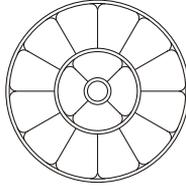


THE MOTHER

Questions and Answers
1956

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Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

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The Mother taking a class at the Playground, 1954

Publisher's Note

This volume is made up of conversations of the Mother in 1956 with 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 the Ashram's school. The Mother usually began by reading out a passage from a French translation of one of Sri Aurobindo's writings; she then commented on it or invited questions. During this year she discussed portions of two works of Sri Aurobindo: *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Part One) and *Thoughts and Glimpses* (first part). She spoke only in French. Further information on these conversations and their publication is provided in the Note on the Text.

Contents

4 January	Integral idea of the Divine	1
	All things attracted by the Divine	3
	Bad things are things no longer in their place	5
	Integral yoga	7
	Moving idea-force; small and great ideas	8
	New Year Message of 1956	9
	Consequences of manifestation	10
	Work of the Spirit through Nature	11
	Change consciousness: the world changes	12
11 January	Desire and self-deception	14
	Giving all one is and has	14
	Sincerity: more powerful than will	19
	Joy of progress	20
	Definition of youth	20
18 January	Positive and negative sides of individual work	22
	Cheerfulness	23
	A chosen human vessel of the Divine	23
	Aspiration of plants, of children	24
	Active consciousness in plants	25
	Being chosen by the Divine	26
	True hierarchy	27
	Perfect relation with the Divine	29
	India is free: already accomplished in 1915	30
	Division of India, not decreed	31
25 January	The divine way of life	33
	Divine; Overmind; Supermind	33
	Material body — for discovery of the Divine	35
	Five psychological perfections	36

Contents

1 February	Path of knowledge	43
	Finding the Divine in life	44
	Capacity for contact with the Divine	45
	Partial and total identification with the Divine	46
	Manifestation and hierarchy	48
8 February	Forces of Nature expressing a higher Will	51
	Illusion of separate personality	52
	One dynamic force which moves all things	55
	Linear and spherical thinking	56
	Common ideal of life: microscopic	57
15 February	Nature and the Master of Nature	59
	Conscious intelligence	60
	Theory of the Gita: not the whole truth	61
	Surrender to the Lord	64
	Change of nature	64
22 February	Strong immobility of an immortal spirit	66
	Equality of soul	68
	Is all an expression of the divine Will?	68
	Loosening the knot of action	70
	Using experience as a cloak to cover excesses	72
	Sincerity, a rare virtue	73
29 February	Sacrifice: self-giving	74
	Divine Presence in the heart of Matter	75
	Divine Oneness	75
	Divine Consciousness	77
	All is <i>One</i>	78
	Divine in the inconscient aspires for the Divine	79
7 March	Animal sacrifice	80
	Sacrifices to hostile forces	81

Contents

	Sacrifice: receive in proportion to consciousness	81
	To be luminously open	82
	Integral transformation	83
	Pain of rejection; delight of progress	84
	Spirit behind intention	85
	Spirit and matter: over-simplified distinction	86
14 March	Dynamic meditation	88
	Do all as an offering to the Divine	90
	Significance of 23.4.56.	90
	If twelve men of goodwill call the Divine	93
21 March	Identify with the Divine	94
	The Divine: the most important thing in life	94
28 March	The starting-point of spiritual experience	96
	The boundless finite	97
	The Timeless and Time	98
	Mental explanation not enough	99
	Changing knowledge into experience	101
	Sat-Chit-Tapas-Ananda	101
4 April	The witness soul	102
	A Gita enthusiast	103
	Propagandist spirit; Tolstoy's son	105
11 April	Self-creator	107
	Manifestation of Time and Space	108
	Brahman-Maya and Ishwara-Shakti	108
	Personal and Impersonal	110
18 April	Ishwara and Shakti: seeing both aspects	112
	The Impersonal and the divine Person	113
	Soul: the presence of the divine Person	114
	Going to other worlds; exteriorisation; dreams	115

Contents

	Telling stories to oneself	117
	Creative power in world of vital forms	118
25 April	God: human conception and the true Divine	119
	Earthly existence: to realise the Divine	119
	Ananda: divine pleasure	120
	Relations with the divine Presence	120
	Asking the Divine for what one needs	122
	Allowing the Divine to lead one	123
2 May	Threefold union	125
	Manifestation of the Supramental	126
	Profiting from the Divine	128
	Recognition of the Supramental Force	131
	Ascent, descent, manifestation	133
9 May	Beginning of the true spiritual life	135
	Spirit gives value to all things	135
	To be helped by the supramental Force	136
16 May	Needs of the body: not true in themselves	139
	Spiritual and supramental law	140
	Aestheticised Paganism	141
	Morality: checks true spiritual effort	141
	Effect of supramental descent	143
	Half-lights and false lights	144
23 May	Yoga and religion	146
	Story of two clergymen on a boat	147
	The Buddha and the Supramental	150
	Hieroglyphs and phonetic alphabets	151
	A vision of ancient Egypt	154
	Memory for sounds	155
30 May	Forms as symbols of the Force behind	157

Contents

	Art as expression of contact with the Divine	158
	Supramental psychological perfection	158
	Division of works	159
	The Ashram: idle stupidities	160
6 June	Sign or indication from books of revelation	162
	Spiritualised mind	169
	Stages of sadhana	170
	Reversal of consciousness	171
	Organisation around central Presence	173
	Boredom: most common human malady	174
13 June	Effects of the Supramental action	176
	Education and the Supermind	178
	Right to remain ignorant	179
	Concentration of mind	181
	Reason: not supreme capacity of man	182
	Physical education and studies	184
	Self-imposed inner discipline	184
	True usefulness of teachers and instructors	185
20 June	The heart's mystic light and intuition	187
	Psychic being; psychic contact	187
	Secular refrigeration; secular ethics	188
	True role of mind	189
	Realisation of the Divine through love	190
	Depression; pleasure; joy	190
	Heart: mixture in its action	192
	To follow the soul and not the mind	194
	Physical energy: progressive effort; rest	195
	To remember the Mother	196
	Collective discipline; laws of atavism	197
27 June	Birth: entry of soul into body	199
	Formation of the supramental world	204

Contents

	Aspiration for progress	205
	Bad thoughts	207
	Cerebral filter	207
	Progress and resistance	208
4 July	Aspiration when one sees a shooting star	210
	Preparing the body; making it understand	211
	Getting rid of pain and suffering	212
	Psychic light	214
11 July	Beauty restored to its priesthood	215
	Occult worlds; occult beings	216
	Difficulties and the supramental force	219
18 July	Unlived dreams	221
	Radha-consciousness	222
	Separation and identification	224
	Ananda of identity and Ananda of union	225
	Sincerity, meditation and prayer	227
	Enemies of the Divine	229
	The universe is progressive	231
25 July	A complete act of divine love	234
	How to listen	235
	Sports programme same for boys and girls	236
	How to profit by stay at Ashram	240
	“To Women about Their Body”	241
1 August	Value of worship	243
	Spiritual realisation and the integral yoga	243
	Symbols: translation of experience into form	246
	Sincerity: fundamental virtue	247
	Intensity of aspiration: with anguish or joy	248
	The divine Grace	250

Contents

8 August	How to light the psychic fire; will for progress	251
	Helping from a distance; mental formations	253
	Prayer and the divine Grace	254
	Grace at work everywhere	256
15 August	Protection, purification, fear	258
	Atmosphere at the Ashram on Darshan days	261
	Significance of Darshan messages	263
	Significance of fifteenth August	264
	State of surrender	266
	Divine Grace: has always been all-powerful	267
	Assumption of the Virgin Mary	269
	Sri Aurobindo's message of 15 August 1947	270
22 August	The heaven of the liberated mind	274
	Trance or <i>samadhi</i>	274
	Occult discipline for leaving consecutive bodies	276
	To be greater than one's experience	278
	Total self-giving to the Grace	278
	The truth of the being	279
	Unique relation with the Supreme	279
29 August	To live spontaneously	281
	Mental formations	282
	Absolute sincerity	284
	Balance is indispensable: the middle path	285
	When in difficulty, widen the consciousness	285
	Easiest way of forgetting oneself	287
5 September	Material life: seeing in the right way	288
	Effect of the Supermind on the earth	290
	Emergence of the Supermind	291
	Falling back into the same mistaken ways	292
12 September	Questions, practice and progress	295

Contents

19 September	Power: predominant quality of vital being	297
	The Divine, the psychic being, the Supermind	298
	How to come out of the physical consciousness	299
	Look life in the face	300
	Ordinary love and Divine love	300
26 September	Soul of desire	303
	Openness; harmony with Nature	304
	Communion with divine Presence	305
	Individuality, difficulties and the soul of desire	305
	Utility of personal contact with the Mother	306
	Inner receptivity	306
	Bad thoughts in the presence of the Mother	308
3 October	The Mother's different ways of speaking	310
	The new manifestation	311
	A new element: new possibilities	313
	Greater number of child prodigies	314
	Laws of Nature and the supramental	315
	Logic of the unforeseen	316
	Child prodigies: example of a child of eight	316
	Creative writers;the hands of musicians	318
Prodigious children, prodigious men	320	
10 October	The supramental race — in a few centuries	321
	Condition for new realisation	323
	Everyone must follow his own path	323
	Progress: no two paths alike	324
17 October	Delight: the highest state	326
	Delight and detachment	327
	To be calm	328
	Quietude, mental and vital	328
	Calm and strength	329
	Experience and expression of experience	330

Contents

24 October	Taking a new body	332
	Different cases of incarnation	334
	Departure of soul from body	336
31 October	Manifestation of divine love	339
	Deformation of Love by human consciousness	340
	Experience and expression of experience	342
7 November	Thoughts created by forces of universal Mind	344
	Our own thought hardly exists	345
	Idea: origin higher than mind	346
	<i>The Synthesis of Yoga</i> : effect of reading	347
14 November	Conquering the desire to appear good	348
	Self-control and control of the life around	350
	Power of mastery	352
	Be a great yogi to be a good teacher	354
	Organisation of the Ashram school	355
	Elementary discipline of regularity	356
21 November	“Knowings” and Knowledge	358
	Reason: summit of man’s mental activities	359
	“Willings” and the true will	360
	Personal effort	361
	First step to have knowledge	361
	Relativity of medical knowledge	363
	Mental gymnastics to make the mind supple	364
	Spiritual life: traditional and in the Ashram	366
28 November	Desire, ego, animal nature	367
	Consciousness: a progressive state	368
	Ananda: desireless state beyond enjoyings	369
	Personal effort that is mental	370
	Reason: when to disregard it	373
	Reason and “reasons”	374

Contents

5 December	Even and objectless ecstasy	376
	Transform the animal	377
	Individual personality and world-personality	378
	Characteristic features of a world-personality	380
	Expressing a universal state of consciousness	380
	Food and sleep	381
	Ordered intuition	382
12 December	Virtue of paradoxes	383
	Nothing is impossible	383
	The unfolding universe and the Eternal	384
	Attention, concentration and effort	385
	Capacity for growth almost unlimited	387
	Why everything is not the same	388
	Distinction between will and “willings”	388
	Suggestions and formations	390
	The vital world: adverse suggestions	392
19 December	Preconceived mental ideas:	395
	Process of creation	396
	Destructive power of bad thoughts	396
	To be perfectly sincere	397
26 December	Defeated victories	401
	Change of consciousness	402
	Experiences that indicate the road to take	404
	Choice and preference	405
	Diversity of the manifestation	407
Note on the Text		409

Questions and Answers

1956

4 January 1956

“If we are to attempt an integral Yoga, it will be as well to start with an idea of the Divine that is itself integral. There should be an aspiration in the heart wide enough for a realisation without any narrow limits. Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the Ineffable in a restricting mental formula.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 76

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by an integral idea of the Divine?

Everyone forms an idea of the Divine for himself according to his personal taste, his possibilities of understanding, his mental preferences, and even his desires. People form the idea of the Divine they want, the Divine they wish to meet, and so naturally they limit their realisation considerably.

But if we can come to understand that the Divine is all that we can conceive of, and infinitely more, we begin to progress towards integrality. Integrality is an extremely difficult thing for the human consciousness, which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself. But still, with a little effort, for those who know how to play with mental activities, it is possible to widen oneself sufficiently to approach something integral.

You form an idea of the Divine which suits your own nature and your own conception, don't you? So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do a truly integral yoga, you must try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be — and in addition something that nobody can think and feel.

Questions and Answers

So, if you understand this, you have taken the first step on the path of integrality.

Instinctively, and without even being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their own conceptions. For, without thinking, quite spontaneously, they tell you, “Oh, this is divine, this is not divine!” What do they know about it? And then there are those who have not yet set foot on the path, who come here and see things or people, and tell you, “This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine.” But if you ask them, “What is divine?”, they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that’s an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less can one pronounce judgments on things.

And there comes a time when all one can do is observe, but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place they now are in and the one they ought to occupy — for this is the great disorder in the world — but one does not judge. One simply observes.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say, “This is divine and that is not divine”, for a time comes when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take away anything from it without disturbing everything.

And one or two steps further yet, and one knows with certainty that what shocks us as a contradiction of the Divine is quite simply something not in its proper place. Each thing must be exactly in its place and, besides, it must be supple enough, plastic enough, to admit into a harmonious progressive organisation all the new elements which are constantly added to the manifested universe. The universe is in a perpetual movement of inner reorganisation, and at the same time it is growing larger, so to say, becoming more and more complex, more and more complete, more and more integral — and this, indefinitely. And as gradually new elements manifest, the whole organisation has

4 January 1956

to be remade on a new basis, so that there is not a second when *everything* is not in perpetual movement. But if the movement is in accordance with the divine order, it is harmonious, so perfectly harmonious that it is hardly perceptible, it is difficult to see it.

Now, if one comes down again from this consciousness to a more external consciousness, naturally one begins to feel, very precisely, the things which help one to reach the true consciousness and those which bar the way or pull one back or even struggle against the progress. And so the outlook changes and one has to say, "This is divine, or this helps me toward the Divine; and that is against the Divine, it is the enemy of the Divine."

But this is a pragmatic point of view, for action, for the movement in material life — because one has not yet reached the consciousness which goes beyond all that; because one has not attained that inner perfection, having which one has no longer to struggle, for one has gone beyond the zone of struggle or the time of struggle or the utility of struggle. But before that, before attaining that state in one's consciousness and action, necessarily there is struggle, and if there is struggle there is choice and for the choice discernment is necessary.

And the surest means to discernment is a conscious and willing surrender, as complete as possible, to the divine Will and Guidance. Then there is no risk of making a mistake and of taking false lights for true ones.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo says here: "His is the Love and the Bliss of the infinite divine Lover who is drawing all things by their own path towards his happy oneness."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 77

All things are attracted by the Divine. Are the hostile forces also attracted by the Divine?

That depends upon how you look at it, you cannot say that. For

Questions and Answers

there is a potential attraction, but so veiled and so secret that you can't even tell that it exists.

In Matter which has an appearance of inertia — it is only an appearance, but still — the attraction for the Divine is a possibility rather than a fact; that is, it is something which will develop, but which does not yet exist perceptibly.

It may be said that all consciousness, whether it knows it or not — even if it doesn't know it — gravitates towards the Divine. But consciousness must already be there in order to be able to affirm this.

And even among men, who at the moment are the most conscious beings on earth, there is an immense majority who are potentially drawn towards the Divine, but who know nothing about it; and there are even some who deliberately refuse this attraction. Perhaps, in their refusal, behind it, something is preparing but neither willingly nor knowingly.

(Speaking to the child) And so, what was the last part of your question?... First you assume something which is not correct, and on top of that you ask a question which naturally doesn't make sense, for the assumption is incorrect.

I wanted to say...

Yes, yes, I know quite well what you want to say.

In fact, finally, everything will be attracted by the Divine. Only, there are direct roads and there are labyrinthine paths where one seems to be going further away for a very long time before drawing close. And there are beings who have chosen the labyrinthine paths and who intend to remain there as long as they can. So, apparently, they are beings who fight against the Divine.

Although those who are of a higher order know quite well that this is an absolutely vain and useless struggle, without issue, they still take pleasure in it. Even if this must lead them to their destruction, they have decided to do it.

4 January 1956

There are human beings also who indulge in vice — one vice or another, like drinking or drug-injections — and who know very well that this is leading them to destruction and death. But they choose to do it, knowingly.

They have no control over themselves.

There is always a moment when everyone has self-control. And if one had not said “Yes” once, if one had not taken the decision, one would not have done it.

There is not one human being who has not the energy and capacity to resist something imposed upon him — if he is left free to do so. People tell you, “I can’t do otherwise” — it is because in the depths of their heart they *do not want* to do otherwise; they have accepted to be the slaves of their vice. There is a moment when one accepts.

And I would go even further; I say, there is a moment when one accepts to be ill. If one did not accept to be ill, one would not be ill. Only, people are so unconscious of themselves and their inner movements that they are not even aware of what they do.

But it all depends on the way one looks at things. From a certain point of view there is nothing that is totally useless in the world. Only, things which were tolerable and admissible at a certain time are no longer so at another. And when they become no longer admissible, one begins to say they are bad, because then a will awakes to get rid of them. But in the history of the universe — one can even say in the history of the earth, to limit the problem to our little planet — I think everything that exists had its necessity and importance at a given moment. And it is as one advances that these things are rejected or replaced by others which belong to the future instead of the past. So, of things which have no further purpose one says, “They are bad”, because one tries to find within oneself a lever to push them out, to break with the habit. But perhaps at one time they were not bad, and other things were.

Questions and Answers

There are ways of being, ways of feeling, ways of doing, which you tolerate in yourself for quite a long time, and which don't trouble you, don't seem to you at all useless or bad or to be got rid of. And then all of a sudden one day, you don't know why or what has happened, but the outlook changes, you look at things and say, "But what is this? This is in me! Am I carrying this in myself? But it is intolerable, I don't want it any longer." And suddenly it seems bad to you because it is time to reject these things, for they do not harmonise with the attitude you have taken or the progress you have made in your march forward in the world. These things should be elsewhere, they are no longer in their place, therefore you find them bad. But perhaps the same things which seem bad to you would be excellent for other people who are at a lower level.

