, most universal and eternal in one’s consciousness.

This is learnt gradually. One learns to discern among one’s ordinary, external movements and the different gradations of the

Questions and Answers

movements of one's inner consciousness. And if one continues to do this with a certain persistence, one realises what it is that puts this highest part of one's being into motion, which represents the ideal of the being. There is no other way. Sometimes this awakens through reading something, sometimes through a conversation, sometimes through a more or less dramatic, that is, unexpected event, which gives you a shock, shakes you up, brings you out of your usual little rut. Sometimes when you are in very great danger, suddenly you feel as though you are above yourself and beyond your small habitual weakness, having within you something higher which can hold out against circumstances.

Such occasions make you enter, first, into contact with that. Afterwards by a methodical discipline you can make the contact continuous; but usually this takes time. But first you get it like that, suddenly, for one reason or another.

(Long silence)

This may come with a very strong emotion, with a very great sorrow, a very great enthusiasm. When one is called to perform a fairly exceptional action, in circumstances which are a little exceptional, all of a sudden, one feels something as though breaking or opening within one, and one feels as though one were dominating oneself, as though one had climbed up a higher rung and from there was looking at one's own existence with the normal perception. Once one has experienced this, one does not forget; even if only once it has happened, one does not forget it. And one can by concentration reproduce the state at will, later. This is the first step to cultivate it.

Afterwards one can very easily call up this state each time a decision is to be taken, and then one takes it in full awareness of the implications and foreseeing everything that's going to happen. I don't think there's one individual in the world who hasn't experienced it — in any case one cultured individual — at least once in his life, something that breaks and opens... and

8 December 1954

one understands. This seems to astonish you very much!... (*To a child*) You have never felt this, you? Yes?

I don't know.

You are not sure! (*Long silence*)

When one has had it one feels that one has begun to live, that before this one did not know what life was. Suddenly one has entered fully into life. This is not forgotten.

(*To a child*) So?

Sweet Mother, to what plane does intuition belong?

It is one of those planes, one of those regions we were speaking about last time, which are intermediary between the higher mind and the Overmind.

How does it manifest, Sweet Mother? — intuition.

Um! How does it manifest? It is something which takes place without any reasoning, any analysis, any deduction. Suddenly one knows a thing, without having reasoned, without having analysed, without deducing, without having reflected, without having made use of one's brain, without having put together the elements of the problem and tried to resolve them — it is not like that. All of a sudden it comes like a light in the consciousness; it can be in the head, it can be lower down, elsewhere; it is a light in the consciousness which brings a precise knowledge on a particular point and it is not at all a result of analyses and deductions. In fact, it is the first manifestation of the knowledge by identity. Knowledge by identity — you understand clearly what that means?

If one succeeds in identifying oneself with something, well, one becomes this thing for a time, and becoming this thing one

Questions and Answers

knows all that is in it, without needing either to guess or to construct. (*Long silence*) That's all.

Of course, there is also a form of foresight, but this does not have altogether the same nature. Foresight usually comes from the faculty of knowing by identity. If one can project one's consciousness into something — a circumstance or an event or a person — if one can project one's consciousness, well, one receives, afterwards, the precise indication of the thing with which the consciousness was mingled. And this leads gradually to a total and absolute knowledge. In fact it is the only way of knowing, and if one pushes this far enough and succeeds in identifying oneself with the Divine, one has the divine knowledge, and this is not impossible. It is something possible because the universe is made like that, for that. Only, it has gone off the right track; for what reasons, one doesn't know. Ah, what strange things we see!... To be sure that one knows, and then, at the same time to wonder how it happens.

You have never tried to enter another person's consciousness to know exactly what is going on there? Not projecting your consciousness into someone else, because then you find yourself inside him and this is not interesting — but entering into relation with his consciousness which is within him, for example when, for one reason or another, you don't see things eye to eye; one sees them in one way, the other in another. If people are reasonable they do not quarrel. But if they are not reasonable, they begin quarrelling. Then, instead of quarrelling, the best thing to do is to enter into the other's consciousness and ask yourself why he says things like that, what is it that pushes him to do this or say that? What is the inner reason, what is his vision of things which makes him take this attitude? It is extremely interesting. If you do this, immediately you stop being angry. First thing: you can no longer be angry. So this is already a great gain. But also, if the other continues being angry, it has no effect on you.

And then, later, one can try to identify oneself more perfectly

8 December 1954

and prevent the movements of division and deformation and stop quarrels. Very useful.

(To a child) I have already recommended this procedure to you several times, I think. I remember. Did you try? You, there, I am talking to you! You have tried? No? Ah, you are obstinate. No? *(The child does not say anything.)* It won't come out.... Good, let's not talk about it any more.

So, that's all, my children? Anything else? No more questions? Nothing over there, no?

Mother, is the central being the psychic being?

For the immense majority of people the psychic being is the central being. But the central being can be identified with another consciousness and another state which is more central and is not purely human. And this is — I can't say that it is extremely rare, but still it is not frequent.

That's all?

It is nine o'clock. That's all?

Good. Finished.

15 December 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 3, "In Difficulty".

What is the meaning of "the mental witness"?

The witness we have spoken about several times already, only here it is in the mind.

There are witnesses everywhere. It is a capacity of the being to detach itself, to stand back and look at what is happening, as when one looks at something happening in the street or when one looks at others playing and does not himself play, one remains seated, looking at the others moving but does not move. That's how it is.

In all the parts of the being there is one side which can do this: put itself at the back, remain quiet and look, without participating. This is what is called the witness. One has many witnesses inside oneself, and often one is a witness without even being aware of it. And if you develop this, it always gives you the possibility of being quiet and not being affected by things. One detaches oneself from them, looks at them as at a dramatic scene, without participating in it. This does not change things very much.

Sweet Mother, here we have the opportunity of learning many things; however, we don't use this opportunity.

No, because it has come to you too easily, all this. One appreciates those things for which one has made a great effort. But you see, this has come to you in this way because it happens that your parents came here; it is not you who have chosen to come. You were brought and put in this atmosphere... some of

15 December 1954

you from the time you were very small, and you see, you are accustomed to this, it seems relatively natural to you because you have always been here, and you are not even aware of the difference between the conditions we are in here and those found elsewhere, outside. Perhaps if most of you were suddenly transplanted into the outer world, you would be completely lost. All the ways of life are absolutely different. Now here, you are so much accustomed to things that it seems quite natural to you, and certainly you don't draw as much profit as possible from the opportunities you have. For to profit by things one must appreciate them, you see. But this seems too natural for you to appreciate it. That's how it is. And as human nature is never constantly satisfied, you can even find many occasions for not being content, without even realising that if you were in other circumstances, they would be much more serious and[. . .]¹ occasions. You do not have any means of comparing, most of you. It is not that I wish that you have them. I don't wish such a thing to anybody. But still, this is the reason. You ask me why: this is it, this is the reason. It is because all this has come to you too naturally, without your thinking about it.

I don't understand this: "The disadvantage [of trance or samadhi] is that trance becomes indispensable and the problem of the waking consciousness is not solved; it remains imperfect." "Waking consciousness is not solved"?

And naturally! Because if in order to have a meditation or a relation with the inner world, you are obliged to enter into *samadhi*, your waking consciousness always remains what it is, without ever changing. That's what I said in other words, you see, when I said that people have a higher consciousness only in very deep meditation. When they come out of their meditation they are no

¹ Words missing in transcript.

Questions and Answers

better than they were before. All their defects are there which come back as soon as they come back into their waking consciousness; and they never make any progress because they do not establish a relation between their deeper consciousness, the truth of their being, and their outer being. You see, they take off their outer being as though they were taking off a cloak, and they put it in a corner: "Come now, don't trouble me, keep quiet. You are a nuisance." And then they enter into contemplation, their meditation, into their deep experience; and then they come back, put on the cloak which of course has not changed — which perhaps is dirtier still than before — and they remain exactly as they were without any meditation.

If you want the outer being to change, it is while remaining conscious of it that you should have the other experiences; and you must not lose contact with your ordinary outer consciousness if you want it to profit by the experience. There are many people... I knew people like that, who used to meditate for hours, almost all the time... they spent their time meditating, and then if by chance... if someone disturbed them in their meditation, if they had to do something, they flew into a rage, a fury, they abused everybody, they became more intolerable than if they had never meditated, than any ordinary person. This happened because they neglected making their outer being participate in their deeper life. They cut themselves into two, so there is a portion inside which progresses and a portion outside which becomes worse and worse, because it is completely neglected.

Mother, for self-mastery are not the ascetic methods useful sometimes?

No! You cure nothing. You only give yourself the illusion that you have progressed, but you cure nothing. The proof is that if you stop your ascetic methods, the thing is even stronger than before; it comes back with a vengeance. It depends upon what you call ascetic methods. If it is not to indulge in satisfying all

your desires, this indeed is not asceticism, it is common sense. It is something else. Ascetic methods are things like repeated fasting, compelling yourself to endure the cold... in fact, to torture your body a little. This indeed gives you only a spiritual pride, nothing more. It masters nothing at all. It is infinitely easier. People do it because it is very easy, it is simple. Just because the pride is quite satisfied and the vanity can get puffed up, it becomes very easy. One makes a great demonstration of one's ascetic virtues, and so considers oneself an extremely important personage, and that helps one to endure many things.

It is much more difficult to master one's impulses quietly, composedly, and to prevent them from showing themselves — much more! — without taking ascetic measures. It is much more difficult not to be attached to the things you possess than to possess nothing. This is something that has been known for centuries. It requires a much greater quality not to be attached to the things one possesses than to be without any possessions or to reduce one's possessions to a strict minimum. It is much more difficult. It is a much higher degree of moral worth. Simply this attitude: when a thing comes to you, to take it, use it; when for one reason or another it goes away, to let it go and not regret it. Not to refuse it when it comes, to know how to adapt yourself and not to regret it when it goes.

Even if defects come?

It is not a question of defects, I am speaking of material things. Defects are not things which come, they are things one carries in oneself. I am speaking of material things. I am speaking of asceticism, you understand.

Asceticism is an altogether material discipline. Defects — don't think they come from outside; one has enough of them inside one without needing to borrow them from elsewhere. And in fact, if one did not carry them in oneself, one could not become aware of them in others. It is because the seed of all

Questions and Answers

this is in oneself that one is in contact with them. And when we say that great waves of passion pass through people, and that they are not generated in them but pass through them, it is perfectly true. But if there was someone absolutely immune from all possibility of passion, they could pass by for centuries, he wouldn't even feel them. He could see them, see them passing, as one sees a storm passing in the sky, but he would feel nothing at all. When the vibrations inside oneself answer the vibrations from outside, it means that they are there; otherwise no vibration can enter.

There are examples like this. For instance, a crowd is seized by panic. Well, it is always possible that there are one or two persons who resist the panic, who are not touched, are outside it: they can save the situation. This has happened many a time. The reason why a movement, a vibration, a forceful movement is contagious is because the ground for contagion is there.

You said that because we are here and have everything, it seems very natural to us. Why doesn't effort also come naturally?

It is because the physical nature in ordinary men is, as Sri Aurobindo writes, rather tamasic. Naturally it does not make any effort. But the vital makes an effort. Only, it makes the effort usually for its own satisfaction. Yet it is quite capable of making an effort because that is in its nature. In fact, I can't say that you don't make any effort, you make a lot of effort for many things, when it pleases you or when you have understood that it is necessary for one reason or another. What you mean is to make a continuous effort for yoga. There are even people who have come here for yoga or at least thinking that they came for yoga and who don't make much effort, who take things easy, as they come. I don't think that the physical nature, left to itself, is spontaneously pushed into any effort. It needs a certain amount of activity, but it is very little. You see, the great thing here is that

the principle of education is a principle of freedom, and to put it briefly, the whole life is organised on the maximum possible freedom in movement; that is, the rules, regulations, restrictions are reduced absolutely to the minimum. If you compare this with the way in which parents usually educate their children, with a constant “Don’t do this”, “You can’t do that”, “Do this”, “Go and do that”, and, you know, orders and rules, there is a considerable difference.

In schools and colleges everywhere there are infinitely more strict rules than what we have here. So, as one doesn’t impose on you the absolute condition of making progress, you make it when it pleases you, you don’t when it doesn’t, and then you take things as easy as you can. There are some — I do not say this absolutely — there are some who try, but they try spontaneously. Of course from the spiritual point of view this is infinitely more valuable. The progress you will make because you feel within yourself the need to make it, because it is an impulsion that pushes you forward spontaneously, and not because it is something imposed on you like a rule — this progress, from the spiritual point of view, is infinitely greater. All in you that tries to do things well, tries to do it spontaneously and sincerely; it is something that comes from within you, and not because you have been promised rewards if you do well and punishments if you do badly. Our system is not based on this.

It is possible that at a certain moment something comes along to give you the impression that your effort has been appreciated, but the effort was not made in view of that; that is, these promises are not made beforehand nor are they balanced by equivalent punishments. This is not the practice here. Usually things are such, arranged in such a way, that the satisfaction of having done well seems to be the best of rewards and one punishes oneself when one does badly, in the sense that one feels miserable and unhappy and ill at ease, and this is indeed the most concrete punishment one has. And so, all these movements, from the point of view of the inner spiritual growth, have

Questions and Answers

an infinitely greater value than when they are the result of an outer rule.

You speak of spiritual experience. What is an experience and how can one have it?

It is something which puts you in contact with a consciousness higher than the one you usually have. You have a certain feeling about yourself, you are not even aware of it, it is for you your ordinary condition, you understand. Well, if suddenly you become conscious within of something very different and much higher, then, whatever it may be, this will be a spiritual experience. You may formulate it with a mental idea, you may not formulate it; you may explain it to yourself, you may not; it may last, it may not, it may be instantaneous. But when there is this essential difference in the consciousness and when, naturally, the quality that comes is very... much higher, clearer, purer than what one usually has, then one can call this a spiritual experience; this means that there are thousands of different things which can be called spiritual experiences.