There is always someone more dull, more unconscious, more ignorant or worse than oneself. So the state which is intolerable for you, which you can no longer keep, which must disappear, would perhaps be very luminous for those who are on the lower rungs. By what right are you going to say, "This is bad"? All you can say is, "I don't want it any longer. I don't want it, it's not in keeping with my present way of being, I want to go where these things have no place any more; they are no longer in their place, let them go and find their place elsewhere!" But one cannot judge. It is impossible to say, "This is bad." At the most one can say, "This is bad for me, it is no longer in its place with me, it must go." That's all. And one drops it on the way.

And this makes the progress much, much easier, to think and feel like that instead of sitting down in despair and lamenting about things and what you are like, and the misery you endure and the defects you have and the impossibilities which beset you and all that. You say, "No, no, those things are no longer in their place here, let them go elsewhere, where they will be in their place and welcome. As for me, I am going forward, I am going to climb a step, I shall go towards a purer and better

4 January 1956

and more complete light; and so all these things which like the darkness must go away.” But that’s all.

Each time one sees in oneself something which seems really nasty, well, that proves that one has made progress. So, instead of lamenting and falling into despair, one should be happy; one says, “Ah! that’s good. I am getting on.”

Mother, what does “a powerful Yoga” mean?

A powerful yoga? You don’t know what “powerful” means?

But here Sri Aurobindo says, “This intellectual preparation can indeed be the first stage in a powerful Yoga, but it is not indispensable.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 75

Yes. A powerful yoga is a very complete yoga, which contains many things, takes in many elements. So this element of intellectual knowledge makes the yoga more powerful.

Is it the same as the integral yoga?

Not quite. An integral yoga is one which comprises all the parts of the being and all the activities of the being. But the activities of one being are not as powerful as the activities of another; and the integrality of one being is not as total as the integrality of another. You don’t understand?

If all your being, as it is, participates in the yoga, it becomes for you an integral yoga. But your participation may be very poor and mediocre compared with that of someone else, and the number of elements of consciousness which you contain may be very small compared with the elements of consciousness contained in another person. And yet your yoga is integral for you, that is, it is done in all the parts and all the activities of your being.

Questions and Answers

You know, I had a cat which was doing yoga. Well, the yoga of the cat could not be as powerful as the yoga of man, and yet it was *as* integral, it was quite complete; even its body took part in its yoga. But its way of doing it, naturally, was not human.

Mother, what does “the moving idea-force” mean?

It is an idea which gives you will, enthusiasm and a power of realisation. A “moving” thing is that which tends towards realisation and gives you the impetus towards realisation.

Here Sri Aurobindo writes, “But still the greater and wider the moving idea-force behind the consecration, the better for the seeker.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 76

Have you never felt the difference between a small idea and a great idea, a narrow idea and a wide one?

But, earlier, Sri Aurobindo has said that if this is accompanied by a self-giving, that is enough. Later he says that if it is wide, it is better.

Listen, I am going to give you quite a concrete and material example. You make an offering of your purse; it contains three rupees. Your neighbour offers his purse which contains fifty. Well, the gift of fifty rupees is larger than the gift of three. That’s all.

But, from the moral point of view, if you have given *all* that you have, you have done the utmost you could have done, nothing more can be asked of you; you understand, from the moral point of view, from the pure spiritual point of view, not from the point of view of realisation. From the purely spiritual point of view the gift of your three rupees has exactly the same value as the gift of fifty. And even he who gave fifty rupees, if he

4 January 1956

has kept back one, his gift is less integral and pure than yours of only three. So, it is not on that plane that the thing must be seen. But from the point of view of the material realisation it is undeniable that fifty is more than three, for all those who know mathematics!

(Silence)

Mother, the message you have given this year, will you explain it a little?¹

The message I have given this year, what's your objection to it?

Does it imply that there will be great victories this year?

This means perhaps something very simple: that it is better to let things happen without speaking about them. If you ask me, I think this is what it means: that it is much better to say nothing about what will happen before it happens. Otherwise it becomes what I call “beat of drum”, what could be called publicity.

It is like those who ask, “What will it be like?” We shall see! Wait, at least we should get a surprise!... And I reply, “I know nothing about it.” For I put myself immediately in the consciousness of the world as it is, to which is announced that extraordinary things are going to happen, and which is quite incapable of imagining them — for as I told you once, if one begins to imagine them, it means they are *already* there. Before you can imagine something, it has to exist, otherwise you cannot imagine it.

Yes, in our higher being we can have a very clear, very exact, very luminous perception of what it is. But if one comes down into the material consciousness, one has to say, “Well, I know

¹ The New Year Message of 1956: “The greatest victories are the least noisy. The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum.”

Questions and Answers

nothing about it.” When it is there, I shall tell you what it’s like — and probably I won’t even need to tell you, you will be able to see it. I hope you will be among those who are able to see it. For, there again, there are some who won’t be able.

And so, what’s the good of it? What’s the use of going round telling people, “It is there, you know, it is like this”? They will reply, as in that play which was staged here: “But I can see nothing!” Do you remember, it was in *Le Sage*? Don’t you remember that in *Le Sage* the messenger says that the Divine is there listening to you, that He is present? And then someone replies, “But I don’t see Him!” It is like that.

It is like those people who come to visit the Ashram and say, “But there is no spirituality here!”... How could they see it? With what organs?

But still I do hope that when something manifests, you will be able to see it.

Naturally, if all of a sudden there were luminous apparitions or if the outer physical forms changed completely, well then, I think even a dog or a cat or anything whatsoever would notice it. But that will take time, it can’t happen right now. It can’t happen right now, it is farther off, for a much later time. Many great things will take place before that, and they will be much more important than that, mark my words.

For, indeed, that is only the flower which blossoms. But before it blossoms, the principle of its existence must be there in the root of the plant.

If there is some manifestation, will it be purely spiritual, that is, will only those who do yoga be able to perceive it, or will there be any consequences in the world of facts?

My child, why do you put this in the future?

There have already been, for years, extraordinary, fantastic consequences in the world. But to see this, one must have a little knowledge; otherwise one takes them for quite normal

4 January 1956

and ordinary things — because one doesn't even know how they happen.

So perhaps this will be exactly the same thing; there are likely to be tremendous changes, fantastic actions, and, well, people will say, "But this — naturally, it is like that", because they don't know how it comes about.

An action in the world? — It is constant. It is something which spreads and acts everywhere, gives out everywhere new impulsions, new orientations, new ideas, new acts of will — everywhere. But still, as one does not see how it happens, one thinks it "quite natural", as they say.

It is quite natural, but with another naturalness than that of ordinary physical Nature.

Indeed, it is quite logical to say that one must be conscious of the Spirit to be able to perceive the work of the Spirit. If you are not conscious of the Spirit, how will you be able to see it at work? Because the result of what the Spirit does is necessarily material in the material world; and as it is material, you find it quite natural. What do you know of what Nature does, and what do you know of what the Spirit does? All that Nature does — I am speaking of physical Nature — we know very little about it, almost nothing, since we have to constantly learn things which upset all that we thought we knew before. And so, how to distinguish between what is purely the work of Nature and the work of the Spirit through Nature? One should know how to distinguish the one from the other. And how to distinguish them when one's consciousness is not quite limpid and sure of what the Spirit is? How to recognise It, and how to see Its Work? This seems to me very simple logic.

The world will go on. Things will happen. And perhaps there will be a handful of men who will know how they were done. That's all.

And if today one were suddenly precipitated, without any transition, into the world as it was, let us say, two or three thousand years ago; oh! even less than that perhaps — one or

Questions and Answers

two thousand years ago — it would be such a suffocating contrast that probably very few people would be able to bear it. But as this came about “like that”, with the amiable slowness of Nature, with all her fantasies, one finds it quite natural and doesn’t even notice it.

It is not an image, it is not just fine words when it is said that if one enters the true consciousness, if one changes one’s consciousness, well, the world itself changes for you. And it is not only an appearance or an impression: one sees differently than one does in the ordinary consciousness; relations are different, causes are different, effects are different. And instead of seeing only something which is not transparent — one cannot see what’s behind, it is a surface, a crust; it is only this one sees and one can’t even see what moves it, what makes it exist — everything is turned inside out, and it is that which appears artificial and unreal, and almost inexistent. And so, when one sees things in this way, normally, you know, without straining oneself, without having to practise meditation and concentration and make strenuous efforts to see things like this, when it is one’s normal, natural vision, then one understands things in a completely different way — naturally, the world is different!

There is a short preliminary passage which is indispensable, and those who have made this little preliminary journey, well, there are all sorts of things, all sorts of speculations and questions which they can no longer ask themselves.

But truly, to come back to our point, what I wanted to say very simply is that one day, at the time I was asked for a message — I give it because I am asked — they ask and tell me, “Oh! we want to print it, couldn’t you send it to us?” Then, what do I do? I look at the year that is coming — to be able to speak about it, I must look at it — I look at the coming year, and then, looking at it, I see at the same time all the imaginations of people, all their speculations and all their inventions about what is going to happen in this so-called wonderful year. I look at that, and at the same time I look at what it is — what it already is beforehand, it

4 January 1956

is already like that somewhere — and immediately I know very clearly that the best thing to do is not to say what it will be like. And as people expect a lot of flourish and proclamations, I said what I said, that's all. Nothing more. That is all I meant to say: "Let us not speak about it, if you please, that is better, that is preferable." I haven't said anything but this: "It is better not to speak about it, don't make a lot of noise about it, because that doesn't help. Let things happen in accordance with a deeper law, without being bewildered like one who does not understand anything and just looks on."

And above all, above all, don't come and say, "You know, it will be like this." Because that is what makes the thing most difficult, I don't say that what has to be will not be, but perhaps there will be many more difficulties if one speaks about it. So it is better to let things happen.

And, after all, if one wants to be very reasonable — very reasonable — one has only to ask oneself, "Well, in ten thousand years, this realisation we are preparing, what will it be? An imperceptible point in the march of time, a preparation, an attempt towards future realisations." Oh! it is better not to get so excited. Let us do all that we can and keep quiet. That's all.

Now, there are people who need a little whipping, as one whips cream. But they should go to the poets, not come to me. I am not a poet, I am content to act. I would rather act than speak.

11 January 1956

Mother, "this craving life-force or desire-soul in us has to be accepted at first, but only in order that it may be transformed."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 77

But even when we understand that it is a desire and must be rejected, there are difficulties in discerning if it is a desire leading us to the Divine or if it is purely desire.

One deceives oneself only when one wants to deceive oneself. It is very, very different.

But within, one understands.

Good. Well, then that's enough, if one understands somewhere, that's enough. Is that all? No questions?

Mother, on January 6 you said, "Give all you are, all you have, nothing more is asked of you but also nothing less."

Yes.

What is meant by "all you have" and "all you are"?

I am going to tell you in what circumstances I wrote this; that will make you understand:

Someone wrote to me saying that he was very unhappy, for he longed to have wonderful capacities to put at the disposal of the Divine, for the Realisation, for the Work; and that he also longed to have immense riches to be able to give them, to

11 January 1956

put them at the feet of the Divine for the Work. So I replied to him that he need not be unhappy, that each one is asked to give what he has, that is, all his possessions whatever they may be, and what he is, that is, all his potentialities — which corresponds to the consecration of one's life and the giving of all one's possessions — and that nothing more than this is asked. What you are, give that; what you have, give that, and your gift will be perfect; from the spiritual point of view it will be perfect. This does not depend upon the amount of wealth you have or the number of capacities in your nature; it depends upon the perfection of your gift, that is to say, on the totality of your gift. I remember having read, in a book of Indian legends, a story like this. There was a very poor, very old woman who had nothing, who was quite destitute, who lived in a miserable little hut, and who had been given a fruit. It was a mango. She had eaten half of it and kept the other half for the next day, because it was something so marvellous that she did not often happen to get it — a mango. And then, when night fell, someone knocked at the rickety door and asked for hospitality. And this someone came in and told her he wanted shelter and was hungry. So she said to him, "Well, I have no fire to warm you, I have no blanket to cover you, and I have half a mango left, that is all I have, if you want it; I have eaten half of it." And it turned out that this someone was Shiva, and that she was filled with an inner glory, for she had made a perfect gift of herself and all she had.

I read that, I found it magnificent. Well, yes, this describes it vividly. It's exactly that.

The rich man, or even people who are quite well-off and have all sorts of things in life and give to the Divine what they have in surplus — for usually this is the gesture: one has a little more money than one needs, one has a few more things than one needs, and so, generously, one gives that to the Divine. It is better than giving nothing. But even if this "little more" than what they need represents lakhs of rupees, the gift is less perfect than the one of half the mango. For it is not by the quantity or

Questions and Answers

the quality that it is measured: it is by the sincerity of the giving and the absoluteness of the giving.

But in ordinary life, when rich men want to give their wealth to the Divine, and the Divine is not in front of them, then to whom are they to give? They don't know where to give their money!

Yes, but then the question doesn't arise. If they haven't met the Divine either within or without, it doesn't come into question. They are not asked to give to someone they do not know.

If they have found the Divine within themselves, well, they have only to follow the indication given by the Divine for the use of what they have; and if they follow quite sincerely and exactly the indications they receive, this is all that can be asked of them. But until then nothing is asked of anyone.

One begins to ask only when someone says, "Here I am, I want to consecrate myself to the Divine." Then it is all right, from that moment one asks; but not before. Before that, even if you casually pull out a coin from your pocket and put it there, it is very good; you have done what you thought you ought to do and that's all; you are not asked for anything at all. There is a great difference between asking the Divine to adopt you, and making a gesture of goodwill, but without the least intention of changing anything whatever in the course of your life.

Those who live the ordinary life, well, if they make a gesture of goodwill, so much the better for them, this creates for them antecedents for future lives. But it is only from the moment you say, "There, now I know that there is but one thing which counts for me, it is the divine life, and I want to live the divine life" — from that moment one asks you, not before.

Mother, there are people who come here, who have money and are very devoted, who show their devotion,

11 January 1956

but when the question of money comes up, they bargain.... Then how shall we remain on friendly terms with them?

What?

They are devoted, they show devotion...

In what way? By taking from Him all they can?

...but when the question of money comes up, they bargain, they calculate.

I tell you, I have already answered, that's how it is. They come with the idea of taking from the Divine all they can: all the qualities, all the capacities, all the conveniences also, all the comforts, everything, and sometimes even powers, and all the rest. They come to take, they don't come to give. And their show of devotion is simply a cloak they have thrown over their wish to take, to receive. That covers a wide field: from saving one's soul, having spiritual experiences, obtaining powers, to leading a petty quiet life, comfortable — more or less comfortable, at least with a minimum of comfort — without cares, without botheration, far from the worries of life. That's how it is. That covers a wide range. But when they give, it is a kind of bargaining; they know that to obtain these things, it would be well to give a little something, otherwise they won't get them, so they make a show of being very devoted. But it is only a pretence, for it is not sincere.

Unfortunately for them, it deceives no one. It may be tolerated; but that doesn't mean that anybody is deceived.

The bargaining is everywhere, in all the parts of the being. It is always give and take, from the highest spiritual experiences to the tiniest little material needs. There is not one in a thousand who gives without bargaining.

Questions and Answers

And the beauty of the story I told you — moreover, there are many others like it here — is just this, that when the old woman gave, she didn't know that it was Shiva. She gave to the passing beggar, for the joy of doing good, of giving, not because he was a god and she hoped to have salvation or some knowledge in exchange.

(Looking at the disciple) There is still some mischief in his mind. Now then, what is it?

I wanted to say that these desires begin with the desire for the work, and this is also guided by the Divine. But when one has understood that now there should no longer be any desire but an absolute giving, still that does not become a giving; and this continues indefinitely. Why?

I can't make out what he means! *(To another disciple)* Translate!

One begins by mixing up desire with one's aspiration...

Yes, that is what Sri Aurobindo has written.

Then, one realises that a desire is mixed up there, but cannot manage to reject this desire.

(To the first disciple) Is that it?

No! (Laughter)

It is and it isn't!

Mother, you said that it may be tolerated, but there is a period of tolerance. But when it goes beyond the period of tolerance and does not want to stop — that's the question.

And so what, what happens?

11 January 1956

He wants to ask what one must do, what should be done?

Ah! at last.

What should be done?... Be sincere.

That's it; always, always, the little worm in the fruit. One tells oneself, "Oh! I can't." It is not true, if one wanted, one could.

And there are people who tell me, "I don't have the will-power." That means you are not sincere. For sincerity is an infinitely more powerful force than all the wills in the world. It can change anything whatever in the twinkling of an eye; it takes hold of it, grips it, pulls it out — and then it's over.

But you close your eyes, you find excuses for yourself.

The problem recurs all the time.

It comes back because you don't pull it out completely. What you do is, you cut the branch, so it grows again.

It takes different forms.

Yes. Well, you have to take it out every time it comes, that's all — until it doesn't come back any more.

We have spoken about it, where was it?... Oh! it was in *Lights on Yoga*, I think. You push the thing down from one part of your consciousness into another; and you push it down again and then it goes into the subconscious, and after that, if you are not vigilant, you think it is finished, and later from there it shows its face. And next, even when you push it out from the subconscious, it goes down into the inconscient; and there too, then, you must run after it to find it.

But there comes a time when it is over.

Only, one is always in too great a hurry, one wants it to be over very quickly. When one has made an effort, "Oh! well, I

Questions and Answers

made an effort, now I should get the reward for my effort.”

In fact, it is because there is not that joy of progress. The joy of progress imagines that even if you have realised the goal you have put before you — take the goal we have in view: if we realise the supramental life, the supramental consciousness — well, this joy of progress says, “Oh! but this will be only a stage in the eternity of time. After this there will be something else, and then after that another and yet another, and always one will have to go further.” And that is what fills you with joy. While the idea, “Ah! now I can sit down, it is finished, I have realised my goal, I am going to enjoy what I have done”, Oh, how dull it is! Immediately one becomes old and stunted.

The definition of youth: we can say that youth is constant growth and perpetual progress — and the growth of capacities, possibilities, of the field of action and range of consciousness, and progress in the working out of details.

Naturally, someone told me, “So one is no longer young when one stops growing?” I said, “Of course, I don’t imagine that one grows perpetually! But one can grow in another way than purely physically.”