Should we aspire to have a spiritual experience?

I think it is wiser to aspire to make progress or to be more conscious or to be better or do better than aspire for a spiritual experience; because that might open the door to more or less imaginary and falsified experiences, to movements of the vital which take on the appearance of higher things. One may deceive oneself by having an aspiration for experiences. In fact, the experience must come spontaneously, as the result of inner progress, but not for itself or in itself.

There were some persons in history who were not evolutionary beings...

15 December 1954

Who were not...?

... evolutionary beings... who came...

You knew them, did you?

No, someone...

Who? Who told you that?

Our English teacher says this.

(Gestures) I can say nothing. I don't say anything now. If it is a teacher, I don't say anything any more. *(Laughter)*

He spoke about Sri Aurobindo... in reference to Sri Aurobindo...

Don't ever speak to me about what your teachers tell you, because I won't contradict them, and I refuse to comment on what they say. Teachers are people who should be respected. And besides, for your information, I can say that you have put the question badly.

If you wanted me to answer, you could have put the question in an absolutely different way. Now I won't reply. *(Laughter)* But if you had said, "Are there beings who...", I would have quite naturally answered you. Perhaps not what you wanted to hear, but I would have said something. But you asked the question badly. You made a statement to begin with, so...

Good. Then, that's all?

22 December 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 3, "In Difficulty".

When a being is possessed by a hostile force, what becomes of his psychic?

It depends on the degree of the possession. Usually it is something progressive. First there is an influence under which one comes, and comes in a fragmentary way, not even totally in his being, but in certain parts and for a time. This is the first stage. The second: the influence becomes permanent and there is one part of the being which deteriorates, which is constantly under this influence and expresses it. After this, the being which has cast this influence tries to enter that part. Then, usually, this produces a conflict, a kind of inner battle. People have fits, sometimes even nervous morbid fits. In trying to resist, the two parts of the being come constantly into conflict, and this produces great imbalance, even physical imbalance. But if one doesn't know how to resist and doesn't succeed in shaking off the hold, then gradually the being that has seized upon a part of the person acts like an octopus and spreads its tentacles like that, slowly and everywhere; and finally it is a total possession. At the moment of the total possession, either the possessed person becomes completely unbalanced or he becomes a kind of monster and his psychic being leaves him.

These cases are extremely rare, fortunately. Usually, in the human being the psychic is strong enough to be able to resist, and the most frequent case is that of constant conflict between the two parts, until the psychic being, if it is strong enough and knows how to lean on a greater strength than its own, is capable of rejecting this influence and freeing itself. It is only

in an extreme case of a total possession that the psychic being goes away. But these are extremely rare cases, extremely rare. It sometimes happens that a child is still-born, that is, just at the moment of birth it dies or a few minutes later, or an hour or two later, you see, just at that time. In these cases it happens that it is the psychic being which has decided not to use this body. But if, for example, the doctor who is looking after the case is a clever man or the nurse a clever person and they can bring back life into the body by artificial respiration or such means, most often it is a hostile being which gets hold of this body. There have been cases like that, children who seemed to be dead, that is, the psychic being had left the body, and before it had died completely, a vital being had entered and taken its place. Such cases have been known. And these beings are demons. In life they become veritable demons. There are not many of them.

There are beings of the vital, but of a higher kind, emanations of Asuras, for example, who have decided for one reason or another that they would try to be converted, not to be anti-divine, and manage to enter into relation with the Divine. They know that the best way is to identify themselves with a human body in order to be under the control of a psychic being. And they incarnate in human bodies, but not with the intention of driving out the psychic being, on the contrary, to try to submit to the influence of the psychic being and be converted by it. These cases also are not frequent, but still they have been known, and in these cases these human beings are gifted with very exceptional capacities, but usually they also have very exceptional difficulties, because the power which has incarnated in them is one which was, at least, if it is not still so, a hostile power; and, you see, it is difficult to get rid of all these movements of revolt immediately; sometimes it takes a whole lifetime to succeed in doing it.

Some of these asuric beings have tried to convert themselves and not succeeded. They ought to have left the body they had

Questions and Answers

chosen, because they could not convert themselves. It was too difficult a task for them, it demanded too great an effort.

But all these cases about which I have just spoken to you are very rare ones, you see. We can't say that such things happen and are met with at every turn: a gentleman who is the incarnation of an adverse force or another who is possessed. Such cases are very rare, very rare.

But the case of an influence — being under an influence and expressing it — this, unfortunately, is very frequent, especially with people who undertake yoga without being sufficiently purified beforehand, or otherwise with egoistic intentions; to people who begin to do yoga for reasons of ambition or vanity it happens very often that they put themselves under the influence of certain adverse forces.

And there are also many people who are under certain influences in a way... how to put it?... one can't call it accidental, but... for example, there are psychic beings who choose a certain environment to incarnate in because they think that there they will have the experiences they want, and owing to some circumstances in this environment there is a hostile influence at work; so the body they put on is to a certain extent under this hostile influence and they have to fight against that terribly all their life. They can at a particular moment, as I said — if they know how to rely on greater forces than their own — they can conquer and gain a great victory. It is a great victory to get rid of the influence of an adverse force. It is truly a victory which goes beyond the individual's own person and has a repercussion on the whole terrestrial state. Each victory gained like this by an individual over a hostile force influencing him, is a long step forward to the day when the earth will be completely free of the presence of hostile forces. It represents a great progress for the earth.

Sweet Mother, how can the hostile forces be converted?

Well, if they want to, why can't they? There is nothing in

the universe which doesn't have one single origin — that is, a supreme origin — the hostile forces like everything else; and if they give up their revolt and separation and aspire to return to their source, they can very well be converted. It may require much more effort from them than is necessary for a human being to change his defects, that of course is obvious. It is a much greater effort and, above all, much deeper, because the origin of their revolt is very deep; it is not superficial. But still, they can manage it. They have the power also; these are very powerful beings who, if they resolve to be converted, can do it; and then they become some of the most wonderful instruments for the divine work. The very ones who were some of the greatest adversaries.

I am looking for someone who told me that she would ask me a question. It is Sujata. Where is she perched? At the end of the world! I shall never be able to hear her. What did you want to ask?

Could I ask you another question? Is mental imbalance due to the same cause, Sweet Mother?

(Pavitra, repeating) *Is mental imbalance due to the same cause?*

Very often, but not always. Mental imbalance can be due to many different causes. One of them may be simply a physical structure which is defective, a cerebral insufficiency. Now, one may say that this cerebral insufficiency is probably the expression of an inner vital imbalance. But in the case of cerebral insufficiency it is usually hereditary or organic, still... that is, something produced at the time of conception. So one can't say that it is due to an additional influence: it was an influence which acted before birth, and the one who suffers from this mental imbalance is not necessarily under a direct adverse influence. It can be a consequence of malformation.

Now, when people are divided in their mind, and in one part of their mind aspire for the truth and transformation and

Questions and Answers

in another don't want them, and not only resist but revolt — which happens often — this indeed creates a terrible inner cerebral struggle, first mental and then cerebral, and this may bring about a serious mental imbalance.

There are cases in which it is precisely the opening to a suggestion, an adverse influence, an opening which is the result of a wrong movement — a movement of revolt or of hatred or of violent desire. One can, in a wrong movement, open oneself — in a rage, for example — one can open to an adverse force and bring in an influence which could end up by a possession. At the beginning these things are relatively easy to cure if there is a conscious part of the being and a very strong will to get rid of this bad movement and this influence. One succeeds easily enough, relatively speaking, if the aspiration is sincere; but if one looks on the thing with complacency and tells oneself, “Ah, it is like that, it can't be otherwise”, then this becomes dangerous. One must not tolerate the enemy in the place. As soon as one notices his presence, one must throw him out very far, as far as one can, pitilessly.

Sweet Mother, to be pure means what?

To be pure, what does it mean? One is truly perfectly pure only when the whole being, in all its elements and all its movements, adheres fully, exclusively, to the divine Will. This indeed is total purity. It does not depend on any moral or social law, any mental convention of any kind. It depends exclusively on this: when all the elements and all the movements of the being adhere exclusively and totally to the divine Will.

Now, there are stages, there are degrees. For example, insincerity, which is one of the greatest impurities, always arises from the fact that a movement or a set of movements, an element of the being or a number of elements, want to follow their own will and not be the expression of the divine Will. So this produces in the being either a revolt or a falsehood. I don't mean that one tells

lies, but I mean that one is in a state of falsehood, of insincerity. And then, the consequences are more or less serious and more or less extensive according to the gravity of the movement itself and its importance. But these, if one sees from the point of view of purity, these are the real impurities.

For example, if you take your stand on a moral viewpoint — which is itself altogether wrong from the spiritual point of view — there are people who apparently lead an altogether perfectly moral life, who conform to all the social laws, all the customs, the moral conventions, and who are a mass of impurity — from the spiritual point of view these beings are profoundly impure. On the other hand there are some poor people who do things... who are born, for instance, with a sense of freedom, and do things which are not considered very respectable from the social or moral point of view, and who can be in a state of inner aspiration and inner sincerity which makes them infinitely purer than the others. This is one of the big difficulties. As soon as one speaks of these things, there arises the deformation produced in the consciousness by all the social and moral conventions. As soon as you speak of purity, a moral monument comes in front of you which completely falsifies your notion. And note that it is infinitely easier to be moral from the social point of view than to be moral from the spiritual point of view. To be moral from the social viewpoint one has only to take good care to do nothing which is not approved of by others; this may be somewhat difficult, but still it is not impossible; and one may be, as I said, a monument of insincerity and impurity while doing this; whereas to be pure from the spiritual point of view means a vigilance, a consciousness, a sincerity that stand all tests.

Now, I may put you on your guard against something — I think it is precisely in this very book that Sri Aurobindo has spoken about it — about people who live in their vital consciousness and say, “I indeed am above moral laws, I follow a higher law, I am free from all moral laws.” And they say this because they want to indulge in all irregularities. These people, then, have a

Questions and Answers

double impurity: they have spiritual impurity and in addition social impurity. And these usually have a very good opinion of themselves, and they assert their wish to live their life with an unequalled impudence. But such people we don't want.

Yet usually the people whom I have found most difficult to convert are very respectable people. I am sorry, but I have had much more difficulty with respectable people than with those who were not so, for they had such a good opinion of themselves that it was impossible to open them. But the true thing *is* difficult. That is to say, one must be very vigilant and very self-controlled, very patient, and have a never-failing goodwill. One must not neglect having a small dose of humility, a sufficient one, and one must never be satisfied with the sincerity one has. One must always want more.

(*To a child*) What do you have to say, you? Nothing? Nobody has anything to say? Where is he, the other boy? He is not in his place. He is not in his place, he isn't there. He was afraid I would ask him questions. So then, nothing more? Nobody has anything to say?

“To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith.” How does it discourage the faith?

The faith spoken about is faith in the divine Grace and the final success of the undertaking. You have begun the yoga and have faith that you will go through to the end of your yoga. But if you spend your time looking at all that prevents you from advancing, then finally you say, “Ah, I shall never succeed! It is not possible. If it goes on in this way, I shall never get there.” So this is to lose one's faith. One must always keep the faith that one is sure to succeed.

Many people begin, and then after some time come and tell you, “Oh, I shall never be able to go through. I have too many difficulties.” So this means not having faith. If one has started,

22 December 1954

one begins with the faith that one will reach the goal. Well, this faith should be kept till the very end. Keeping one's faith, one attains the end. But if in the middle of the road you turn back saying, "No, I can't", then, obviously you will not reach the end. Some people start on the way and then, after some time, they find it heavy-going, tiring, difficult, and also that they themselves, their legs, don't walk well, their feet begin to ache, etc. You see, they say, "Oh, it is very hard to go forward." So instead of saying, "I have started, I shall go through", which is the only thing to do, they stand there, stop there, lamenting and saying, "Oh, I shall never be able to succeed", and then they leave the path. So, obviously, if they leave the path, they will never succeed. This is to lose one's faith.

To keep one's faith is to say, "Good, I have difficulties but I am going on." Despair — that's what cuts off your legs, stops you, leaves you like this: "It is over, I can't go on any longer." It is indeed finished, and that's something which should not be allowed.

When you have started, you must go to the very end. Sometimes, you see, to people who come to me with enthusiasm I say, "Think a little, it is not an easy path, you will need time, you will need patience. You will need much endurance, much perseverance and courage and an untiring goodwill. Look and see if you are capable of having all this, and then start. But once you have started, it is finished, there is no going back any more; you must go to the very end."

Sometimes I tell them, I tell them that I give them a few days or a few months. There are some to whom I have given a few years for reflection. I told them, "Look well, be quite sure." But once they come and say, "Now I have decided, I want to start", it is good. Now, one must go on to the very end, whatever the cost; even if it is very difficult, one has to go to the very end.

*When one draws back from the path, one draws back
for the present life or...*

Questions and Answers

In this, you see, there are many different cases, and they depend on the nature of the drawing back. If it is a small set-back or a small halt, you can start again. But it is ten times more difficult than before.

Why?

Why? Because it is so. Because you have accumulated obstacles in yourself by your cowardice and weakness. All those difficulties which you must conquer are like spiritual tests which you have to pass. And if you fail in your test, well, the next one will be much more difficult. This is the general occult law. One can't escape it. If you are faced with making an effort and making progress, if you fail... And note that in the present conditions you are not warned beforehand, which makes the test much more difficult to pass. In former days, the days of old, the candidates were told, "Now, prepare yourself. You are going to undergo terrible trials: you will be enclosed in a coffin, you will have to face terrible dangers. But these are tests to find out if you have the necessary qualities." A man forewarned, you understand, is as good as ten, as we say. Once they were warned that it was a trial, they did not take it seriously and it was much easier.