That is to say, in human life there are successive periods. As you go forward, something comes to an end in one form, and it changes its form.... Naturally, at present, we come to the top of the ladder and come down again; but that’s really a shame, it shouldn’t be like that, it’s a bad habit. But when we have finished growing up, when we have reached a height we could consider as that which expresses us best, we can transform this force for growth into a force which will perfect our body, make it stronger and stronger, more and more healthy, with an ever greater power of resistance, and we shall practise physical training in order to become a model of physical beauty. And then, at the same time, we shall slowly begin and seek the perfection of character, of consciousness, knowledge, powers, and finally of the divine Realisation in its fullness of the marvellously good and true, and of His perfect Love.

11 January 1956

There you are. And this must be continuous. And when a certain level of consciousness has been reached, when this consciousness has been realised in the material world and you have transformed the material world in the image of this consciousness, well, you will climb yet one more rung and go to another consciousness — and you will begin again. *Voilà*.

But this is not for lazy folk. It's for people who like progress. Not for those who come and say, "Oh! I have worked hard in my life, now I want to rest, will you please give me a place in the Ashram?" I tell them, "Not here. This is not a place for rest because you have worked hard, this is a place for working even harder than before." So, formerly, I used to send them to Ramana Maharshi:¹ "Go there, you will enter into meditation and you will get rest." Now it is not possible, so I send them to the Himalayas; I tell them, "Go and sit before the eternal snows! That will do you good."

That's all, then.

¹ A sage of South India who left his body in April 1950. He founded a traditional ashram for meditation and contemplation.

18 January 1956

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes, "For all this first period he [the individual] has to work by means of the instruments of the lower Nature."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 79

What is this work, and how is it accomplished?

There is a positive side and a negative side to this work.

The positive side is to increase one's aspiration, develop one's consciousness, unify one's being, to go within in order to enter more and more into contact with one's psychic being; to take up all the parts, all the movements, all the activities of one's being and put them before this psychic consciousness so that they fall into their true place in relation to this centre; finally, to organise all one's aspiration towards the Divine and one's progress towards the Divine. That is the positive side.

At the same time the negative side consists in refusing methodically and with discernment all the influences which come from outside or from the subconscious or inconscient or from the environment, and stand in the way of spiritual progress. One must discern these influences, suggestions, impulses, and systematically refuse them without ever getting discouraged by their persistence and ever yielding to their will. One must, at the same time, observe clearly in one's being all its different elements, obscure, egoistic, unconscious, or even ill-willed, which consciously or otherwise, answer these bad influences, and allow them not only to penetrate into the consciousness, but sometimes to get settled there. That is the negative side.

Both must be practised at the same time. According to the moment, the occasion, the inner readiness, you must insist now on one, now on the other, but never forget either of them.

18 January 1956

Generally, all progress made on one side is set off by an attack of the adverse forces on the other. So, the more you advance, the more vigilant must you become. And the most essential quality is perseverance, endurance, and a... what shall I call it? — a kind of inner good humour which helps you not to get discouraged, not to become sad, and to face all difficulties with a smile. There is an English word which expresses this very well — cheerfulness. If you can keep this within you, you fight much better, resist much better, in the light, these bad influences which try to hinder you from progressing.

That is the work. It is vast and complex. And one must never forget anything.

Sweet Mother, "The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light and Power and Ananda."
Ibid., p. 81

Does the Supreme choose the being who will be his instrument, or does the being choose to become his instrument?

You can take it as you like.

One can't tell who began! But the two usually take place at the same time.

If you want an order of priority, it is evident that the Divine exists before the individual, so it must be the Divine who has chosen first! But that is a choice prior to terrestrial life. In the order of the ordinary human consciousness it may be one or the other or both at the same time. In fact, it is likely that the Divine is the first to notice that this or that being is ready! But he who is ready generally does not know it to begin with, so he has the impression that it is he who has decided and is choosing. But this is more of an impression than a reality.

And once you are chosen, it is ineluctable, you can't escape even if you try.

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, here I would like an explanation: “In the last period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed sadhana; the place of endeavour and tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 81

It is in a poetic form.

But what is it you don't understand? Why he speaks about the bud and the flower?

I am asking this because the bud opens into a flower without any effort, but we have to make an effort, haven't we?

He says that this happens when one is ready; it is precisely to make you think “but the bud opens without effort”; so, when the nature is ready, the same thing happens as with the bud.

“Effort”, I don't know what we call effort, it is not certain whether the plant makes an effort or not. And in any case, it has an aspiration; plants grow because they aspire for the light, for the sun, for open air.

And it's a kind of competition. If one goes into a wood, for instance, into a park where there are many different plants, one can observe very clearly that there is a sort of competition among plants to pass each other and reach the light and open air above. It is indeed quite wonderful to see.

Now, Sri Aurobindo means that when one is well prepared and the nature is ready, then the last movement is like a spontaneous blossoming — it's no longer an effort, it's an answer. It is a truly divine action in the being: one is prepared and the moment has come, then the bud opens.

18 January 1956

Is there an aspiration for growth in children also, as there is in plants?

Yes. Even, very often it is conscious: they want to be tall.

Does it then depend upon their aspiration — their being tall or short?

At a particular time, yes. Indeed, I have known children who have grown tall because they had a very strong will to grow.

Yes, that has an effect even when one is no longer quite a child. I have seen cases of people who grew taller even at twenty-five, so very anxious were they to grow tall. And I am not speaking of those who have practised physical culture, for that's different; with physical training one can considerably change one's body; I am just speaking of an aspiration, an inner will. The body is sufficiently plastic till twenty-five. Later one must introduce more scientific methods, like physical culture; and if that is done wisely and methodically, one can obtain wonderful results. But always, behind it, there must be a will, that is very important; a kind of tenacious aspiration, a knowledge, or even a faith that one is not necessarily tied down by atavism.

For obviously, like plants, one is limited by the original seed, the species to which one belongs. But all the same there is a wide margin. For instance, I have very many times seen children who were considerably taller than their parents, and had truly wanted to be so. Of course, it was against a certain resistance and within a certain limit, but one can push back the limit a good deal.

And in fact, according to the theories of heredity and atavism, it is said that heredity can skip generations, and there are few families where at least one member was not tall and so could justify the height of his grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, can a plant grow otherwise than physically?

In plants there is a great vital force. And this vital force has a considerable action. And there is also the genius of the species, which is a consciousness. There is already an active consciousness at work in plants.

And in the genius of the species there is a beginning — quite embryonic, but still — there is a beginning of response to the psychic influence, and certain flowers are clearly the expression of a psychic attitude and aspiration in the plant, not very conscious of itself, but existing like a spontaneous impetus.

It is quite certain, for instance, that if you have a special affection for a plant, if, in addition to the material care you give it, you love it, if you feel close to it, it feels this; its blossoming is much more harmonious and happy, it grows better, it lives longer. All this means a response in the plant itself. Consequently, there is the presence there of a certain consciousness; and surely the plant has a vital being.

Mother, does a plant have its own individuality and does it also reincarnate after death?

This may happen, but it is accidental.

There are trees — trees especially — which have lived long and can be the home of a conscious being, a vital being. Generally it is vital entities which take shelter in trees, or else certain beings of the vital plane which live in forests — as certain beings of the vital live in water. There were old legends like that, but they were based on facts.

The plant serves as home and shelter, but the being is not created by the plant itself!

(Silence)

18 January 1956

Can the being who is chosen by the Divine know it from his very birth?

Even before his birth.

Perhaps his birth is the result of this choice; generally it is like that. But at any time at all in his life this can happen. Yet for those who are predestined it is before birth; usually they come to earth with an intention and a specific purpose.

You would like to know very much if this has happened to you, yes? (*Laughter*) Well, try — try to find out: have this inner aspiration, concentrate, and then try. If you get a result, tell me; I shall tell you if it is right.

(*Looking at another disciple*) He has yet something on his mind!

Mother, to continue this question about the last sentence: "The Supreme has laid his luminous hand upon a chosen human vessel of his miraculous Light...."

Yes.

Can this be applied generally or is it for one in a million?

What do you mean by "generally"? Everyone on earth? Is that what you mean?

All those who aspire and do yoga, or is it only one person?

Oh! now it begins to take shape! (*Laughter*) Is it only one individual the Divine chooses to manifest Him or can He choose several? — He chooses several.

But here too there is a hierarchy. One can understand *nothing* of the spiritual life if one does not understand the true hierarchy.

Questions and Answers

Nowadays it's not in fashion. It is something which human thought doesn't favour at all. But from the spiritual point of view, it is automatic, spontaneous and indisputable. And so, if the hierarchy is true, there is a place for everybody; and for each individual in his own place, his individual truth is absolute. That is to say, each element which is truly in its place has a total and perfect relation with the Divine — in its place. And yet, on the whole, there is a hierarchy which too is quite absolute. But to understand spiritual life one must first understand that; and it isn't very easy.

Everyone can be a perfect expression of the Divine in himself, on condition that he knows his place and keeps to it.

And if they do not know the hierarchy, they cannot know this?

But they don't need to know that they form a hierarchy, it is not necessary to know it. It is only if one wants to physically organise a spiritual society — then one has to materialise the hierarchy. But generally, in the world as it is, there are so many gaps in this hierarchy that it seems a confusion.

The perfect hierarchy is a total hierarchy, and it is not concerned with time and space. But when you want to realise this physically it becomes very difficult. It's like weaving a piece of cloth with lots of holes everywhere; and the holes disturb the general harmony. Always people are missing, steps are missing, pieces are missing on the chess-board — all this is missing. So it looks like a confusion. But if everything were expressed and each thing in its place, it would be a perfect harmony and a perfect hierarchy.

There is somewhere — not in the material universe, but in the manifested universe — this perfect hierarchy; it exists. But it is not yet manifested upon earth.

Perhaps this will be one of the results of the supramental transformation: the world will be ready for a perfect,

18 January 1956

spontaneous, essentially true hierarchical manifestation — and without any kind of coercion — where everyone will become aware of his own perfection.

Mother, what does a spiritual hierarchy mean exactly? Because when we speak of hierarchy that implies something graded in a superior and inferior order, doesn't it?

Yes, and that's quite wrong. That is to say, materially it is like that. But this is not what I call a hierarchy.

Then what is a hierarchy?

It is the organisation of the functions and the manifestation in action of the particular nature of each person.

We have often tried to find comparisons, but they are worthless. For none of the things we know physically can answer to that condition. There is always the sense of superiority and inferiority as you say... Some have compared a hierarchy to the various functions of the body, for example. But that always gives the impression that the head is at the top and the feet at the bottom, so it is a nuisance!

Each element is the whole Divine at the same time, then how can we speak of a hierarchy?

Each element has a direct and perfect relation with the Divine.

But can't they become the whole Divine?

Yes, all become the Divine; but not the totality of the Divine, for the Divine is everything. You can't take a piece of the Divine and say, "This is the Divine." And yet, in his spiritual consciousness each one has a perfect relation with the Divine, that is to say, each

Questions and Answers

one is the Divine as perfectly as he can be. But to reconstruct the Divine, all the Divine is necessary. And it is precisely this that constitutes the very essence of hierarchy. But as each one is perfect in himself, there can be no feeling of inferiority or superiority.

I don't think the human mentality can understand that. I think it must be lived; once one has lived it, it is very simple, it appears luminously simple. But to understand it with the mind is not possible, it seems impossible. Above all because the mind, in order to understand anything at all, has to divide and contrast everything, otherwise it does not understand, it gets confused. By its very functioning, it becomes incapable of understanding.

(*Silence*)

Sweet Mother, how can one say that a fact is “already accomplished” where it has not yet been manifested — for instance, that the Divine has chosen an instrument, when nothing is yet apparent?

Yes, within, in the world which is not yet manifested, the decision is there, it is taken there; but then it must come to the surface.

It corresponds exactly to what I have already told you so often about the freedom of India. After going to a certain plane, I said to Sri Aurobindo, “India is free.” I didn't say, “She *will* be free”; I said, “She *is* free.” Well, between that moment when it was an accomplished fact and the time when it was translated into the material world on earth, how many years were necessary? It was in 1915, and liberation came in 1947, that is, thirty-two years later. There you are, that is the exact picture of the resistance.

So, for the individual it is the same thing; sometimes it takes as long as that, sometimes it goes faster.

You say you saw India free...

18 January 1956

No, I did not see: I knew.

You said to Sri Aurobindo: "India is free." Was India free as one whole or cut into two as it is at present?

I meant specially what happened in 1947, that is, the withdrawal of foreign domination, that's all. Nothing but that, not her moral or spiritual freedom, I did not speak of that at all. I simply said she was free from foreign domination, because, even to a question Sri Aurobindo put to me, I answered from the same plane, "There will be no violence, this will come about without a revolution, it will be the English who will decide to go away of their own accord, for things will become too hot for them owing to certain world circumstances." So that was the only point, there was no spiritual question here.

And that's how things happened. And I had told Sri Aurobindo this in 1915, exactly. It was all there, it was there—I guessed nothing nor prophesied anything: it was a fact.

And so, that gives you the exact picture of the length of time necessary between the established fact and the inner realisation. And for the individual it is the same thing: he is chosen, he has chosen; and he has chosen the Divine and he is chosen; and it is something which has been decided; and it will be realised inevitably, one can't escape even if one tries. Only, it may take a very long time.

Mother, I was asking... (laughter) You said that India was free in 1915, but was she free as she is free now? Because India is not free as one whole. She is broken up.

Oh! Oh! that's what you wanted to know.

That... the details were not there. No, there must have been a possibility of its being otherwise, for, when Sri Aurobindo told

Questions and Answers

them to do a certain thing, sent them his message,¹ he knew very well that it was possible to avoid what happened later. If they had listened to him at that time, there would have been no division. Consequently, the division was not decreed, it was a human deformation. It is beyond question a human deformation.

But then, how can it be said that the decision of the Supreme cannot be eluded?

What?

If the Divine had chosen that India would be free...

No, no, it's not like that, my child! (*Laughter*)

It's a *fact*, that's all. It is the Divine who is India, it is the Divine who is freedom, it is the Divine who is subjection, it is the Divine who is everything — then how could He choose?

(*Silence*)

I advise you to go up there and see, then you will understand. So long as you have not climbed right up the ladder, it will be difficult to understand.

¹ In 1942, at the time of the proposals offered by the British through Sir Stafford Cripps, not yet granting independence to India but leading towards it, Sri Aurobindo took the trouble of sending a special messenger to Delhi to convince certain responsible persons that the proposals *must be* accepted. They did not understand. Had the proposals been accepted, the partition of India and its accompanying atrocities would most probably have been avoided.

25 January 1956

“Life, not a remote silent or high-uplifted ecstatic Beyond — Life alone, is the field of our Yoga. The transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life must be its central purpose.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol 20, p. 82

Sweet Mother, will “the divine way of life” be established on earth only when the Supermind descends?

I think so. There seems to be no possibility of its happening other-wise. But it is a very relative question. Perhaps our way of life could become a little more divine without becoming altogether divine.

What do you mean by a “divine way of life”?

We always call “Divine” all that we are not but wish to be. All that seems to us infinitely superior, not only to all that we have done, but to all that we feel we can do; all that surpasses both our conception and our present possibilities, we call “Divine”.

I say this, not as a joke, but because I am quite convinced that if we go back some thousands of years, when men spoke of the Divine — if ever they did speak of the Divine, as I believe — they spoke perhaps of a state like that of the godheads of the Overmind; and now this mode of being of the Overmind godheads who, obviously, have governed the earth and formed many things on earth for a very long time, seems to us far inferior

Questions and Answers

to what we conceive the Supermind to be. And this Supermind, which is, precisely, what we now call the Divine and try to bring down on earth, will probably strike us in the same way a few thousand or million years hence as the Overmind does today.

And I am sure that in the manifestation, that is, in His self-expression, the Divine is progressive. Outside the manifestation He is something we cannot conceive; but as soon as He manifests in this kind of perpetual becoming, well, He manifests more and more of Himself, as though He were reserving for the end the most beautiful things in His Being.

As the world progresses, what He expresses in the world becomes what we might call more and more divine.

So Sri Aurobindo has used the word Supermind to explain to those who are in the outer and evolutionary consciousness and who have some idea of the way in which the earth has developed — to explain to them that this something which is going to be beyond all this, and superior to human creation, to man, whom he always calls the mental being — this something which is going to come will be greater and better than man; and so he calls it supramental in order to make himself understood. But we could just as well say that it is something more divine than what has been manifested before.

And this he himself says, in what I read today, that it is infinite, that it has no limits.¹ That is to say, there will always be a growing perfection; and what now seems to us imperfect must have been the perfection for which certain ages in earth's history aspired.

There is no reason why this should stop. If it stopped, it would be finished. It would be a new Pralaya.

Mother, I have not understood this: "It is for this meaningful development of consciousness by thought, will,

¹ "In a certain sense it may be an error to speak of a goal anywhere in a progression which may well be infinite."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 83

25 January 1956

emotion, desire, action and experience, leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery, that Man, the mental being, has entered into the material body.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 82–83

Why has the mental being taken a material body? Is that what you are asking?

Sri Aurobindo says, “leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery”.

The divine discovery is the discovery of the Divine in oneself. So man, that is, the mental being—for what we call man is a physical body with a mental being within, a mental being manifested in a body, a physical body—so the mental being has incarnated and become man in order to find within himself the divine Being, the divine Presence.

Why? Are you asking why? It’s a funny way of going about it! (*Laughter*)

I don’t know if he is going to explain it here, I don’t remember now, but one thing is certain, that this marvellous thing, the divine Presence in Matter, which is at the origin of the formation of the psychic being, belongs in its own right to life on earth.

So—we have already said this many times, I believe—our earth which from the astronomical point of view seems to be only a small insignificant planet in the midst of all the stars and all the worlds, our earth has been formed to become the symbol of the universe and the point of concentration for the work of transformation, of divine transmutation.

And because of that, in this Matter which was perhaps the most obscure and most inconscient of all the Matter of the universes, there plunged and incarnated directly the Divine Consciousness, from the supreme Origin right into the obscurest Matter, without going through any intermediate stages, *directly*.

Questions and Answers

Consequently, the two extremes touch, the Supreme and the most inconscient, and the universal circle closes. And so earthly life is the easiest means, one might say, or the most rapid, of becoming conscious of the Divine.