But that's no longer the practice. This is no longer done. It is life itself, the circumstances of each day which are the trials through which you have to pass. Some people instinctively feel that they are facing a decision that's to be taken, a special effort that's to be made, and they make this effort within themselves and cross the step. These acquire a much greater strength to cross the next step. When one has gained a small victory over one's lower being, the next time one has a much greater strength to take the next step. On the contrary, if one is blind, ignorant, stupid or ill-willed and, instead of saying "yes" to the trial that faces him, he revolts or refuses it, then, you see, this is expressed by: "One has not passed his test, one has failed in his test." But the next time, one is compelled not only to make an effort

to conquer this, but to make a still greater effort to redress the wrong one has done to himself. So it is much more difficult.

But these things happen to everyone on the path, all the time, perhaps even daily. There are small things, there are things a little bigger. The small ones one can turn, you see, by chance the right way. For the big ones one must first have a kind of instinct. One must pay attention and do the right thing in the right way. But there are other things still. When one is at a critical moment of one's development, and it is absolutely necessary to cross the step in order to go forward — at that moment, there are always two possibilities: that of crossing the step, and then one immediately makes a terrific progress; or else to become slack, and then this indeed is more than a halt, even more than a set-back, it can be a very serious fall into a chasm. There are abysses from which one does not come up again; and so, in this case it means a life lost.

But if one has within oneself, besides the part that has given way and fallen, if somewhere one has a very ardent flame, if one is ready for anything, all possible suffering, all possible effort, all possible sacrifices to redress what one has done, in order to climb back from the bottom of the abyss, to find the path again, one can do it. This flame has the power to call the Grace. And with the Grace there is nothing impossible. But it must be a real flame, something very powerful, because when one is at the bottom of the hole it is not easy to come out of it. Between the first kind, which is simply a little halt on the way and which makes the next step just a little more difficult, and the last one I am speaking about, there are many degrees; and so one can't say that if one leaves the path it is for a lifetime. That would be only an extreme case.

But if one leaves the path, it is even very difficult to find it again. What is strange is that in leaving it one loses it. There are legends of this kind in all countries: of people who have left the path and then later searched for it and never found it again. It was as if it had vanished. They lost it and this truly is a very sad thing.

Questions and Answers

But when you are on the path, I said this — I was just saying it — when you are on the path, do not ever leave it. Wait a little, you can hesitate as long as you want before taking it; but the minute you set your foot on it, it is finished, don't leave it. Because this has consequences which can even extend to several lives. It is something very serious. That is why, besides, I never push anyone to enter the path of Yoga. You are quite a number of children here; I have never asked anyone — only those who came to me and told me, "I want it." And to these also, unless I am absolutely sure of them because it is written in their destiny that they have come for that, I always say, "Think about it, think, be quite sure that this is what you want and nothing else." And when they have reflected and decided, it is finished. One should no longer move away, one should go straight to the end. I mean, one should not leave the path any more. One should go forward at all costs and try not to stop too often on the way, because it is easier to continue even if it is hard, you see, than to begin all over again when one has stopped. A much greater effort is needed to get going again than to continue on the way. And you see, logically I should not say it, but I have already warned all who are here, I have told them, "Don't ever take lightly all the circumstances of each day, all the tiny little things of life, all the small events, you know; never take all this lightly." Never react with your lower being. Each time you are told to do something or not to do it — you are not told this very often, but each time you are told, before reacting think a little, try to find in yourself the part which reacts. Do not react just like that with what is most commonplace in you. Enter within yourself, try to find the best in yourself and with this you must react. *It is very important, it is very important.*

There are people who mark time for years because they haven't done this. There are others who seem to fly, so fast do they go, because they pay attention to this. And those who don't do that throw the blame always on the Divine. They accuse the Grace. They tell her, "It is You who deceived me, it is You

22 December 1954

who put me into difficulty, it is You who made me stumble, it is You who are a monster”, not exactly in these words, but their thought is like this. And so, naturally, they make their case worse because they push away even the help they could have had in their difficulty. There we are.

I could tell you many more things, but it will come gradually. In any case, if you can keep within yourself a confidence, a candid trust which does not argue, and the sense of... yes, it is truly a kind of trust that what is done for you, in spite of all appearances, is always the best thing to lead you in the quickest way possible out of all your difficulties and towards the goal... if you can keep that strong in you, well, your path will become tremendously easier.

You will tell me that it is very difficult to keep it, but children keep it very well. They must have truly come upon particularly detestable parents to lose it; but if their parents are simply good enough, they keep this very well. Well, it is this attitude; if you can tell yourself, “Good, perhaps the divine Grace deserves our confidence”, simply this, nothing else, you will avoid many difficulties, many. In fact this avoids many difficulties even in ordinary life, and many worries. And particularly here, if you can do that, well, you will see things which seemed formidably difficult dissolving suddenly like clouds.

There we are, that’s all.

Au revoir, my children.

29 December 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 3, "In Difficulty".

So? (*To a child*) No questions? (*To another*) You have a question?

Sweet Mother, why is it said that "those who have the greatest power for Yoga... have too, very often... the greatest imperfections"?

Why is it like that? (*Silence*) Because one must have a very strong, very powerful nature, with great inner strength in order to have a great capacity for yoga; and very strong natures have also very strong difficulties.

People who are neutral, dull, unimportant, usually go their own little way without being disturbed very much. But they cannot do anything very much, their road is very small and very short; they reach the end very quickly. They can't do much. But people who have a strong nature have also strong difficulties. For it is absolutely impossible in this world to be without difficulties. So long as the world remains what it is and one participates in the world, one necessarily participates in its difficulties.

It is only by a very persistent effort that one can succeed in overcoming his difficulties; and yet it seems impossible to cut oneself off completely from one's solidarity with the rest of the world. Therefore a perfect purity, a perfect perfection seem impossible so long as the world has not reached at least a certain degree of perfection. Even the ascetic, the solitary, who goes and sits in a cave or under a tree or in the jungle, cannot completely free himself from solidarity with the rest of the world. The air he breathes is full of all the vibrations of the world, the food he eats, whatever it may be, even if it is reduced to the minimum,

29 December 1954

contains the vibrations of the world; and so, it is enough for him to exist to be in solidarity with the difficulties of the world.

That is why, in fact, the way is so long. Even without having any other consideration than that of what one is absorbing constantly into oneself when breathing or eating, all these things one must constantly transform as one goes on absorbing them. It is a continuous alchemy in which one absorbs a particular kind of vibration containing all the possible disorders and must transmute this into something which is ready to receive the light from above. And this work is perpetual, and perpetually renewed. So it is impossible to live in this world, in the world as it is, and become perfect without the world itself making a great progress.

(Long silence)

So? There are no questions today?

Mother, does an individual's life depend on the experience his psychic being wants to have?

Very much!