And it is so true that even the great cosmic Individualities, when they want to be converted or to unite with the Origin, take a physical body for that, because it is more convenient for them, for it can be done faster and better than if they had to progress through all the states of being, from any one of the states of being in the universe to the supreme Origin.

It is easier to come down into a human body and find the divine Presence there, it is quicker. Imagine the serpent biting its tail, it makes a circle, doesn't it? So, if something wants to be united with the Divine, it is easier to enter the tail than to go the whole round of the body! As the head bites the tail, well, if you enter the tail you are immediately in contact with the head, otherwise you have to go all the way round to reach the head.

(To the child) Mind you, I am not quite sure if this is what he means, but any way it is one explanation.

(Silence)

Mother shows the white Champak flower she is holding in her hand. She has named the flower "Psychological Perfection".

Who remembers this?

(Counting the petals) One, two, three, four, five psychological perfections. What are the five psychological perfections?

For they can be changed. And in fact, to tell you my secrets, every time I give it to someone, they are not always the same psychological perfections. That depends on people's needs. Even to the same person I may give at different times different psychological perfections; so it's not fixed. But the first time this flower was named "Psychological Perfection" (I remember very

25 January 1956

well it was at a gathering up there where Prosperity² now is, where I go on the first of the month; there was a gathering and we had decided the five psychological perfections), at that time they were noted down, but as for me it is something very fluid — I told you it depends on the circumstances and needs — I don't remember what was chosen the first time.

So, if someone knows it, he can tell us, we'll compare.

I am not sure.

You are not sure. Is there anyone who is sure?

Aspiration, devotion, sincerity and faith.

That makes only four, so far.

And surrender.

Surrender? Someone told me something else.

(*To a disciple*) You, do you know? Well, then, come and tell us.

In English, Mother?

Ah, no, my child, this is a French class, not in English!

Faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion, surrender.

But that's what he just said. (*Turning to another disciple*) You — a little while ago, you told me "faithfulness".

I said that, but it's not faithfulness, instead of faithfulness it's faith.

² "Prosperity" is the place where, on the first of every month, Mother used to distribute to the disciples what they needed for the month.

Questions and Answers

But why should there not be faithfulness? I didn't put it down, because I didn't try to recall anything, I simply wrote down what seemed to me the most important and most general. But it may be put in various ways.

In any case, what is always there, in all combinations and to whomever I give it, the first among them all is sincerity. For if there is no sincerity, one cannot advance even by half a step. So that is the first, and it is always there.

But it is possible to translate it by another word, if you prefer it, which would be "transparency". I shall explain this word:

Someone is in front of me and I am looking at him; I look into his eyes. And if this person is sincere or "transparent", through his eyes I go down and I see his soul—clearly. But—this is precisely the experience—when I look at somebody and see a little cloud, then I continue, I see a screen, and then sometimes it is a wall, and afterwards it is something quite black; and all this must be crossed, and holes bored in order to go through; and even then I am not sure if at the last minute I may not find myself before a door of bronze so thick that I shall never get through and see his soul; so, of such a person I can immediately say that he is not sincere. But I can also say, figuratively, that he is not transparent. That is the first thing.

There is a second, which is obviously, as indispensable if you want to go forward; it is to have faith. Or another word, which seems more limited but is for me more important, because (it is a question of experience) if your faith is not made of a complete trust in the Divine, well, you may very easily remain under the impression that you have faith and yet be losing all trust in the divine Power or divine Goodness, or the Trust the Divine has in you. These are the three stumbling-blocks:

Those who have what they call an unshakable faith in the Divine, and say, "It is the Divine who is doing everything, who can do everything; all that happens in me, in others, everywhere, is the work of the Divine and the Divine alone", if they follow

25 January 1956

this with some kind of logic, after some time they will blame the Divine for all the most terrible wrongs which take place in the world and make of Him a real demon, cruel and frightful — if they have no trust.

Or again, they do have faith, but tell themselves, “Well, I have faith in the Divine, but this world, I see quite well what it’s like! First of all, I suffer so much, don’t I? I am very unhappy, far more unhappy than all my neighbours” — for one is always far more unhappy than all one’s neighbours — “I am very unhappy and, truly, life is cruel to me. But then the Divine is divine, He is All-Goodness, All-Generosity, All-Harmony, so how is it that I am so unhappy? He must be powerless; otherwise being so good how could He let me suffer so much?”

That is the second stumbling-block.

And the third: there are people who have what may be called a warped and excessive modesty or humility and who tell themselves, “Surely the Divine has thrown me out, I am good for nothing, He can do nothing with me, the only thing for me is to give up the game, for He finds me unworthy of Him!”

So, unless one adds to faith a total and complete trust in the Divine Grace, there will be difficulties. So both are necessary....

Now, we have put “devotion” in this series. Yes, devotion is all very well, but unless it is accompanied by many other things it too may make many mistakes. It may meet with great difficulties.

You have devotion, and you keep your ego. And then your ego makes you do all sorts of things out of devotion, things which are terribly egoistic. That is to say, you think only of yourself, not of others, nor of the world, nor of the work, nor of what ought to be done — you think only of your devotion. And you become tremendously egoistic. And so, when you find out that the Divine, for some reason, does not answer to your devotion with the enthusiasm you expected of Him, you despair and fall back into the same three difficulties I was just speaking about: either the Divine is cruel — we have read that, there are many such stories, of enthusiastic devotees who abuse the Divine

Questions and Answers

because He is no longer as gentle and near to them as before, He has withdrawn, “Why hast Thou deserted me? Thou hast abandoned me, O monster!...” They don’t dare to say this, but think it, or else they say, “Oh! I must have made such a serious mistake that I am thrown out”, and they fall into despair.

But there is another movement which should constantly accompany devotion.... That kind of sense of gratitude that the Divine exists; that feeling of a marvelling thankfulness which truly fills you with a sublime joy at the fact that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine, that it is not just the monstrosity we see, that there is the Divine, the Divine exists. And each time that the least thing puts you either directly or indirectly in contact with this sublime Reality of divine existence, the heart is filled with so intense, so marvellous a joy, such a gratitude as of all things has the most delightful taste.

There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun, no matter what, suddenly this comes upon you, this kind of emotion — indeed so deep, so intense — that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.

So I find that devotion without gratitude is quite incomplete, gratitude must come with devotion.

I remember that once we spoke of courage as one of the perfections; I remember having written it down once in a list. But this courage means having a taste for the supreme adventure. And this taste for supreme adventure is aspiration — an aspiration which takes hold of you completely and flings you, without calculation and without reserve and without a possibility of withdrawal, into the great adventure of the divine discovery, the great adventure of the divine meeting, the yet greater adventure of the divine Realisation; you throw yourself into the adventure without looking back and without asking for a single minute,

25 January 1956

“What’s going to happen?” For if you ask what is going to happen, you never start, you always remain stuck there, rooted to the spot, afraid to lose something, to lose your balance.

That’s why I speak of courage — but really it is aspiration. They go together. A real aspiration is something full of courage.

And now, surrender. In English the word is “surrender”, there is no French word which gives exactly that sense. But Sri Aurobindo has said — I think we have read this — that surrender is the first and absolute condition for doing the yoga. So, if we follow what he has said, this is not just one of the necessary qualities: it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. If one has not decided to make a total surrender, one cannot begin.

But for this surrender to be total, all these qualities are necessary. And I add one more — for so far we have only four — I add endurance. For, if you are not able to face difficulties without getting discouraged and without giving up, because it is too difficult; and if you are incapable... well, of receiving blows and yet continuing, of “pocketing” them, as they say — when you receive blows as a result of your defects, of putting them in your pocket and continuing to go forward without flagging — you don’t go very far; at the first turning where you lose sight of your little habitual life, you fall into despair and give up the game.

The most... how shall I put it? the most material form of this is perseverance. Unless you are resolved to begin the same thing over again a thousand times if need be... You know, people come to me in despair, “But I thought it was done and now I must begin again!” And if they are told, “But that’s nothing, you will probably have to begin again a hundred times, two hundred times, a thousand times; you take one step forward and think you are secure, but there will always be something to bring back the same difficulty a little farther on. You think you have solved the problem, you must solve it yet once again; it will turn up again looking just a little different, but it will be the same problem”, and if you are not determined that: “Even

Questions and Answers

if it comes back a million times, I shall do it a million times, but I shall go through with it”, well, you won’t be able to do the yoga. This is absolutely indispensable.

People have a beautiful experience and say, “Ah, now this is it!...” And then it settles down, diminishes, gets veiled, and suddenly something quite unexpected, absolutely commonplace and apparently completely uninteresting comes before you and blocks your way. And then you say, “Ah! what’s the good of having made this progress if it’s going to start all over again? Why should I do it? I made an effort, I succeeded, achieved something, and now it’s as if I had done nothing! It’s indeed hopeless.” For you have no endurance.

If one has endurance, one says, “It’s all right. Good, I shall begin again as often as necessary; a thousand times, ten thousand times, a hundred thousand times if necessary, I shall begin again — but I shall go to the end and nothing will have the power to stop me on the way.”

This is most necessary. Most necessary.

So here’s my proposal: we put surrender first, at the top of the list, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said — that to do the integral yoga one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, this is *the* way. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, five psychological perfections, and we say that these perfections are:

Sincerity or Transparency

Faith or Trust (Trust in the Divine, naturally)

Devotion or Gratitude

Courage or Aspiration

Endurance or Perseverance.

One form of endurance is *faithfulness*, faithfulness to one’s resolution — being faithful. One has taken a resolution, one is faithful to one’s resolution. This is endurance.

There you are.

If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious.

Victory is to the most persistent.

1 February 1956

Sri Aurobindo writes here, "It is possible, indeed, to begin with knowledge or Godward emotion solely or with both together and to leave works for the final movement of the Yoga."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 86

What is this knowledge?

There are three principal paths of yoga: the path of knowledge, the path of love and the path of works. So Sri Aurobindo says that it depends on each case and person. Some people follow more easily the path of knowledge, others follow more easily the path of love, of devotion, and others follow the path of works. He says that for the integral yoga the three must be combined and with them something else, but that everybody can't do everything at the same time and that there are people who need to be exclusive and to choose one of the three paths first in order to be able to combine them all later.

The path of knowledge is the well-known path of Raja Yoga, in which one practises detachment from one's physical being, saying, "I am not the body", then detachment from one's sensations, "I am not my sensations", then from one's feelings, saying, "I am not my feelings", and so on. One detaches oneself from thought and goes more and more within until one finds something which is the Eternal and Infinite.

It is a path of meditation, which is truly the path of self-knowledge seen from the point of view of the divine reality. It is the path of meditation, concentration, of withdrawal from life and action. This was the one most practised in the old yogas.

Or else, the path of devotion and love, like that of Chaitanya or Ramakrishna.

Questions and Answers

This book [Part One of *The Synthesis of Yoga*] is entirely about the yoga of works, of action, that is to say, the finding of union with the Divine in action and work, and in the consecration of one's work to the Divine. That's all.

Sweet Mother, "the consecration of works is a needed element in that change. Otherwise, although they may find God in other-life, they will not be able to fulfil the Divine in life."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 85

Why these two words: "God" and "the Divine"?

I don't think that Sri Aurobindo contrasts them. This is only a way of speaking. He does not set one against the other.

What does it mean?

It means that they go out of existence to find the Divine, to find God, a God who is outside life; they themselves go outside life to find Him. While in the integral yoga it is in life that the Divine must be found, not outside life.

There are those, for instance, who consider life and the world an illusion, and think it necessary to leave them behind in order to find the Divine, whose nature, they say, is the opposite of that of existence. So Sri Aurobindo says that perhaps they will find God outside life but will not find the Divine in life. He contrasts the two things. In one case it is an extra-terrestrial and unmanifested Divine, and in the other it is the Divine who is manifested in life and whom one can find again through life.

Do you catch the point?

Mother, when one is identified with the Divine in the higher part of the being while neglecting the lower parts — neglecting life — doesn't the Divine, in the part where

1 February 1956

one is identified with Him, advise one to attend to the lower parts?

And if before even beginning, one has decided that this must not happen, perhaps one makes it impossible for oneself to receive the advice of the Divine!

For, truly speaking, each one finds only what he wants to find of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has said this by turning it the other way round; he has said — I am not quoting the exact words, only the idea: what you expect from the Divine is what you find in the Divine; what you want from the Divine is what you meet in the Divine. He will have for you the aspect you expect or desire.

And His manifestation is always adapted to each one's receptivity and capacity. They may have a real, essential contact, but this contact is limited by their own capacity for receiving and approach.... It is only if you are able to go out of all limits that you can meet the total Divine as He totally is.

And this capacity for contact is perhaps what constitutes the true hierarchy of beings. For everyone carries within himself the Divine, and therefore everyone has the possibility of uniting with the Divine — that possibility is the same in all. But according to each one's capacity — in fact, according to his position in the divine hierarchy — his approach will be more or less partial or total.

It could be said — although these words deform things a lot — that the quality of the approach is the same in every being, but the quantity, the totality is very different.... It is very difficult to explain in words, but if one may say so, the *point* at which you are identified with the Divine is perfect in itself, that is to say, your identification is perfect in itself, at this point, but the number of points at which you are identified differs immensely.

And this is very marked in the difference between the paths followed to approach the Divine. Usually people set limits; they

Questions and Answers

limit themselves by excluding everything that is not exactly the path they have chosen, for this is much easier and they go much faster — relatively. But if, instead of following *one* road, you go forward in a sort of movement which could be called spherical, where everything is included, which takes in all the possibilities of approach to the Divine, naturally the result is much more complete — and it is this that Sri Aurobindo calls the integral yoga — but the progress is much more difficult and much slower.

One who chooses the path of knowledge — and even in the path of knowledge a special method, for everyone has his own method — and follows it, eliminating from his consciousness and life all that's not it, advances much more rapidly, for he is in search of only one aspect and this is much more direct, immediate. And so he rejects, rejects, rejects all that is not this, and limits his being just to the path he travels. And the more you want your approach to be integral, naturally the more will it become difficult, complicated, long, laborious.

But he who follows only one path, when he reaches his goal, that is, when he is identified with the Divine, his identification is perfect in itself; that is to say, it is really an identification with the Divine — but it is partial. It is perfect; it is perfect and partial at the same time.

This is very difficult to explain, but it is a fact. He is really identified with the Divine and has found the Divine; he is identified with the Divine — but at one point. And so he who is able to identify himself in his totality with the Divine is necessarily, from the point of view of the universal realisation, on a much higher level of the hierarchy than one who could realise Him only at a single point.

And that is the true meaning of the spiritual hierarchy, this is why there is a whole spiritual hierarchical organisation, otherwise it would have no basis, for from the minute you touch the Divine, you touch Him perfectly: the point at which you touch Him is perfect in itself. And, from this point of view, all who are

1 February 1956

united with the Divine are equally perfect in their union — but not equally complete, if I may say so.

Do you catch a little of what I mean?

What I wanted to ask, Mother, was whether in the part where they are identified, after their identification with the Divine, they don't find that this identification is not complete, that is, that they have left behind other parts of their being, and that they must begin once again?

This may happen.

This may happen, but usually they have so well eliminated from themselves all that was not that, that nothing remains for them to realise that the identification is not perfect. They have the experience of identification, they are lost in the Divine. From the personal, individual point of view, that is the most they can hope for.

It is not that what you say is impossible, indeed I think it is possible — but it is rare. It is not frequent. That would mean that in spite of their work of elimination they have retained in their consciousness something which would be able to feel that they are not entirely satisfied.

After the identification, there is no longer the position, for example, of Master and disciple, the Lord and the aspirant. At the moment of identification that relationship disappears; there is no longer any Master or disciple, any Lord or aspirant: all is the Divine. So, who receives the lesson? That could only happen if there were an element of consciousness which did not participate in this identification, because it needed another approach than the one it had. And all would depend on how perfectly the aspirant has eliminated from his being all that has nothing to do with the exclusive path he follows. For instance, if he keeps latent in his consciousness, elements of devotion or love, then if he has followed the path of knowledge, well, at the time of identification these will miss something. And then he

Questions and Answers

will be able to understand that his experience is not complete. But if they have been so well eliminated that they no longer exist, then who will notice that the union is not perfect? The union is perfect in itself at this particular point. It is purely a phenomenon of consciousness.

(Turning to the child) In your consciousness there is still the idea that you unite with “Something” which knows more about it than you and will make you recognise your mistake. But that no longer exists after the identification! That is just the first contact, but not the identification.

In identification there is no longer any difference between the one who is identified and what he is identified with: it is the same thing. So long as there is a difference, it is not identification.

I say that by any path whatever and by eliminating all that is not of this path, it is possible for each one to be perfectly identified with the Divine, that is to say, to become the Divine — but at only one point, the point he has chosen. But this point is perfect in itself. I don’t say it contains everything, I say it is perfect in itself, that is, the identification is perfect — but it is not total.

They have the full bliss?

Perfect bliss — perfect bliss, eternity, infinity, everything.

Then what’s the difference?

The difference exists only in the manifestation. By this identification, whatever it may be, one automatically goes out of the manifestation, except at the point where one is identified. And if, in the path one has followed, the aim is to go out, as for instance with those who seek Nirvana, if it is a going out of the manifestation, well, one goes out of the manifestation, it’s the end. And once one goes out of the manifestation, there is no longer any difference or any hierarchy, it is finished, one

1 February 1956

has gone out of the manifestation. That is it, you understand, everything depends on the goal one pursues. If one goes out of the manifestation, one goes out of the manifestation, then there is no longer a possibility of any hierarchy at all. But as soon as one enters the manifestation, there is a hierarchy. That is to say — if we take the realisation of the supramental world — everybody will not be on the same level and made in the same pattern, and with the same capacity and possibility. It's always this illusion, isn't it, of a sort of indefinite repetition of something which always resembles itself — it is not that. In the realisation, the manifestation, there is a hierarchy of capacity and action, and of manifestation. But if the aim is to go out of the manifestation, then quite naturally, at whatever point you go out, you go out.

It all depends on the ideal one puts before oneself. And while you go out because you have chosen to do so, to enter into Pralaya, there is all the rest of the universe which continues.... But that's totally immaterial to you. As your aim was to get out of it, you get out of it. But that doesn't mean that the rest also go out! You are the only one to go out, or those who have followed the same aim and the same path as you.