I was just speaking about this with someone today, and I said that if one can become fully conscious of one's psychic being, at the same time one understands, necessarily, the reason of one's present existence and the experience this psychic being wants to have; and instead of having it somewhat half consciously and more than half unconsciously, one can shorten this experience and so help one's psychic being to cover in a limited number of years the experiences it would perhaps take several lifetimes to go through. That is to say, the help is mutual. The psychic, when it has an influence on the outer life, brings to it light, order and quietude and the joy of the divine contact. But also the physical being, the body-consciousness — if it is identified with the psychic consciousness, and through that learns what kind of experience the psychic being wants to have — can help it to have

Questions and Answers

these experiences in a very brief time, and not only save time but save many lives for the psychic being. It is a mutual help.

In brief, this is what yoga means. Yoga helps you to become fully conscious of your destiny, that is, your mission in the universe, and not only at the present moment but what it was in the past and what it will be in the future. And because of this knowledge you can gather by a concentration of the consciousness all these experiences in a very short time and gain lives, do in a few years what could take a fairly considerable number of lives to achieve. The psychic being goes progressively through all these experiences towards its full maturity and complete independence, its liberation — in the sense that it no longer needs any new life. If it wants to come back to the physical world, it returns, because it has something to do there and it chooses freely to return. But till then, till this liberation, it is compelled to return to have all the experiences it needs. Well, if it happens that once the physical being is developed and conscious enough and has enough goodwill to be able to become fully aware of the psychic being, it can then and there create all the circumstances, the outer experiences necessary for the psychic being to attain its maturity in this very life.

(Long silence)

Do people who roam about in the lower vital domain during the night suffer much after death?

Not necessarily more than those who don't do it. Because by the very fact that they roam there, they are a little more armed, they are a little accustomed to this world, it is not for them an altogether unknown domain; they have already gone there and, for instance, they might have had quite a few unpleasant experiences and learnt how to defend themselves. It is true that usually the only defence one has in these cases is to rush back into one's body, and this is just the thing one can no longer

do. But all the same, they have a little bit of experience, while those who go there without knowing anything about it, and who have never had this consciousness, when they are thrown into this world, it is like being thrown into an altogether unpleasant unknown with a total unawareness of the means of defending oneself. I think that those who have dreams, what they call dreams, and who are conscious of them, are in a much better position; even if their dreams are not very beautiful, they are in a much more favourable condition than those who are quite unconscious. Because once one has left his body, whether one is conscious or unconscious, whether one is developed or not, one always goes out into the same domain to begin with — unless one is a yogi who can do what he likes with himself, but that, you know, is so rare a case that one can't consider it. All men when they leave their body are flung into a domain of the lower vital which has nothing particularly pleasant about it.

And strange, there is still another thing I was speaking about today.

The most important thing in this case is the last state of consciousness in which one was while both were joined together, when the vital being and the body were still united. So the last state of consciousness, one may say the last desire or the last hope or the last aspiration, has a colossal importance for the first impact the being has with the invisible world. And here the responsibility of the people around the dying man is much greater than they think. If they can help him to enter his highest consciousness, they will do him the greatest service they can. But usually what they do is to cling to him as much as they can, and to pull him towards them with a fierce selfishness; the result, you see, is that instead of being able to withdraw in a slightly higher consciousness which will protect him in his exit, he is gripped by material things and it is a terrible inner battle to free himself from both his body and his attachments.

In fact, you see — I say except for a very few, so few that one can hardly speak about them — all men live in a total ignorance,

Questions and Answers

a total ignorance of the way to live, not of the things in the universe but simply of the most elementary knowledge of living. They don't know how to live. All the time they do things they should not do, and I am not speaking of satisfying desires and all that, I am speaking simply of the life of each moment, the movement of each instant; because one is in a state of total ignorance, one does exactly the opposite of what one should do to get the result one wants. One tries to follow some aim, whatever it may be — it may be a selfish aim, it may be a disinterested aim, it may be a material aim, it may be a spiritual aim, but one wants to get somewhere — and one does just the opposite of what is necessary to go there, all the time. And if you are simply just a little attentive and are able to look at yourself at any minute, whatever be the thing you have to do, stop for half a second and look at yourself and ask, "Do I know what I have to do?" If you are sincere you will see that you don't know it at all. You do it automatically, instinctively, by habit or else with some kind of impulse, you see; but to know: "Is this what must be done? Is it in this way that it ought to be done?" — I don't think once in a thousand times you can answer.

And then, when the problem of wanting to help someone comes up... If you have goodwill and want to help someone... You don't know how to help yourself to begin with, but still, you are not selfish; at a particular moment you want to help someone, and then comes this question: "What should I do?" You know nothing at all about it. "What does he need?" I mean not only material things but the feeling you must have, the thought you must have, the word you ought to say. If you just take a step backward, you look at yourself, but you know nothing about it; you do it like that, haphazardly, at random, in the hope that it will succeed, but the knowledge is not there. Without speaking, naturally, about... I am not speaking of people who know nothing at all and who, when they happen to have even a child, don't even know what is to be done to keep it clean and healthy. I am not even speaking of this kind of ignorance,

because this everybody recognises. I knew, you see, countless mothers who hadn't *the faintest idea* of what had to be done to keep their children healthy. I am not even speaking of this. Because this — if one reads a book, works a little, studies, one can at least have a minimum of knowledge.

I am speaking simply of a slightly higher stage: morally, your moral, psychological relation with people. You are with someone who is in difficulty. Do you know what you should say to him? Do you even know the cause, the origin of his difficulty? What is going on in him? You may guess, you may imagine it, you may deduce, may reason, but you don't know!

To have this certitude, the knowledge, the knowledge to know: "That's it", this you don't have. "Is it this, is it like that? If I do this, will that happen? And if I do that, is that what will happen?" And you go on, you may go on and on for hours, hesitating, groping, asking yourself.... And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has written in his last article which appeared in the *Bulletin*. He says that if you want to prepare for the descent of the supermind, first of all your mind of ignorance and incapacity must be replaced by a mind of light which sees and knows. And this is the first step! Before this step is crossed, one cannot go forward. It is not to discourage you that I tell you this, but it is for those who believe that one has only to say, "Oh, I want the supramental light", and it will come just like that, as when one says, "I want to drink a glass of water" and drinks it up. Not so easy! There we are.

Now then, has anyone a question? No?

Well, Friday, which is my reading day, is the thirty-first. The thirty-first is the eve of the first. On the eve of the first, usually, a long time ago — you were very small, perhaps you weren't even there — I used to read the prayer at midnight, just when we passed from one year to the next. Now it is too late, we people tire ourselves out very much the whole day and need to sleep quietly. (*The children all ask Mother to read at midnight.*) No, no, I won't do it. (*Laughter*) Only, on that day, at this time,

Questions and Answers

instead of reading anything at all, I shall read the prayer for 1955 to you, and you will listen. And if any of you want to ask questions, I shall answer you, and we shall finish our year in this way... not till midnight! (*Laughter*) We shall end our year like this. Here we are.

There, my children, that's all?

Au revoir!