(Long silence)

That is precisely the problem which faced Sri Aurobindo here and me in France: should one limit one's path and reach the goal first, and later take up all the rest and begin the work of integral transformation; or should one go step by step, not leaving anything aside, not eliminating anything on the path, taking in all the possibilities at the same time and progressing at all points at the same time? That is to say, should one retire from life and action until one reaches one's goal, becomes conscious of the Supermind and realises it in oneself; or should one embrace the entire creation and with this entire creation gradually go forward towards the Supermind?

Questions and Answers

(Silence)

One can understand that things get done by stages: you go forward, reach one stage, and so, as a consequence, take all the rest forward; and then at the same time, in a simultaneous movement, you reach another stage and again take others forward — and so on.

That gives the impression that you are not moving. But everything is on the move in this way.

That's all.

Sweet Mother...

I would rather we didn't fall back into inessentials. If you have understood what I said and it is about that you want to ask a question, ask it.

No? Well, then, it would be better to meditate.

8 February 1956

Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: "At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will or how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 88

Not understood? What do you mean, "not understood"? It's a fact, there is nothing to understand, it's like that.

I have explained this to you I don't know how many times. You think it is you who decide: these are impulses coming from outside. You think you are conscious of your will: it is a consciousness which is not yours. And everything... you are made up entirely of something which is the forces of Nature expressing a higher Will of which you are unconscious.

Only, one doesn't understand this except when one can come out of one's ego, though it be only for a moment; for the ego — and this is its strength — is convinced that it alone decides. But if one looks attentively, one notices that it is moved by all sorts of things which are not itself.

But then what is mental and vital will?

That is an expression of something which is not personal.

If you analyse carefully, you see, for instance, that all that you think has been thought by others, that these are things which circulate and pass through you, but you have not produced this thought, you are not the originator of this thought.

Questions and Answers

All your reactions come from atavism, from those who gave you birth and from the environment in which you have lived, from all the impressions which have accumulated in you and constituted something which seems to you yourself, yet which is not produced by you, but merely felt and experienced; you become aware of it in passing, but it is not you who created it, not you who gave it birth.

It could be said that these are like sounds — any kind of sounds: words, music, anything — recorded by an instrument, then reproduced by another instrument which plays them back like a gramophone, for instance. You wouldn't say that the gramophone has created the sound you hear, would you? That would never occur to you. But as you are under the illusion of your separate personality, these thoughts which cross your mind and find expression, these feelings which pass through your vital and find expression, you think, have come from you; but nothing comes from you. Where is the "you" which can create all that?

You must go deep, deep within, and find the eternal essence of your being to know the creative reality in yourself. And once you have found that, you will realise that it is one single thing, the same in all others, and so where is your separate personality? Nothing's left any longer.

Yes, these are recording and reproducing instruments, and there are always what might be called distortions — they may be distortions for the better, they may be distortions for the worse, they may be fairly great changes; the inner combinations are such that things are not reproduced exactly as they passed from one to the other because the instrument is very complex. But it is one and the same thing which is moved by a conscious will, quite independent of all personal wills.

When the Buddha wanted to make his disciples understand these things, he used to tell them: every time you send out a vibration, a desire for example, the desire for some particular thing, your desire starts circulating from one person to another, from one to another across the universe and will go right round

8 February 1956

and come back to you. And as it is not only one thing but a world of things, and as you are not the only transmitting centre — all individuals are transmitting centres — it is such a confusion that you lose your bearings in there. But these vibrations move about in a single, absolutely identical field; it is only the complication and interception of the vibrations which give you the impression of something independent or separate.

But there's nothing separate or independent; there is only *one* Substance, *one* Force, *one* Consciousness, *one* Will, which moves in countless ways of being.

And it is so complicated that one is no longer aware of it, but if one steps back and follows the movement, no matter which line of movement, one can see very clearly that the vibrations propagate themselves, one following another, one following another, one following another, and that in fact there is only one unity — unity of Substance, unity of Consciousness, unity of Will. And that is the only reality. Outwardly there is a kind of illusion: the illusion of separation and the illusion of difference.

Desires and all those things also?

This is not personal. Not at all personal. And that is *very* easy to find out; of all things this is the easiest to discern, because ninety times out of a hundred it comes to you from someone else or from a certain circumstance or a set of circumstances, or from a vibration coming from another person or several other people. It is very easy to discern, it is the first thing one can discern: it is a vibration which suddenly awakens something similar in you. You know, something makes an impact on you, and this impact brings up a response, as when you play a note. Well, this vibration of desire comes and strikes you in a certain way and you respond.

It is not very difficult to discern; even when one is very young, even when one is a child, if one pays attention, one becomes aware of this. One lives amidst constant collective

Questions and Answers

suggestions, constantly; for example, I don't know if you have been present at funerals, or if you have been in a house where someone has died — naturally you must observe yourself a little, otherwise you won't notice anything — but if you observe yourself a little, you will see that you had no special reason to feel any sorrow or grief whatever for the passing away of this person; he is a person like many others; this has happened and by a combination of social circumstances you have come to that house. And there, suddenly, without knowing why or how, you feel a strong emotion, a great sorrow, a deep pain, and you ask yourself, "Why am I so unhappy?" It is quite simply the vibrations which have entered you, nothing else.

And I tell you it is easy to observe, for it is an experience I had when I was a little child — and at that time I was not yet doing conscious yoga; perhaps I was doing yoga but not consciously — and I observed it very, very clearly. I told myself, "Surely it is their sorrow I am feeling, for I have no reason to be specially affected by this person's death"; and all of a sudden, tears came to my eyes, I felt as though a lump were in my throat and I wanted to cry, as though I were in great sorrow — I was a small child — and immediately I understood, "Oh! it is their sorrow which has come inside me."

It is the same thing for anger. It is very clear, one receives it suddenly, not even from a person, from the atmosphere — it is there — and then all of a sudden it enters you and usually it gets hold of you from below and then rises up and pushes you, and so off you go. A minute earlier you were not angry, you were quite self-possessed, you had no intention of losing your temper. And this seizes you so strongly that you can't resist — because you are not sufficiently conscious, you let it enter you, and it makes use of you — you... what you call "yourself", that is to say, your body; for apparently (I say apparently) it is something separate from your neighbour's body. But that is only an optical illusion, because in fact all the time there are what may be called particles, even physical particles, like a sort

8 February 1956

of radiation which comes out of the body and gets mixed with others; and because of this, when one is very sensitive, one can feel things at a distance.

It is said, for instance, that the blind develop such a sensitivity, so delicate a sense-perception, that when they are nearing an object they feel an impact at a distance. But one can quite easily make the experiment. For example, drawing near to someone without making any noise, then bringing one's hand quite close — sensitive people feel it at once. You haven't put your will for them to feel it, you haven't brought in any psychological element, you have only made a purely physical experiment of approaching noiselessly and without being heard — a sensitive person will feel it at once.

That means that the body seems to end there, but it's simply the way our eyes are made. If we had a little more subtle vision, with a little wider range, well, we would see that there is something which comes out, as something comes out from other bodies — and that all this gets mixed up and interacts.

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by "oneness in dynamic force"?

That's what I was saying. There is a dynamic force which moves all things, and when you become conscious of it, you see that it is one single Force which moves all things; and as you become conscious, you can even follow its movement and see how it works through men and things.

From the minute you become conscious of the Unity — unity of Force, unity of Consciousness and unity of Will — well, you no longer have the perception which makes you quite separate from others, so that you do not know what goes on in them, they are strangers to you, you are shut up as it were in your own skin, and have no contact with others except quite externally and superficially. But this happens precisely because you have not realised in yourself the perception of this

Questions and Answers

oneness of Consciousness, Force and Will — even of material vibrations.

It is the complexity which makes this perception difficult — for our faculties of perception are quite linear and very one-sided; so when we want to understand, we are immediately assailed by countless things which are almost inconsistent with each other and intermix in such an intricate way that one can no longer make out the lines and follow things — one suddenly enters a whirlwind.

But this is because... For instance, most men think one thought after another, even as they have to say one word after another — they can't say more than one word at the same time, you know, or else they stammer. Well, most people think like that, they think one thought after another, and so their whole consciousness has a linear movement. But one begins to perceive things only when one can see spherically, globally, think spherically, that is, have innumerable thoughts and perceptions simultaneously.

Naturally, up to now, if one wanted to describe things, one had to describe them one after another, for one can't say ten words at once, one says one word after another; and that is why all one says is practically quite incapable of expressing the truth, quite incapable. For we have to say one thing after another — the minute we say them one after another, they are no longer true. They must all be said at the same time, just as they can all be seen at the same time, and each one in its place.

So, when one begins to see like this — to see, to discern, to feel, to think, to will like this — one draws near the Truth. But so long as one sees as one speaks, oh, what a lamentable poverty!

Sri Aurobindo writes: "As long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief

8 February 1956

and joy, pain and pleasure, good fortune and ill fortune, success and failure, we follow helplessly the iron round of the wheel of Maya.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 88

Yes. There are people who have a happy and comfortable life, and people who have a miserable one. That depends... how shall I put it? — upon individual destiny, that depends perhaps on what they have to do upon earth, on the stage they have reached, on many things. It's quite obvious that it is not they who choose. For most people would always choose the same thing. If they were asked what they wanted, there would be differences, yes, but not so great. It would be rather monotonous.

Most people want to be what they call “quiet”, what they call “peaceful”, to have a small organisation in their own measure — which is generally microscopic, and consists of a regular routine of almost the same activities always, within almost the same bounds, in almost the same surroundings — and all that repeated without much difference; with a sufficient variety not to become completely boring, but with nothing that might disturb this regular round which makes what is called a peaceful life. For the vast majority of people this is the ideal.

And so, the realisation of this ideal in its details depends solely on the country where they are born, the society in which they are born, and the customs of their environment. Their ideal is fashioned by the manners of the country and society in which they live.

Of course, there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule. Generally speaking, the most common ideal is to be born in an environment comfortable enough to avoid too many difficulties in life, to marry someone who won't give you too much trouble, to have healthy children who grow up normally — again to avoid trouble — and then a quiet and happy old age, and not be too ill, again to avoid trouble. And then to pass away when one is tired of life, again because one does not want any trouble.

Questions and Answers

Indeed, this is the most widespread ideal. Naturally, there are exceptions, one may even find the exact opposite. But existence, as men conceive it, would be rather monotonous. The differences would come in the details, for in one country people prefer one thing and in another, another; and then, in the society in which one is born, there are certain customs and an ideal of happiness, and in another society there are other customs and another ideal of happiness — and that's all.

If one speaks to Europeans, for example, they will say there is nothing more beautiful than Europe. I knew Frenchmen — not one but hundreds — who used to say that there were no women in the world more beautiful than French women! And I knew a Negro who had been entirely educated in France and who, when asked which women were the most beautiful, said, "There is no woman more beautiful than a Negress." That was quite natural, wasn't it? Well, that's how it is. There is no house more beautiful than the one you are used to living in — the houses of the country you live in, where you are born — and for the landscape it is the same thing, for food the same thing, for habits it's the same thing. And provided that this goes on fairly harmoniously, without any very violent knocks, you are perfectly satisfied.

That is the usual mentality. And one turns round and round — and sometimes it is an iron circle, sometimes a golden one — but one turns round and round and round, and the children will turn round and round and the grandchildren will turn round and round — and so it will go on. There you are.

That's enough for today.

15 February 1956

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo speaks of “this executive world-Nature”. Is there an executive Nature on the other planes also?

On the other planes, what do you mean?

In the mind and higher up.

The earth-Nature contains not only matter — the physical and its different planes — but also the vital and the mind; all this is part of the earth-Nature.

And after that there is no Nature, that is to say, there is no longer this distinction. That belongs essentially to the material world as it is described here.¹

But, as Sri Aurobindo says, this is not “all the true truth”. He has simply given a summary of what is explained in the Gita. That is what the Gita says; it is not exactly like that.

Only, as he says, this may be useful, that is, instead of causing a confusion between the different parts of the being, this helps you to distinguish between what is higher and what is lower, what is turned towards the Divine and what is turned towards matter. It is a psychologically useful conception, but, in fact, that’s all there is to it. Things are not like that.

Sri Aurobindo writes: “Nature, — not as she is in her divine Truth, the conscious Power of the Eternal, but as

¹ In the passage of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 91) the Mother had just read, Sri Aurobindo expounds the traditional distinction between Purusha and Prakriti, the Master of Nature and Nature, and describes the different stages of immersion of the Master of Nature in Nature, or of the soul in the activities of the world; then he shows the traditional path of the liberation of the spirit, which rises above Nature and becomes once again the Master of Nature.

Questions and Answers

she appears to us in the Ignorance, — is executive Force, mechanical in her steps, not consciously intelligent to our experiences of her, although all her works are instinct with an absolute intelligence.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 91

Nature is not consciously intelligent?...

There is an intelligence which acts in her and through her, in her action, but she is not conscious of this intelligence. You can understand this with animals. Take ants, for example. They do exactly what they have to do; all their work and organisation is something which really looks perfect. But they are not conscious of the intelligence which organises them. They are moved mechanically by an intelligence of which they are not aware. And even if you take the most developed animals, like the cat and dog for instance, they know exactly what they have to do: a cat bringing up its little ones brings them up just as well as a woman hers — sometimes better than a woman but it is impelled by an intelligence which moves it automatically. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it do things. It is not aware of it, it can't change anything at all in the movement by its own will. Something makes it act mechanically but over that it has no control.

If a human being intervenes and trains a cat, he can make it change its behaviour; but it is the consciousness of the human being which acts upon it, not its own consciousness. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it act.

And this kind of self-awareness, this possibility of watching oneself acting, of understanding why one does things, how one does them and, therefore, of having a control and changing the action — that belongs to the mind and in his own right to man. This is the essential difference between a man and an animal — that a man is conscious of himself, that he can become aware of the force which makes him act, and not only become aware of it but control it.

15 February 1956

But all those who feel themselves driven by a force and say, “I was forced to do it”, without the participation of their will, show that they are still deeply rooted in animality, that is to say, in the unconscious. One begins to become a conscious human being only when one knows why one does things and when one is capable of changing one’s action by a determined will, when one has a control. Before having any control, one is still more or less an animal with a small embryo of consciousness which is just beginning, a little flame flickering and trying to burn, and likely to be blown out by the slightest passing breeze.

“Nature as Prakriti is an inertly active Force, — for she works out a movement imposed upon her; but within her is One that knows....”

“The individual soul or the conscious being in a form may identify itself with this experiencing Purusha or with this active Prakriti. If it identifies itself with Prakriti, it is not master, enjoyer and knower....”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 91

If Nature is led by the Power which is self-aware and if she does exactly what is imposed upon her, how is it that there are all these distortions? How can Nature distort things?

Yes, I was expecting that.

I tell you this is the theory of the Gita, it’s not the whole Truth.

I heard this when I was in France; there are people who explain the Gita, saying there is no flame without smoke — which is not true. And starting from that they say, “Life is like that and you can’t change it, it’s like that. All you can do is to pass over to the side of the Purusha, become the governing force instead of being the force that is governed.” That’s all. But, as Sri Aurobindo says at the end, it is the theory of the Gita, it’s

Questions and Answers

not the whole truth; it is only a partial way of seeing things — useful, practical, convenient, but not wholly true.

If that is so, how is it that some of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo preach the message of the Gita for the salvation of the world?

That's their business. If that makes them happy, it's all the same to me.

But it has no connection with Sri Aurobindo's yoga?

One can't say no connection; but it's narrow-mindedness, that's all. They have caught hold of a small bit and make it the whole. But that happens to everybody. Who is capable of grasping the whole, I would like to know? Everyone grasps his bit and makes it his whole.

But Sri Aurobindo has explained...

Oh! but you are a propagandist! Why do you want to convince them? If they are content with that, leave them in their contentment.... If they come and tell you, "This is Sri Aurobindo's theory", you have the right to tell them, "No, you are mistaken, that is the traditional theory, this is not the theory of Sri Aurobindo." That's all. But you can't tell them, "You must change yours." If it pleases them, let them keep it.

It's very convenient. I saw this in France, in Paris, before coming to India, and I saw how very practical it was. First, it allows you to grasp a very profound and extremely useful truth, as I said; and then it shields you from all necessity of changing your outer nature.

It's so convenient, isn't it? You say, "I am like that, what can I do about it? I separate myself from Nature, I let her do whatever she likes, I am not this Nature, I am the Purusha. Ah!

15 February 1956

let her go her own way; after all, I can't change her." This is extremely convenient. And that is why people adopt it; for they imagine they are in the Purusha, but at the least scratch they fall right back into Prakriti, and then they fly into a temper or are in despair or fall ill. And that's that.

I heard someone who had, however, realised precisely this kind of identification with the Purusha and radiated a very remarkable atmosphere; but he called dangerous revolutionaries all those who wanted to change something in the earth-Nature, all who wanted things on earth to change — wanted, for example, that suffering might be abolished or ultimately the necessity of death might be done away with, that there might be an evolution, a luminous progress requiring no destruction: "Ah! those who think like that are dangerous revolutionaries. If need be, they should be put in prison!"

But if one wants to be wise even without becoming a great yogi, one must be able to look at all these things with a smile, and not be affected by them. You have your own experience; try to make it as true and complete as possible, but leave each one to his own experience. Unless they come seeking you as a guru and tell you, "Now, lead me to the Light and the Truth"; then, there your responsibility begins — but not before. (*Looking at a disciple*) He is longing to speak!

Sri Aurobindo has said, "The Gita... pauses at the borders of the highest spiritual mind and does not cross them into the splendours of the supramental Light."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 87

By following the Gita, why doesn't one catch the central truth and come to the path of the supramental Yoga?

I don't know what you mean. But there are also many people who believe they are following the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and who don't reach the supramental truth.

Questions and Answers

It does not depend so much on the path one follows; it depends on the capacity one has.

But I am asking: the central truth of the Gita is surrender to the Lord — why doesn't one grasp that?... "Its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature, is the central secret."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 87

But of course, this is what is written in the Gita, that you must give yourself entirely. You know, in the Gita, Krishna is the Guide and inner Master, and you must give yourself entirely to Him, make a total surrender — so? I tell you, people profess one teaching or another, but they are not always able to follow it; they come to a certain point and stop.

I don't understand your difficulty. You mean that those who are convinced of the truth of the teaching of the Gita do not realise this teaching?

The teaching of surrender.

Yes, anyway the teaching contained in the Gita — and this surprises you? But there are countless people throughout the world who are convinced of the truth of a teaching, but that doesn't make them capable of realising it. For instance, all Buddhists, the millions of Buddhists in the world who profess that Buddhism is the truth — does this enable them to become like a Buddha? Certainly not. So, what is so surprising about that?

I told you why there are people who accept this even after having read and studied Sri Aurobindo: why they accept it, hold fast to it, cling to this teaching of the Gita; it is because it's comfortable, one doesn't need to make any effort to change one's nature: one's nature is unchangeable, so you don't at all need to think of changing it; you simply let it go its own way,

15 February 1956

you look at it from the top of your ivory tower and let it do whatever it likes, saying, "This is not I, I am not that."

This is very convenient, it may be done very rapidly — at least one could claim that it's done. As I said, in practice one is rarely consistent with one's theory; if you have a bad throat or a headache or have grazed your foot, you begin to cry out or complain, to groan, and so you are not detached, you are altogether attached and tightly bound. This is a very human fact.

Or else, when someone says something unpleasant to you, you get quite upset. It is like that — because you are closely attached to your nature, although you have declared you are not. That's all.

22 February 1956

Sweet Mother, I don't understand "the strong immobility of an immortal spirit".

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 95

What is it you don't understand? That an immortal spirit has a strong immobility? It says what it means. An immortal spirit is necessarily immobile and strong, by the very fact of its being immortal.

But then Sri Aurobindo says about the Gita: "Not the mind's control of vital impulse is its rule, but the strong immobility of an immortal spirit."

Yes. But this is a conclusion, my child; you must read the beginning of the sentence if you want to understand.... Ah! (*Turning to a disciple*) Give me the light and the book. (*Mother searches*). Here it is, he says, "The Gita... aims at something absolute, unmitigated, uncompromising, a turn, an attitude that will change the whole poise of the soul. Not the mind's control of vital impulse is its rule, but the strong immobility of an immortal spirit."

This is as clear as daylight. The Gita demands the strong immobility of an immortal spirit — all the rest is secondary. What the Gita wants is that the spirit should be conscious of its immortality and thus have a strong immobility.

For this is a fact, it's like that. When the spirit is conscious of immortality, it becomes an immobility all made of strength. Immobility — that is to say, it doesn't move any longer, but it is a strong immobility, it is not an immobility of inertia or impotence; it is a strong immobility which is a basis for action, that is, all one does founds itself upon this powerful — all-powerful — immobility of the spirit that is immortal.

But you see, there is no explanation which can give you that; you must have the experience. As long as one has not had the experience, one can't understand what this means.... And it is the same for everything: the head, the little brain, cannot understand. The minute one has the experience, one understands — not before. One may have a sort of imaginative idea, but this is not understanding. To understand, one must live it. When you become conscious of your immortal spirit, you will know what its strong immobility is — but not before. Otherwise, these are mere words.

You don't understand how one can be immobile and strong at the same time, is that what is bothering you? Well, I reply that the greatest strength is in immobility. That is the sovereign power.

And there is a very small superficial application of this which perhaps you will understand. Someone comes and insults you or says unpleasant things to you; and if you begin to vibrate in unison with this anger or this ill-will, you feel quite weak and powerless and usually you make a fool of yourself. But if you manage to keep within yourself, especially in your head, a complete immobility which refuses to receive these vibrations, then at the same time you feel a great strength, and the other person cannot disturb you. If you remain very quiet, even physically, and when violence is directed at you, you are able to remain very quiet, very silent, very still, well, that has a power not only over you but over the other person also. If you don't have all these vibrations of inner response, if you can remain absolutely immobile within yourself, everywhere, this has an almost immediate effect upon the other person.

That gives you an idea of the power of immobility. And it is a very common fact which can occur every day; it is not a great event of spiritual life, it is something of the outer, material life.

There is a tremendous power in immobility: mental immobility, sensorial immobility, physical immobility. If you can remain like a wall, absolutely motionless, everything the other

Questions and Answers

person sends you will immediately fall back upon him. And it has an immediate action. It can stop the arm of the assassin, you understand, it has that strength. Only, one must not just appear to be immobile and yet be boiling inside! That's not what I mean. I mean an integral immobility.

Mother, is this the same as the equality of soul Sri Aurobindo has spoken about?

Equality of soul is a way. It is a means, it is a way — it can be a goal also. But it is not the consummation.

For example, there are those who say, who profess that everything that happens is the expression of the divine Will (I spoke about this last time, I think), there is an entire way of looking at life, understanding life, which is like that, which says, “All that is, the world as it is, all that happens, is the expression of the divine Will; therefore wisdom wants us, if we want to be in relation with the Divine, to accept without flinching and without the slightest emotion or reaction all that happens, since it is the expression of the divine Will, and it is understood that we should bow down before it.” This is a conception which tends precisely to help people to acquire this equality of soul. But if you adopt this idea without adopting its opposite and making a synthesis of the two, well, naturally, you have only to sit through life and do nothing — or, in any case, never try to make the world progress.

I remember having read in a class, before our present class started — a class which also used to be held on Wednesdays, perhaps, I don't quite know, in which I used to read books — I read a book by Anatole France, who had a very subtle wit — I think it was *Le Livre de Jerome Coignard* but I am not absolutely sure — where he says that men would be perfectly happy if they were not so anxious to improve life. I am not quoting the exact words but the idea. Unhappiness begins with this will to make men and things better!... (*Mother laughs*) That is his way of

22 February 1956

saying exactly the same thing I was just telling you in another form. If you want to be peaceful, happy, always satisfied, to have perfect equality of soul, you must tell yourself, “Things are as they should be,” and if you are religious you should tell yourself, “They are as they should be because they are the expression of the divine Will”, and we have only one thing to do, that is to accept them as they are and be very quiet, because it is better to be quiet than to be restless. He turns the thing round and puts it in another way; he says life is very comfortable and very tolerable and very acceptable, if men don’t begin to wish that it should be different. And the minute they are not happy, naturally nobody is happy! Since they find that it is not what it should be, well, they begin to be unhappy — and others too.

But if everyone had the good sense to say, “Things are as they should be; one dies because one has to die, and one is ill because one has to be ill, one is separated from those one loves because one has to be separated, and then, etc... and one is in poverty because one has to be poor, one...”, you know, there is no end to it. Well, if completely, totally, one says, “Things are as they should be”, it makes no sense to grieve or to revolt, it’s foolish!... Ah! one must be logical. So we say that misery begins with the will to make things better than they are. Why do you not want to be ill when you are ill? You are much more ill when, being ill, you don’t want to be ill, than if you tell yourself, “All right, it is God’s Will, I accept my illness!” At least you are quiet, that helps you to recover, perhaps.... And poor people — why do they want to be rich? And people who lose their children or their parents — why don’t they want it to be like that? If everybody wanted things to be as they are, everybody would be happy.

This is one point of view. Only it happens that perhaps — perhaps, the divine Will is not quite like that. And perhaps it is as in that story — you all know the story of the elephant and its mahout? — the elephant, its mahout and the Brahmin on the road who refused to get out of the way of the elephant and, when the mahout told him, “Go away”, he replied, “No, God

Questions and Answers

in me wants to stay here”, and the mahout answered, “Pardon me, but God in me tells you to go away!”

So the reply to Anatole France is perhaps just this that there is a will higher than that of man which wants things to change. And so there is nothing to do but obey and make them change.

There we are. Is that all?

Sweet Mother, it is written here: “In the path of works action is the knot we have first to loosen.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 94

Why is action a knot?

Because one is attached to action. The knot is the knot of the ego. You act because of desire. Sri Aurobindo says this, doesn't he? The ordinary way of acting is tied to desire in one form or another — a desire, a need — so that is the knot. If you act only to satisfy desire — a desire which you call a need or a necessity or anything else, but in truth, if you go to the very root of the thing, you see that it is the impulse of a desire which makes you act — well, if you act only under the effect of the impulse of desire, you will no longer be able to act when you eliminate the desire.

And this is the first answer people give you. When they are told, “Act without being attached to the result of action, have this consciousness that it is not you who are acting, it is the Divine who is acting”, the reply which ninety-nine and a half per cent give is, “But if I feel like that, I don't move any longer! I don't do anything any more; it is always a need, a desire, a personal impulse which makes me act in one way or another.” So Sri Aurobindo says, if you want to realise this teaching of the Gita, the first thing to do is to loosen this knot, the knot binding action to desire — so firmly tied are they that if you take away one you take away the other. He says the knot must be loosened in order to be able to remove desire and yet continue to act.

22 February 1956

And this is a fact, this is what must be done. The knot must be loosened. It is a small inner operation which you can very easily perform; and when it has been performed, you realise that you act absolutely without any personal motive, but moved by a Force higher than your egoistic force, and also more powerful. And then you act, but the consequences of action no longer return upon you.

This is a wonderful phenomenon of consciousness, and quite concrete. In life you do something—whatever you do, good, bad, indifferent, it doesn't matter—whatever it may be, it immediately has a series of consequences. In fact you do it to obtain a certain result, that is why you act, with an eye to the result. For example, if I stretch out my hand like this to take the mike, I am looking for the result, you see, to make sounds in the mike. And there is always a consequence, always. But if you loosen the knot and let a Force coming from above—or elsewhere—act through you and make you do things, though there are consequences of your action, they don't come to you any longer, for it was not you who initiated the action, it was the Force from above. And the consequences pass above, or else they are guided, willed, directed, controlled by the Force which made you act. And you feel *absolutely* free, nothing comes back to you of the result of what you have done.

There are people who have had this experience—but these things come first in a flash, for a moment, and then withdraw; it is only when one is quite ready for the transformation that this comes and is established—well, some people have had this experience once, perhaps for a few seconds in their lives, they have had the experience; and then the movement has been withdrawn, the state of consciousness has withdrawn; but the memory remains. And they imitate that. And if by chance they happen to be people who know how to make speeches, like certain gurus who have disciples to whom they teach the path, they tell them this, “When it is the Divine who acts through you and when you have loosened the knot of desire, you no longer

Questions and Answers

suffer any moral or other consequences of what you do. And you can do anything whatever: you can kill your neighbour, you can violate a woman, you can do everything the Divine wants in you — and you will never suffer any consequences.”

And indeed they do it! Yes, they take the experience as a cloak to cover all their excesses.... This is just by the way, to put you on your guard against people who pretend to be what they are not.

But, as a matter of fact, the result is very simple, for immediately they suffer the consequences of their pretences — they say they don't, but they suffer them.... I knew of a very striking case of a sannyasin who was furious with someone who did not want to be his disciple — already this proved that he was far from having realised this state — and who wished to take revenge. And indeed he had some powers, he had made a very powerful formation to kill this person who had refused to be his disciple. It so happened that this person was in contact with Sri Aurobindo. He told him his story and Sri Aurobindo told it to me. And the result was that the formation made by that man, who was acting with his so-called divine Will, fell back on him in such a way that it was he who died!

And it was simply the fact of re-establishing the truth. There was nothing else to do.

So the moral of the story is that one must not pretend, one must be; that one must be absolutely sincere and not cover up one's desires with fine theories.

I have met many people who claimed they had perfect equality of soul and perfect freedom, and hid themselves behind these theories: “All is the divine Will”, and who, in fact, in their thought, were substituting their own will for the divine Will, and were very far from realising what they claimed. They were idlers who didn't want to make any effort and preferred keeping their nature as it was, rather than working to transform it. *Voilà!*

Sweet Mother, do these people have powers?

22 February 1956

Yes! There are some who have great powers. But these powers come from the vital and from an association with vital entities.

There are all kinds of powers. Only, those powers don't hold out before the true divine Power — they can't resist. But over ordinary human beings they have much power.

Then, they can do harm?

Much. Not only they can, they do it. They do a lot of harm. The number of people who are tormented because they had the misfortune of meeting a so-called sannyasin,¹ is considerable, considerable. I am not telling you this to frighten you, because here you are protected, but it is a fact. While receiving initiation these men have received the imposition of a force from the vital world, which is extremely dangerous.... This is not always the case, but most often this is what happens.

Because sincerity is so rare a virtue in the world, one ought to bow down before it with respect when one meets it. Sincerity — what we call sincerity, that is to say, a perfect honesty and transparency: that there may be nowhere in the being anything which pretends, hides or wants to pass itself off for what it is not.

¹ Later the Mother added the following commentary: "Of course, this refers only to those who put on the orange robe with the sole purpose of hiding their egoistic passions behind the veil of a dress which is generally respected. There can be no question about those who have a pure heart and whose dress is simply the outer sign of their integral consecration to the spiritual life."

29 February 1956

On this evening, during the meditation which followed this conversation, there took place what Mother has called “the first Manifestation of the Supramental Light-Force in the earth-atmosphere”.

“The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption of this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. For ‘with sacrifice as their companion,’ says the Gita, ‘the All-Father created these peoples.’ The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 98

Sweet Mother, what does the “sacrifice to the Divine” mean?

It is self-giving. It is the word the Gita uses for self-giving.

Only, the sacrifice is mutual, this is what Sri Aurobindo says at the beginning: the Divine has sacrificed Himself in Matter to

29 February 1956

awaken consciousness in Matter, which had become inconscient. And it is this sacrifice, this giving of the Divine in Matter, that is to say, His dispersion in Matter, which justifies the sacrifice of Matter to the Divine and makes it obligatory; for it is one and the same reciprocal movement. It is because the Divine has given Himself in Matter and scattered Himself everywhere in Matter to awaken it to the divine consciousness, that Matter is automatically under the obligation to give itself to the Divine. It is a mutual and reciprocal sacrifice.

And this is the great secret of the Gita: the affirmation of the divine Presence in the very heart of Matter. And that is why, Matter must sacrifice itself to the Divine, automatically, even unconsciously — whether one wants it or not, this is what happens.

Only, when it is done unconsciously, one doesn't have the joy of sacrifice; while if it is done consciously, one has the joy of sacrifice which is the supreme joy.

The word "sacrifice" in French has slightly too narrow a sense, which it doesn't have in the original Sanskrit; for in French sacrifice implies a sort of suffering, almost a regret. While in Sanskrit this sense is not there at all; it corresponds to "self-giving".

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "All are linked together by a secret Oneness."

Ibid., p. 98

What is this secret Oneness?

It is precisely the divine Presence.

Because the Divine is essentially one, and yet He has subdivided Himself apparently in all beings, and in this way recreated the primordial Oneness. And it is because of this divine Oneness — which, however, appears fragmented in beings — that the Unity is re-established in its essence. And when one becomes conscious of this, one has the joy of the consciousness of this

Questions and Answers

Oneness. But those who are not conscious — what they miss is the joy of consciousness. But the fact remains the same.

Sri Aurobindo says: the Oneness exists; whether you are aware of it or not, it exists, in reality it makes no difference; but it makes a difference to you: if you are conscious, you have the joy; if you are not conscious, you miss this joy.

But how can a sacrifice be made when one is unconscious?

It is made automatically.

Whether you know it or not, whether you want it or not, you are all united by the divine Presence which, though it appears fragmented, is yet One. The Divine is One, He only appears fragmented in things and beings. And because this Unity is a fact, whether you are aware of it or not doesn't alter the fact at all. And whether you want it or not, you are in spite of everything subject to this Unity.

This is what I have explained to you I don't know how many times: you think you are separate from one another, but it is the same single Substance which is in you all, despite differences in appearance; and a vibration in one centre automatically awakens a vibration in another.

So, no effort is to be made to improve the sacrifice, there is no need to make an effort?

I don't understand this conclusion at all.

If you are happy to be unhappy, that's all right, it is your own affair; if you are content to be unhappy and to suffer and remain in the ignorance and inconstancy you are in, stay there. But if this does not satisfy you, if you want to be conscious and you want suffering to cease, then you must make constant efforts to become conscious of the sacrifice and to make your sacrifice consciously instead of unconsciously.

29 February 1956

Everything turns around the consciousness, the fact of being or not being conscious. And it is only in the supreme Consciousness that you can attain the perfect expression of yourself.

But that the Oneness exists, even if you feel just the opposite, is a fact you can do nothing about, for it is a divine action and a divine fact—it is a divine action and a divine fact. If you are conscious of the Divine, you become conscious of this fact. If you are not conscious of the Divine, the fact exists but you simply are not conscious of it—that's all.

So, everything turns around a phenomenon of consciousness. And the world is in a state of obscurity, suffering, misery, of... everything, all it is, simply because it is not conscious of the Divine, because it has cut off the connection in its consciousness, because its consciousness is separated from the Divine. That is to say, it has become unconscious.

For the true consciousness is the divine Consciousness. If you cut yourself off from the divine Consciousness, you become absolutely unconscious; that is exactly what has happened. And so, everything there is, the world as it is, your consciousness as it is, things in the state they are in, are the result of this separation of the consciousness and its immediate obscuration.

The minute the individual consciousness is separated from the divine Consciousness, it enters what we call the inconscience, and it is this inconscience that is the cause of all its miseries.

But all that is, is essentially divine, and the divine Oneness is a fact, you can't do anything about it; all your unconsciousness and all your denials will change nothing—it is a fact, it's like that.

And the conclusion is this, that the true transformation is the transformation of consciousness—all the rest will follow automatically.

There we are, that's all.

Sweet Mother, what part in us sets itself against a total renunciation?

Questions and Answers

It is as if you asked me, “What is unconscious in us?” But in fact, everything is unconscious except the Divine. And it is only when one can unite with the Divine that one re-establishes the true consciousness in one’s being. The rest is a kind of mixture of semi-consciousness and semi-unconsciousness.

Anything else? No?

(*Turning to a disciple*) Oh! he is longing to speak!

Mother, there is a magnificent sentence!

Ah! only one?

“Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock....” and Sri Aurobindo adds, “And always again it receives something from its environment in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 98

Yes, that is what I was just saying. And then?

Does one receive from one’s environment or only from the Divine?

Oh! from both.

Because here it is written: “it receives from its environment.”

Yes! Because Sri Aurobindo says there is a oneness in Matter, a oneness in the manifestation, a oneness in substance, and that there is necessarily an interchange.