31 December 1954

New Year's Eve. After a meditation, Mother distributes her New Year's Message to everyone.

I am going to read the prayer to you in French — it is a message not a prayer — in French and in English. And then I have brought two of Sri Aurobindo's replies to questions which have not been published anywhere, and you will be the first to hear them. And then two... not poems, some lines; a very short little poem and just a stanza from another poem, which are a magnificent illustration of our message for the next year.

This message was written because it is foreseen that next year will be a difficult year and there will be many inner struggles and even outer ones perhaps. So I tell all of you what attitude you should take in these circumstances. These difficulties may perhaps last not only twelve months, that is, one full year, but perhaps fourteen months; and during these fourteen months you must make an effort never to lose the attitude about which I am going to speak to you just now.

In fact, I insist that the more difficult things are, the more you must remain quiet, and the more should you have an unshakable faith. Of all things this is the most important.

Usually, as soon as things become difficult, human beings get agitated, become irritated, get terribly excited and they make the difficulties ten times more difficult. So I am warning you right away that this is not to be done, that you must do the opposite; and what I am going to read to you is precisely what you must repeat to yourself as soon as you feel some anxiety or worry within you; you must remember what I am telling you today and remember it throughout the year. You can repeat it morning and evening profitably. Here, then.

Now, first in French:

Questions and Answers

“Aucune volonté humaine ne peut prévaloir contre la Volonté Divine. Rangeons-nous délibérément et exclusivement du côté du Divin et la victoire finale est certaine.”

Now here is the English:

“No human will can finally prevail against the Divine’s Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain.”

Now I shall read to you two questions which were asked and Sri Aurobindo’s answers. It’s not that the questions express a very high state of mind, but I am afraid many people let themselves fall into this kind of mental state. And so I think the answers will be very useful to many people also.

Here’s the first question:

“It seems to me that the number of people in the world accepting the truth of our Yoga of Transformation would not be as large as those who accepted Buddhism, Vedanta or Christianity.”

Here is Sri Aurobindo’s answer. Notice his humour. I draw your attention to his humour.

“Nothing depends on the number. The numbers of Buddhism or Christianity were so great because the majority professed it as a creed without its making the least difference to their external life.

“If the new consciousness were satisfied with that, it could also and much more easily command homage and acceptance by the whole earth. It is because it is a

31 December 1954

greater consciousness, the Truth Consciousness, that it will insist on a real change.”¹

The second one:

“You have said that the aim of our Yoga is to rise beyond the Nirvana, but in the Ashram there are extremely few who have reached or have tried to reach even the Nirvana. To reach even the Nirvana one has to give up ego and desire. Could it be said that even a few sadhaks in the Ashram have succeeded in doing so? Surely everybody must be making some effort to do this. Why then are they not successful? Is it that after some effort they forget the aim and live here as in ordinary life?”

The answer:

“I suppose if the Nirvana aim had been put before them, more would have been fit for it, for the Nirvana aim is easier than the one we have put before us—and they would not have found it so difficult to reach the standard. The sadhaks here are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer follows still its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the sadhaks

¹ Letter of 29 April 1934.

Questions and Answers

here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Ashram itself, and not before.”²

This indeed is a programme for next year, my children. I hope that next year I shall be able to say that many have tried to make their external life the expression of their deeper aspiration. For the moment there are not very many.

Now, as we have spoken about difficulties, I am going to read to you two things which will give you just a little glimpse of what true consciousness is, that which is free from all difficulties, that which is above all conflicts.

The first one goes like this — you have read it perhaps but I don't think you could have quite understood it. It is called

ONE DAY *The Little More*

*One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.*

*Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.³*

Sri Aurobindo

And then this:

² Letter of 30 April 1934.

³ *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 109.

31 December 1954

*Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.⁴*

Sri Aurobindo

There we are.

Now, I said that if someone asks “reasonable” questions, I shall perhaps answer.

What human will is at present particularly against the divine Will?

You mean from what point of view?

All human will which is against the divine Will is an anti-divine will. That’s all. No matter where it manifests, even in you!

There are no party politics in the divine life, you know. (*Laughter*) There are only states of consciousness.

(*To a child*) You have a question to ask, you?

No, Mother, will you explain the two poems?

Explain? There is no explanation. They speak for themselves, very clearly. It cannot be explained — poetry. You must feel it and not reason about it. Poetic inspiration is beyond the reason. You must not bring it down into the domain of reason, because then it is spoilt. It is felt much more than... it can be understood by an inner contact much more than by words.

Mother, why not twelve months instead of fourteen?

Ah that, my child, you may ask... Well, there are people who believe in the stars, they will tell you, “Ask the stars.” It is like

⁴ A stanza from “Life”, *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 95.

Questions and Answers

that! Why do you take a certain number of years to grow up? Because the nature of things is like that. Well, the nature of this conflict is like that. That is to say, a certain development of forces is necessary to obtain the result; and this development of forces extends over a given number of months approximately.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: The final victory is certain.⁵ If it is the divine Will, why is not each victory certain?

(Mother not having heard the question well, the child repeats it.) *If it is the divine Will, why is it not each victory, why only the final Victory?*

No, this is not what it means. It means that finally the Victory is certain. Whatever may be the course of events and the ups and downs and the difficulties and the different issues of the different conflicts, at the end of the curve one is sure of the Victory, for the Divine is sure to be victorious. It may take a longer or shorter time. I have said — in English I used “finally”: that finally no human will can prevail against the divine Will. Finally means in spite of everything... what we may call divine patience. In spite of all divine patience, there is a given moment when human will exhausts its strength and the divine Will prevails.

We always measure time by our small human duration; but naturally the divine forces do not have the same measure as ours, and what may seem to us long or uncertain is for them the most direct way, in spite of everything, to reach there. In the given set of circumstances it is the most direct way to reach the goal: this goal is the expression of the divine Will, whatever it may be. So what seems to us, for instance, a long, tortuous, uncertain road seems so because we do not see the whole picture, because we see only a very tiny part which is in our proportion. Our vision

⁵ The child misunderstands the French sentence and takes it to mean this instead of “The Victory is ultimately certain.”

31 December 1954

is very very short, very short behind, very short in front. I mean the ordinary human vision. For example, there isn't one man in a million who can say what is going to happen to him ten years hence, though he may make many plans and projects and try to organise his life; but he can't say with certitude what will happen, because his vision is very short. The divine vision is not like that.

It [human vision] is very short, very limited in space, very linear; this means that things follow one after another; while the vision of the Divine is a global vision which sees the problem in all its totality, not only on the surface but in the depths also, and contains all the elements of the problem and resolves it without neglecting any points. But man follows a straight line and all that escapes his straight line and which he does not care for would not be done if it were he who decided things; whereas the march of the Divine is a global march which takes in the whole universe in its entirety and goes forward on the most direct road in relation to this universe and this set of circumstances. And the most direct road may be circular, it is not necessarily a straight line.

*Mother, you said that next year will be a difficult year.
Is it that...*

Ah, yes! Next year... in a few hours! (*Laughter*) So?