In fact, this is what we have said more than fifty thousand times: that all is the Divine and that consequently all is *One*; that it is only your consciousness which is separated and in a state of unconsciousness because it is separated; but that if you

29 February 1956

remove this unconsciousness and this sense of separation, you become divine.

But in ordinary life, in one's environment, what one receives is not always what one gives.

Oh! but you must not understand things so superficially.

(Another disciple) Does the inconscient aspire to become conscious?

No. It is the Divine in the inconscient who aspires for the Divine in the consciousness. That is to say, without the Divine there would be no aspiration; without the consciousness hidden in the inconscient, there would be no possibility of changing the inconscience to consciousness. But because at the very heart of the inconscient there is the divine Consciousness, you aspire, and necessarily — this is what he says — automatically, mechanically, the sacrifice is made. And this is why when one says, “It is not *you* who aspire, it is the Divine, it is not *you* who make progress, it is the Divine, it is not *you* who are conscious, it is the Divine” — these are not mere words, it is a fact. And it is simply your ignorance and your unconsciousness which prevent you from realising it.

(Meditation)

7 March 1956

Sweet Mother, what is this form of sacrifice in which animals are slaughtered upon altars?

It is certainly one of the obscurest and most unconscious. And the sacrifice spoken about here and in the Gita, is the sacrifice one makes of oneself, not of others.

Because here it is written: "Whoever the recipient, whatever the gift, it is the Supreme, the Eternal in things, who receives and accepts it."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 101-02

Happily for the poor creature which is sacrificed! Perhaps it goes straight to the Divine.

It would be very interesting to see.... Imagine a man who wants to win the Divine's favour, or that of some god or other, some deity, in order to obtain something very selfishly personal, something he desires and finds it hard to get; and so he snatches a chicken from his yard and goes and cuts its throat before the deity, with his prayer, perhaps for a good harvest or the good sale of his harvest, or for a child if he doesn't have one, or that his wife may be cured if she is ill — anything at all. And then imagine that this evolving psychic particle, already like a tiny spark in semi-consciousness — not even semi-consciousness — the rudiment of consciousness which is in the chicken, goes straight to the Divine who magnifies it; while the man who has offered the chicken to obtain some benefit or other is not even heard.

Most probably, this is what happens. So the one who has truly gained in this business is the chicken, not the man!

7 March 1956

Sweet Mother, some people make sacrifices and offerings to hostile forces. Are these also received by the Divine?

You mean sacrifices like those I have just spoken about, from people offering something for altogether selfish ends?

No, people who offer sacrifices to hostile forces.

To hostile forces? But they don't know they are hostile! Or as they do here, when they take the deity of cholera round in a procession, for example, or the deity of smallpox: it is taken round with songs and beating of drums, and then all sorts of offerings are made to it. This is to satisfy it so that it doesn't kill too many people.

One should first make sure that this deity exists, that it is not just a doll sitting there on its altar.

Anyway, in instances of this kind, I think it is people's faith, above all, which saves them. When they have performed their little ceremony properly, they feel confident, "Oh! now it will be over, for she is satisfied." And because they feel confident, it helps them to react and the illness disappears. I have seen this very often in the street. There might be a small hostile entity there, but these are very insignificant things.

In other cases, in some temples, there are vital beings who are more or less powerful and have made their home there.

But what Sri Aurobindo means here is that there is nothing, not even the most anti-divine force, which in its origin is not the Supreme Divine. So, necessarily, everything goes back to Him, consciously or unconsciously. In the consciousness of the one who makes the offering it does not go to the Divine: it goes to the greater or smaller demon to whom he turns. But through everything, through the wood of the idol or even the ill-will of the vital adversary, ultimately, all returns to the Divine, since all comes from Him. Only, the one who has made the offering or the sacrifice receives but in proportion to his own consciousness

Questions and Answers

and to what he has asked. So one could say that theoretically it returns to the Divine, but that the response comes from that to which he has addressed himself, not from the supreme Origin, for one is not in contact with it; one is in contact only with the next step, the next intermediary — no higher.

It is quite certain that if the movement is absolutely unconscious, the result will also be absolutely unconscious; and if the movement is entirely egoistic, the result is also entirely egoistic. It is as in that story by Sri Aurobindo¹ I read to you one Friday, the first story in which he explained Karma, saying that evil results in evil, and good results in good. Evil begets evil, and good begets good: that is Karma; it is not a punishment or a reward, it is something automatic. Well, if your sacrifice is egoistic and obscure, it will necessarily have an obscure and egoistic result.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “The vulgar conception of sacrifice is an act of painful self-immolation, austere self-mortification, difficult self-effacement.... But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it is not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it, but to be increasingly fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine Light.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 100

How can one be luminously open?

If you like you may replace the word “luminously” by the word “sincerely”, or “transparently”, like something which is not opaque or does not distort; something clear, transparent, sincere, which does not obstruct.

¹ The reference is to the tale “A Dream”, written originally in Bengali and published in *The Chariot of Jagannatha*.

7 March 1956

You may take the image of a window open to the light. If your panes are of blackened or opaque glass, what comes through naturally becomes dark and opaque, and little passes through. And if the glass is quite transparent, then it is a luminous light which comes. Or if your glass is coloured, the light will be coloured in one way or another when it reaches you. While if the glass is absolutely pure and transparent, the light will come through pure and transparent.

Mother, the Gita speaks of the true essence of sacrifice, and Sri Aurobindo says, "Its method is not self-mortification, but a greater life; not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members...."

Ibid., p. 101

Isn't it physical transformation we aspire for?

When Sri Aurobindo says "integral transformation", naturally he is speaking of physical transformation. But the Gita does not speak of integral transformation, I don't think so. Because for the Gita, the idea of physical transformation does not exist. As I was explaining to you the other day, the world is as it is and you have but to take it as it is, and not be affected by what it is. For you enter a higher consciousness, you are liberated from outer forms, but they remain as they are. Indeed, some slight mention is made of changing one's character, but there is no question of changing the material world.

Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: "The spirit's inner enemies... have to be sacrificed in the harsher sense of the word, whatever pain in going they may throw by reflection on the consciousness of the seeker."

Ibid., pp. 100–101

Questions and Answers

Not understood? This has never happened to you? No? When, for instance, you have a movement you don't like — a movement of anger or spite, all kinds of things like that, or an insincerity or something you don't like — when you reject it from yourself, when you want to make an effort not to have it any more, it hurts you, doesn't it? It hurts, it is as though something was being pulled out. Well, this is the pain he is speaking about; he says that it is the bad thing you throw away from you which, when leaving, gives you a nice little knock as a parting gift. That's what he says.

For you are always under the illusion that pain belongs to you. This is not true. Pain is something thrust upon you. The same event could occur, *exactly* the same in all its details, without its inflicting the shadow of a pain on you; on the contrary, sometimes it can fill you with ecstatic joy. And it is exactly the same thing. But in one case, you are open to the adverse forces you want to reject from yourself, and in the other you are not, you are already too far away from them to be affected by them any longer; and so, instead of feeling the negative side they represent, you feel only the positive side the Divine represents in the experience. It is the divine Grace which makes you progress, and with the divine Grace you feel the divine Joy. But instead of identifying yourself with the Grace which makes you progress, you identify yourself with the ugly thing you want to get rid of; and so, naturally, you feel like it and suffer.

That is an experiment you can make if you are just a little conscious. There is something in you which you don't want, something bad — for one reason or another you don't want it, you want to pull it out — well, if you identify yourself ever so little with that thing, you feel the pain of the extraction; if, on the contrary, you identify yourself with the divine Force which comes to liberate you, you feel the joy of the divine Grace — and you experience the deep delight of the progress you have made.

And this is a sure sign for you, a sure indication of what you identify yourself with. If you are identified with the forces

7 March 1956

from below, you suffer; if you are identified with the forces from above, you are happy. And I am not speaking about feeling pleasure; you must not think that when one jumps about, dances, shouts and plays, one is identified with the divine forces — one may or may not be. That is not what I am speaking of. I am speaking of the divine Joy, the inner Joy which is unalloyed.

Each time a shadow passes, with what may be just an uneasiness or what may become a severe pain or an unbearable suffering, through the whole range, from the smallest to the greatest — as soon as it appears in your being, you may tell yourself, “Ah, the enemy is there!” — in one form or another.

Sweet Mother, what is the experience of the being who has given himself completely to the Divine?

But... do it, my child, then you will know! It is not the same for everybody.

Mother, “the intention ... and the spirit that is behind the intention,”² what does that mean, isn’t it the same thing?

What?

The intention...

Yes, I know.

...and the spirit that is behind.

To me it is as clear as crystal, I don’t understand your question.

² “The fruit also of the sacrifice varies according to the work, according to the intention in the work and according to the spirit that is behind the intention.”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 102

Questions and Answers

What is the difference between the intention and the spirit of the intention?

The spirit that is behind.

Isn't there a spirit behind all things? No?

There is always a spirit behind.

Well, yes, and that is all he has said, nothing else, that you must know what kind of spirit there is behind your intention.

He says the result is different.

But of course! According to the spirit in which you do things, the result is different.

But the spirit and the intention are not the same thing?

What do you want me to tell you? If you don't feel the difference between the two, I can't explain it to you.

There are forces at work all the time, which set people moving, which make them move. In the individual being this is translated into exact intentions; but behind the intention a force is acting which is not individual.

Do you understand?

Yes.

Ah!

I think one of the greatest difficulties in understanding things comes from an arbitrary simplification which puts spirit on one side and matter on the other. It is this foolishness that makes you incapable of understanding anything. There is spirit and matter — this is very convenient. So if one does not belong to spirit, one

7 March 1956

belongs to matter; if one does not belong to matter, one belongs to spirit. But what do you call spirit and what do you call matter? It is a countless crowd of things, an interminable ladder. The universe is a seemingly infinite gradation of worlds and states of consciousness, and in this increasingly subtle gradation, where does your matter come to an end? Where does your spirit begin? You speak of “spirit” — where does this spirit begin? With what you don’t see? Is that it? So you include in “spirit” all the beings of the vital world, for instance, because you don’t see them in your normal state — all that belongs to “spirit” — and they may indeed be the spirit which is behind your intention — and it isn’t up to much! That’s it.

It is like those people who say, “When you are alive you are in matter; when you are dead, you enter the spirit. There, then! So, liberate the spirit from matter, die, and you liberate your spirit from matter.” It is these stupidities which prevent you from understanding anything at all. But all this has nothing to do with the world as it really is.

For the human consciousness as it is, there are certainly infinitely more invisible things than visible things. What you know, the things which are visible to you and which you are conscious of — it’s almost like the skin of an orange compared with the orange itself — and even an orange with a very thin skin, not a thick one! And so, if you know only the skin of the orange, you know nothing about the orange.

And this is more or less what happens. All that you know about the universe is just a superficial little crust — and even this you hardly know. But that is all you know about it, and all the rest escapes you.

14 March 1956

“The practice of this Yoga demands a constant inward remembrance of the one central liberating knowledge.... In all is the one Self, the one Divine is all; all are in the Divine, all are the Divine and there is nothing else in the universe, — this thought or this faith is the whole background until it becomes the whole substance of the consciousness of the worker. A memory, a self-dynamising meditation of this kind, must and does in its end turn into profound and uninterrupted vision and a vivid and all-embracing consciousness of that which we so powerfully remember or on which we so constantly meditate.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 104

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by “a self-dynamising meditation”?

It is a meditation that has the power of transforming your being. It is a meditation which makes you progress, as opposed to static meditation which is immobile and relatively inert, and which changes nothing in your consciousness or in your way of being. A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation.

Generally, people don't have a dynamic meditation. When they enter into meditation — or at least what they call meditation — they enter into a kind of immobility where nothing stirs, and they come out of it exactly as they went in, without any change either in their being or in their consciousness. And the more motionless it is, the happier they are. They could meditate in this way for eternities, it would never change anything either in the universe or in themselves. That is why Sri Aurobindo speaks of a dynamic meditation which is exactly the very opposite. It is a transforming meditation.

14 March 1956

How is it done? Is it done in a different way?

I think it is the aspiration that should be different, the attitude should be different. “Different way” — what do you mean by “way” — (*laughing*) the way of sitting?... Not that? The inner way?

Yes.

But for each one it is different.

I think the most important thing is to know why one meditates; this is what gives the quality of the meditation and makes it of one order or another.

You may meditate to open yourself to the divine Force, you may meditate to reject the ordinary consciousness, you may meditate to enter the depths of your being, you may meditate to learn how to give yourself integrally; you may meditate for all kinds of things. You may meditate to enter into peace and calm and silence — this is what people generally do, but without much success. But you may also meditate to receive the Force of transformation, to discover the points to be transformed, to trace out the line of progress. And then you may also meditate for very practical reasons: when you have a difficulty to clear up, a solution to find, when you want help in some action or other. You may meditate for that too.

I think everyone has his own mode of meditation. But if one wants the meditation to be dynamic, one must have an aspiration for progress and the meditation must be done to help and fulfil this aspiration for progress. Then it becomes dynamic.

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: “No matter what the gift and to whom it is presented by us...” and then “there must be a consciousness in the act that we are presenting it to the one divine Being.”

Ibid., p. 103

Questions and Answers

These two phrases are contradictory, aren't they?

No, my child. That's because you don't understand the turn of the sentence. This means: the nature of the gift we make and to whom we give it is of little importance, provided that it is made as an act of consecration to the Divine.

That is what I always tell people in other words: whatever work you do — whether you go to an office, keep accounts, drive a car, anything — whatever the work you do, and naturally whomever you do it for, it must be an offering to the Divine. While doing it, you should keep the remembrance of the Divine and do it as an expression of your consecration to the Divine. This is what Sri Aurobindo says, nothing else.

Sweet Mother, I have a question to ask you but it is not my own it is someone else's.

Ah! let us see.

Why? That person isn't here?... He is afraid to speak! All right, ask your question.

It is often said, or predicted, that the numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, (23 April 56) will have a special significance for the Ashram. Is this true?

I can reply with a joke, if you like. There's talk now about changing the calendar; if it is changed, the numbers will be changed, and then the whole of History will have gone, flown away!

It is a convention, you see.

Obviously, if the convention is generalised, as is the case with the calendar, it can become a very powerful formation. But it must be very widely adopted to become a powerful formation. What I call "formations" are images which can be animated by a force and taken as symbols. Some people create images

14 March 1956

for themselves and use them as their own symbols; and for them they may be very useful and valid, as, for instance, the symbols of dreams. But these are valid only for them, they are purely subjective. While, if you take the calendar which has been adopted by almost all human beings, your symbol can act on a much wider field; but the origin is the same, it is a convention. Naturally, these are things we are used to, for they were like that when we were small children; but it depends on the country of one's birth and the community in which one is born.

There are communities which count differently. And so, for them, other numbers at other times have a symbolic significance. Only, if our formation — the one in which you are born, which you have adopted — if this formation is adopted by the vast majority of men, you will be able to act on this majority by acting through this formation. You can act through a formation only to the extent to which it is adopted by a certain number of people. It is purely conventional. We began counting from a certain date — which, besides, was chosen quite arbitrarily — and so the numbers came to be what they are today. But, for instance, one has only to visit a Muslim community, where they started counting from — I don't know whether it is the birth or the death of Mohammed — and their numbers are quite different. So, if you go and tell them: "2, 3, 4, 5, 6", they will say, "What does your number mean, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6? Nothing at all."

These things can be taken usefully as symbols and as a means of bringing a more subtle world in contact with a more material world. They may be used in this way, that's all.

But if, instead of the millions of people who use the present calendar, there were only three or four, it would be pointless to say that these numbers are symbolic. They would be symbolic only for these three or four people. Therefore, it is not the thing in itself which counts, it is the extent of its usage. That's what's important.

People make the same mistake with the stars and horoscopes. It is quite simply a language and a convention, and if this

Questions and Answers

convention is adopted, it may be utilised to do a certain work. But it has only a relative value in proportion to the number of people who have adopted it.

In this relative world, everything is necessarily relative. So things should not be taken literally, for that makes your mind small and narrow.

The more primitive people are, the more simple-minded they are, and these things take on a more superstitious turn. Superstitions are simply a wrong generalisation of a particular fact.

I always give the example of a person passing under a ladder. At the top of the ladder a man is working and, by an unlucky coincidence, he drops his tool on the head of the passer-by and breaks his head — that can happen, it is a fact, and the man's head is shattered. But someone, who sees this accident, later makes a general rule and says, "To walk under a ladder is a bad omen" — *that* is a superstition. And that's how it happens with everything.

Moreover, many facts of knowledge have exactly the same origin. For instance, if a certain medicine, through a concurrence of favourable circumstances, has cured a number of people, immediately it is proclaimed that this medicine is all-powerful against this disease. But it is not true. And the proof is that if the same medicine is administered in the same way to a hundred people, there won't be two similar results, and sometimes the effects will be diametrically opposite. Therefore, it is not the property of the medicine itself which cures; to believe in this medicine is a superstition.

And in fact, there is a very slight difference between science and superstition. Perhaps it lies only in the care taken in expressing things. If one is careful as scientists are, to say, "It seems this may be like that... one would think that... everything combines to make us think..." then there's no longer any superstition! But otherwise when one says, "It is like that", this is necessarily a superstition. *Voilà*.

14 March 1956

So, to the person who asked you the question you will reply like this: “If with 3, 4, 5, 6, or with 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, something exceptional happens to you and you have an inner or outer revelation, you may proclaim that it is an exceptional date. But if nothing happens to you, it will not be an exceptional date for you at all; it will be a date like all the others!”

(Silence)

There was a very old tradition, very, very old, even older than the Vedic tradition here, which said, “If twelve men of goodwill unite and call the Divine, the Divine is obliged to come.” Well, perhaps this is a truth, perhaps a superstition. Perhaps it depends on the twelve men of goodwill and what they are. Perhaps it depends on other things also. If you ask me, I think that it probably happened like this, that in the beginning twelve men gathered together — there happened to be twelve, perhaps they didn’t even know why — and they were so united in their aspiration, an aspiration so intense and powerful, that they received the response. But to say, “If twelve men of goodwill unite in an aspiration, they are sure to make the Divine descend” is a superstition.

In fact, things must have happened like that, and the person who noted it put it down carefully: “If twelve men of goodwill unite their aspiration, the Divine is obliged to come.” And since then, I can tell you that a considerable number of groups of twelve men have united in a common aspiration... and they did not bring down the Divine! But all the same the tradition has been left intact.