*Will it be a difficult year for the Ashram or also for India
and the whole world?*

Generally. The world, India, the Ashram and individuals. Everyone according to his mode, naturally not in the same way for all. Some things will seem easier than others. But generally speaking it is — if you like I can tell you — it is the last hope of the adverse forces to triumph against the present Realisation. If one holds on fast during these months, after that they will

Questions and Answers

not be able to do anything very much, it will be a crumbling resistance. That's it: it is essentially the conflict of the adverse forces, the anti-divine forces which are trying to push back the divine Realisation as much as they can... they hope, for thousands of years, you see. And it is this conflict which has come to its crisis. It is their last chance; and as those who are behind their external action are altogether conscious beings, they know very well that it is their last chance, and they will put all they can into it, and what they can is much. These are not ordinary little human consciousnesses. They are not human consciousnesses at all. They are consciousnesses which, compared with human possibilities, seem to be divine in their power, their strength, even their knowledge. Therefore it is a terrific conflict and one wholly concentrated on the earth, because they know that it is upon earth that the first victory has to be won — the decisive victory, a victory which will determine the course of the earth's future.

Those who are noble-hearted and hold up their heads when things become dangerous, can be happy. It is an opportunity to rise above oneself. There we are.

How can one change into the divine Will?

How can one change *one's* will into the divine Will? I don't understand your question.

(Another child, repeating) *How can one change into the divine Will?*

Well, it's because it is not well expressed that I don't understand. Change, that is transform one's will into the divine Will? Is that what you want to say?

Yes.

Well, first you must want it. Afterwards you must have a great

aspiration. And then you must continue to want it, and continue to aspire and not give way when difficulties come, and continue until you succeed. That's all. And then, a certain number of things are necessary, as for example not to be selfish, not to have a small narrow-mindedness, not to live with preferences, not to have desires, not to have mental opinions — many things. It is a fairly long process because you must change your ordinary nature. This is the first condition.

To break all the limits of one's mind, break all the desires of one's vital, break all the preferences of one's physical nature. After that one may hope to be in contact with the divine Will; and then, later, one must not only be in contact with it, but live integrally this Will, that is, be unified in all one's being: not have a single bit which goes on this side and another bit which goes on that. You must be entirely in one single will.

Sweet Mother, when we are faced with a difficulty, does this mean that the Divine is trying to make us conscious of the defects of our nature?

If you face it, yes. That is, as soon as you are in front of a difficulty, if instead of giving way like a coward you begin trying to conquer it, then you may be sure that the Divine is behind you. But if you are cowardly, the Divine will not be there. That is, your cowardice cuts you off from the Divine. But if you resist and want to conquer, you may be sure that the Divine will be there to help you. There's not the shadow of a doubt about it.

But I want to know — if the difficulty comes — whether the Divine is trying to make us conscious that we have defects?

Whether he deliberately puts difficulties in your path? No. That's not his way.

Questions and Answers

No, I don't mean that. If a difficulty comes, does this mean that the Divine is trying to make us conscious of the defects of our nature, to show us that we have defects?

No, but think of what you are saying. If by having a difficulty you become conscious, you see, it does not mean that the Divine created the difficulty to make you conscious; and your question seems to say that.

Yes.

But it isn't true. One can say from an altogether impersonal point of view that the adverse forces — which of course are responsible for all difficulties — that the adverse forces are tolerated in the world in so far as they serve to make the world completely conscious. This indeed is true. But it seems to me a very human way of putting it because it could be said that as long as the world is not perfectly conscious, this allows the existence of these adverse forces. That is, it conditions them. The world's unconsciousness conditions the existence of these forces. So, one can as well say this as say that the forces are tolerated so long as the world is unconscious. I don't know if you are following. These are two opposite ways of saying the same thing and neither is perfectly true. But both contain something correct, yet something which is quite different. And in fact, if one wants to say the thing exactly, one can only say, "Things are like that because they are like that."

This is the only way of not making a mistake. If you say, "The world is like that because it is like that", then here you are sure you are saying something approximately correct — approximately. But if you try to explain, you will see an atom in a world and will take this atom for an explanation. You would have to give all the explanations and even many others in order to approach the reality.

31 December 1954

That's what I just said, you know: that the human mind is linear in its action. It sees ideas one after another. Naturally when one speaks it is even ten times worse. One is obliged to say one word after another and this becomes frightful. But most people, almost all human beings think linearly. They think one thing after another. They can't think of many things at once. Only very few individuals are capable of thinking of, say, about twenty things at the same time. You can try, you will see. You think things one after another, one after another.... The succession may be very fast, but it is a succession. It is a very different kind of vision and a very different functioning, not of the mind but of intellectual powers, which can see things in their totality and all at the same time. But even when you see them like that, if you want to try to describe them, either by writing or speaking, you can't put down everything at the same time nor say everything at the same time; you are obliged to use one word after another, and so it necessarily becomes... it destroys the truth of the thing, it becomes linear, which means that the truest things cannot be said. Everything one says is always a diminution of the truth.

Sweet Mother, if this year is difficult for us, what should we do?

What should you do? Be very good (*laughter*), very good, very quiet, work well, be very obedient, do what you are told, and be regular at school. (*Laughter*) All this — it is very important.

If we succeed in these fourteen months, Mother, then after that will it be easy or will it be as at present? Will it be easier to conquer the difficulties?

That, my child, depends on you. If during these fourteen months you make much progress, you become very good and very reasonable, very conscious and very regular, after this it will be

Questions and Answers

much easier. But if you spend your time in letting time pass without making any progress, you will find yourself in the same position where you now are, not better.

It is precisely a chance given to everyone to make progress. If he doesn't use it, so much the worse for him, he will remain where he is. And instead of being a conscious element in the world, he will be a cork upon the waters, tossed by circumstances. And with anything that happens, he will be carried away without having the least control over what is happening. Because the first thing necessary to have a control over events is to be absolutely conscious and master of oneself; and I think you are pretty far from this realisation — which means that you must make a great effort throughout this period and manage to become a little more conscious and a little more self-controlled. You must not think that suddenly it will be a beatific paradise where all your defects will disappear as by magic. It is not like that.

Your defects will disappear if you do what is necessary for them to disappear, not otherwise.

Else you may continue in the easier years with the same defects, and you will be the same little Madhusudan who will not have changed.

Here we are, my children. I think that's enough.

Nobody has anything to say?

*Adjugé!*⁶

Au revoir.

⁶ Sold! — as at an auction.

Note on the Text

These talks of 1954 were given by the Mother in French and appear here in translation. All of them were tape-recorded. The talks from January 2 to September 15 were first published in the original French with an English translation in the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* from April 1973 to August 1978. In 1979 all the talks were brought out in English under the title *Questions and Answers 1954*, as Volume 6 of the Collected Works of the Mother (first edition). In that volume the *Bulletin* translations were slightly revised and the remaining talks translated for the first time. The present volume has the same text as the first edition of the Collected Works, apart from some minor revisions of the translation.