There we are.

We are many more than twelve this evening. *(Laughter)*
Shall we try it once and see if we succeed!

(Meditation)

21 March 1956

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "There is one fundamental perception indispensable towards any integral knowledge.... It is to realise the Divine in its essential self and truth...."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 106

How can one understand the Divine?

By becoming Him, my child. And that is the only way: by identity. As Sri Aurobindo says, "We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are That already in our secret nature." It is because He is the very essence of our being that we can become Him and, consequently, understand Him; otherwise it would be quite impossible.

How can we find the Divine within ourselves?

Well, it is precisely what I have just said.

What do you mean exactly?... By what method?

First of all, you must begin to seek Him, and then that must be the most important thing in life. The will must be constant, the aspiration constant, the preoccupation constant, and it must be the only thing you truly want. Then you will find Him.

But of course, if in one's life one thinks of Him for five minutes and is busy with other things for three-quarters of an hour, there is not much chance of success. Anyway, it will take many lifetimes.

It must not be a pastime. It must be the exclusive preoccupation of one's being, the very reason of one's existence.

Is that all?

21 March 1956

*Tell us something, Sweet Mother, since we don't have
any questions.*

Why say anything?

I can say this, that the most precious gifts are given in silence.

(Meditation)

28 March 1956

“If a departure from the world and its activities, a supreme release and quietude were the sole aim of the seeker, the three great fundamental realisations¹ would be sufficient for the fulfilment of his spiritual life: concentrated in them alone he could suffer all other divine or mundane knowledge to fall away from him and himself disencumbered depart into the eternal silence. But he has to take account of the world and its activities, learn what divine truth there may be behind them and reconcile that apparent opposition between the Divine Truth and the manifest creation which is the starting-point of most spiritual experience.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 110

I don't understand the meaning. Why is this opposition the starting-point of spiritual experience?

What is ordinarily called a spiritual experience is the intense need for something other than the life one lives, and most often this awakens after difficulties or disappointments or pain or sorrow, all these things which bring unhappiness and at the same time arouse the aspiration for a better state. It is this that is generally at the root of spiritual experiences: it is something negative.

The positive need to know the Divine and unite with Him usually comes much later. I say usually; there are exceptions, but usually it is at first a flight from the miseries of life which pushes you towards the spiritual life. Very few people, if they were in a state of perfect inner and outer harmony and nothing unpleasant or painful happened to them, very few people would think of

¹ Realisation of the Immanent Divine, the Cosmic Divine and the Transcendent Divine or Nirvana.

28 March 1956

the Divine; they would not concern themselves with Him, they would be content with the half-measures of ordinary things and would not seek for an absolute. That is what Sri Aurobindo means.

But, when one has found this spiritual life, one realises that it is everywhere behind all appearances, as well as directly, without appearances. Behind appearances it also exists; this is what he says: we must find and reconcile these oppositions. There is a place or a state of consciousness in which they are reconciled.

But, first, one must go like this (*a gesture of ascent*), and then one comes back like this (*a gesture of descent*). There!

Sri Aurobindo writes here: “And yet there is not only in him [the seeker] or before him this eternal self-aware Existence, this spiritual Consciousness, this infinity of self-illuminated Force, this timeless and endless Beatitude. There is too, constant also to his experience, this universe in measurable Space and Time, some kind perhaps of boundless finite, and in it all is transient, limited, fragmentary....”

Ibid., pp. 111–12

“Boundless finite” — what does that mean?

It is an attempt at formulating something which cannot be formulated.

In fact, one could almost say that the details are finite and the whole is infinite, but he doesn't say “infinite”, he says “boundless” — boundless in space and boundless in time, but still limited in itself. Each detail has its own limit and the whole has none.

Sweet Mother, another thing I haven't understood: “At times these two states of his spirit [the consciousness of eternity and the consciousness of the world in time]

Questions and Answers

seem to exist for him alternately according to his state of consciousness; at others they are there as two parts of his being, disparate and to be reconciled, two halves, an upper and a lower or an inner and an outer half of his existence. He finds soon that this separation in his consciousness has an immense liberative power, for by it he is no longer bound to the Ignorance, the Inconscience.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 112

I don't understand this.

It is because you carry this division within you and can taste of an eternal life that the outer life seems unreal to you; and therefore, because of this opposition, you begin to do what is necessary to pass from the outer life to the divine life. If there were no opposition in the being, if you were a middle term between the two, like that, this could last indefinitely; you would not objectify your difficulty and your need, you would continue to live as you do, without thinking, by force of habit.

Also because of this opposition, one part of the being acquires the habit of watching over the other. Otherwise you would live without even realising what you do, automatically.

(Turning to a disciple) Something over there?

Why is it that “All the Timeless presses towards the play in Time; all in Time turns upon and around the timeless Spirit”?

Ibid., p. 112

Because it is like that, my child. All that is unmanifested wants to manifest, and all that is manifested tries to return to its Origin.

It is as if you asked me, “Why is the earth round and why are the sun and the planets there?” It is like that, the law of the universe is like that.

Most of these things are simply statements of fact; but there are no explanations, for one can't give mental explanations. One

28 March 1956

can give some, but each thing one wants to explain is explained by another, which has to be explained by another, which has to be explained by another — indefinitely. And you can go right round the universe, and with one thing explaining another, it explains nothing at all.

The only thing one can do is to say, “It is like that.”

That is why it is said that the mind can know nothing: it can know nothing because it needs explanations. An explanation is valuable only to the extent it gives you a power to act on the thing explained, otherwise what’s the good of it? If explaining something does not give you the power to change it, it is absolutely useless, because, as I said, the explanation you give entails another explanation, and so on. But if through an explanation you obtain some power over a thing, to make it different from what it is, then it’s worth the trouble. But this is not the case. So you go on turning round and round in this way, on the surface, instead of springing up into the air towards a new height.

Is that all?

(*Turning to a disciple*) Yes, yes, you have already asked your question, but still, you may ask it aloud if you like.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of a first realisation where one sees on the one hand the eternal Existence, Brahman, and on the other the existence of the world, Maya, as two contradictions; then there is another realisation, the supramental, and he says, “The once conflicting but now biune duality of Brahman-Maya stands revealed to him as the first great dynamic aspect of the Self of all selves....”

Ibid., p. 113

When this is realised, does it mean that our lower nature has consented to change? At that time, is the duality seen as biune?

Questions and Answers

Of course. I don't understand your question.

So far there is this duality of which he has spoken.

It is an appearance, it is not a fact.

When one realises that the duality does not exist...

That means one has gone behind the appearances, one has established a fact which was always there.

Is that a promise?

But look, after all, when one has made a progress, one has made a progress! I don't understand your question. If you make a progress, you make a progress; if you perceive a truth behind an illusion, usually this is considered a progress.

But here, he further explains that even the lower nature...

Yes, but as you have realised that it is one and the same thing.... That's what I was saying a while ago: when you have an explanation, does it suffice to change your outer nature? Has it changed, are you different from what you were in your outer nature?

No.

No. Then something more is required. This is what I meant; an explanation is not enough, something else is needed. Evidently, it is a progress to know something one did not know before, but unless this knowledge becomes dynamic and changes into a power for transformation, it is not much use.

You understand? Good.

(Turning to a child) You want to ask a question? Speak up, take courage.

28 March 1956

Sweet Mother, how can one increase one's understanding?

One's understanding? Well, by increasing one's consciousness, by going beyond the mind, by widening one's consciousness, deepening one's consciousness, by reaching regions beyond the mind.

When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following commentary to the last question.

I would add one thing now: experience. Changing knowledge into experience. And experience will automatically lead you to another experience.

But by "experience" I mean something quite different from what it is usually taken to mean. It is not to experience what one knows — that is of course obvious — but instead of knowing and understanding — even a knowledge much higher than mental knowledge, even a very integral knowledge — it is to become the Power which makes *that be*. Fundamentally, it is to become the Tapas of things — the Tapas of the universe.

It is always said that at the beginning of the Manifestation there is Sachchidananda, and it is put in this order: first, Sat, that is to say, pure Existence; then Chit, the self-awareness of this Existence; and Ananda, the delight of Existence which makes it continue. But between this Chit and Ananda, there is Tapas, that is to say, the self-realising Chit. And when one becomes this Tapas, the Tapas of things, one has the knowledge which gives the power to change. The Tapas of things is what governs their existence in the Manifestation.

When one is there, one has the feeling of so tremendous a power! — It is the universal power. One has the feeling of a total mastery over the universe.

4 April 1956

“On one side, he [the seeker] becomes aware of a witness recipient observing experiencing Consciousness which does not appear to act but for which all these activities inside and outside us seem to be undertaken and continue. On the other side he is aware at the same time of an executive Force or an energy of Process which is seen to constitute, drive and guide all conceivable activities and to create a myriad forms visible to us and invisible and use them as stable supports for its incessant flux of action and creation. Entering exclusively into the witness consciousness he becomes silent, untouched, immobile; he sees that he has till now passively reflected and appropriated to himself the movements of Nature and it is by this reflection that they acquired from the witness soul within him what seemed a spiritual value and significance. But now he has withdrawn that ascription or mirroring identification; he is conscious only of his silent self and aloof from all that is in motion around it; all activities are outside him and at once they cease to be intimately real; they appear now mechanical, detachable, endable.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 113

What is the witness soul?

It is the soul entering into a state in which it observes without acting. A witness is one who looks at what is done, but does not act himself. So when the soul is in a state in which it does not participate in the action, does not act through Nature, simply draws back and observes, it becomes the witness soul.

If one wants to stop the outer activities, this is the best method. One withdraws into one's soul, to the extreme limit of

4 April 1956

one's existence, in a kind of immobility — an immobility which observes but does not participate, does not even give orders. That's all.

You don't understand?

When one wants to detach oneself from something, from a certain movement or activity or state of consciousness, this is the most effective method; one steps back a little, watches the thing like that, as one would watch a scene in a play, and one doesn't intervene. And a moment later, the thing doesn't concern you any longer, it is something which takes place outside you. Then you become very calm.

Only, when you do this, you never remedy anything in the outer movement, it remains what it is, but it no longer affects you. We have said this already I don't know how many times: it is only a first step, it helps you not to feel much troubled by things. But things remain as they are — indefinitely. It is a negative state.

*Is this what Sri Aurobindo speaks about when he says:
“the separative aspect is liberative”?*

Ibid., p. 115

Yes. It liberates, precisely. It's just that. One practises it for that, don't you see, for liberation, in order to be free from attachments, free from reactions, free from consequences. Those who understand the Gita in this way, tell you that — they don't understand much further than that — they tell you, “Why do you want to try and change the world? The world will always be what it is and remain what it is, you have only to step back, to detach yourself, to watch it as a witness watches something which doesn't concern him — and leave it alone.” That was my first contact with the Gita in Paris. I met an Indian who was a great Gita enthusiast and a very great lover of silence. He used to say, “When I go to my disciples, if they are in the right state I don't need to speak. So we observe silence together, and in the

Questions and Answers

silence something is realised. But when they are not in a good enough state for this, I speak a little, just a little, to try to put them in the right state. And when they are in a worse state still, they ask questions!” (*Laughter*)

But he was the one who didn't want to change the world, wasn't he? the one who said we were revolutionaries?

Oh, that's to excuse your questions! (*Laughter*)

No, that was one way of understanding the Gita; these people always quote — I believe in a truncated form the sentence about there being no fire without smoke.¹ Perhaps this was true a thousand years ago or even five hundred years ago, but now it is a stupidity. So you can't use this sentence to explain things: “Why do you worry about the state the world is in? — There is no fire without smoke.”

It is not true.

But still, it is one point of view. I think every point of view is necessary — if each one keeps to his own place and doesn't try to impede the others. If he had just added: “My experience is like that”, it would have been all right; but he used this to criticise what others were doing. And there he was wrong.

That means he was not truly sincere?

Why? Perhaps he was sincere in his own conviction.... You mean when one makes propoganda, one is not sincere?

He believes he is sincere.

No, excuse me, he is convinced. He had neglected — perhaps

¹ Perhaps Mother was referring to the following two verses of the Gita: “All existences follow their nature and what shall coercing it avail? Even the man of knowledge acts according to his own nature.... As a fire is covered over by smoke and a mirror by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so knowledge is enveloped by desire.” (Gita, III. 33, 38)

4 April 1956

out of politeness — to tell me about the fourth state, which was still worse: that in which after having asked the question, one begins to discuss the answer. That is really the limit!

If you arrive at the conception of the world as the expression of the Divine in all His complexity, then the necessity for complexity and diversity has to be recognised, and it becomes impossible for you to want to make others think and feel as you do.

Each one should have his own way of thinking, feeling and reaction; why do you want others to do as you do and be like you? And even granting that your truth is greater than theirs — though this word means nothing at all, for, from a certain point of view all truths are true; they are all partial, but they are true because they are truths but the minute you want your truth to be greater than your neighbour's, you begin to wander away from the truth.

This habit of wanting to compel others to think as you do, has always seemed very strange to me; this is what I call “the propagandist spirit”, and it goes very far. You can go one step further and want people to do what you do, feel as you feel, and then it becomes a frightful uniformity.

In Japan I met Tolstoy's son who was going round the world for “the good of mankind's great unity”. And his solution was very simple: everybody ought to speak the same language, lead the same life, dress in the same way, eat the same things.... And I am not joking, those were his very words. I met him in Tokyo; he said: “But everybody would be happy, all would understand one another, nobody would quarrel if everyone did the same thing.” There was no way of making him understand that it was not very reasonable! He had set out to travel all over the world for that, and when people asked him his name he would say “Tolstoy” — now, Tolstoy, you know... People said, “Oh!” — some people didn't know that Tolstoy was dead — and they thought: “Oh! what luck, we are going to hear something remarkable” — and then he came out with that!

Questions and Answers

Well, this is only an exaggeration of the same attitude.

Anyway, I can assure you that there comes a time when one no longer feels any necessity at all, at all, of convincing others of the truth of what one thinks.

When someone criticises what I am, the truth I am realising, when others criticise...

You may politely tell him, “Mind your own business.” But you must leave it at that. You want to convince someone who criticises that he is wrong to criticise? — The more you tell him, the more will he be convinced that he is right!

Not him, but others who follow...?

Oh! you are afraid they will make adverse propaganda....

It doesn't matter at all. We had an instance like that, which was very amusing. Someone whom I won't name, came here and wrote in one of the leading French newspapers an absolutely stupid article which was... well, which showed the stupidity of the man and was extremely violent against the Ashram — that's not the reason I call him a fool, but still... Well, the result — one of the results — of this article was that we received a letter from someone: “I have read the article, I want to come to the Ashram immediately.”

This can have just the opposite effect.

11 April 1956

“On one side, he [the seeker] is aware of an infinite and self-existent Godhead in being who contains all things in an ineffable potentiality of existence, a Self of all selves, a Soul of all souls, a spiritual Substance of all substances, an impersonal inexpressible Existence, but at the same time an illimitable Person who is here self-represented in numberless personality, a Master of Knowledge, a Master of Forces, a Lord of love and bliss and beauty, a single Origin of the worlds, a self-manifester and self-creator, a Cosmic Spirit, a universal Mind, a universal Life, the conscious and living Reality supporting the appearance which we sense as unconscious inanimate Matter.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 115

Sweet Mother, what does a “self-creator” mean?

Self-creator? It means, that He creates Himself.

Create is taken in the sense of manifesting, of making objective, apparent. So it is His own self that He manifests. It is Himself He manifests, makes evident, objectivises.

In fact, the word “create” is usually taken in another sense: it means to make something out of something else. That is why Sri Aurobindo says “self-creator”, which means that He gives an external form of Himself to Himself. It is a change in the mode of being: instead of being an unmanifested possibility it becomes a manifested reality. It is simply reversed, nothing else. It is the same thing: from this side it is not seen; from that side it is seen — that’s all. You turn it round again and it is seen. You turn it like that and don’t see it, you turn it like this and see it. That’s all. As simple as that.

Questions and Answers

“On the other side, he becomes aware of the same God-head in effectuating consciousness and power put forth as a self-aware Force that contains and carries all within her and is charged to manifest it in universal Time and Space.”

Ibid., p. 115

Yes, that's it, that's exactly what I was saying: from one side it is as if it did not exist, and then it is “put forth”, you see, He does that (*gesture*), He puts it forth and it becomes visible and existent, and then, instead of being one thing existing all at once, it develops, it is manifested in Time and Space. This is what Sri Aurobindo says, this is where the idea of Time and Space begins, for it is no longer simultaneous.

Sri Aurobindo has first spoken of the duality Brahman-Maya [eternal Existence and the existence of the world], and now he speaks of the duality Ishwara-Shakti [the Divine in his Being and the Divine in his Force of cosmic realisation]. This duality Ishwara-Shakti, it isn't very clear, is it?

The other one is simpler, isn't it? For it is cut into two, distinct: one is Reality and the other illusion; one is Light and the other darkness; one is Consciousness, the other inconscience; one is Truth, the other falsehood. That is very convenient.

Here, it is much more difficult: it is the same thing which exists in itself, unmanifest, and then, suddenly, it does this (*gesture of projection*). And it is exactly the same thing, but it is a movement which puts forth what was within. And that's what makes the world. It is the same thing in a double movement: as when you sleep and when you wake up, or when you remain still and when you begin to move, or when you are silent and then begin to make a noise, it is like that. One movement is within, containing everything in itself, without any

11 April 1956

expression of what is there; and the other movement is just this (*same gesture of projection*), and all that is within oneself comes out.

And then, for this to become perceptible, it must be continuous. When it is within, it can be simultaneous, for it is unmanifest, so all is in an eternity outside Time and Space — immobile, inexistent. In the opposite direction, everything becomes and so there is a continuity of perceptions which follow one after another and spread out in Space and Time.

And it is the same thing.

It is exactly as if you are like this (*gesture of being doubled up*), and then you do this (*gesture of opening*) — and so what was there comes out. So these two movements are literally opposite, but it is the same thing in two opposite attitudes which are simultaneous: it remains like this (*inward gesture*), and at the same time it is like this (*outward gesture*); the one does not cancel out the other and they exist simultaneously. But in one direction it is imperceptible because it is contained within itself, in the other movement it is thrown outside, and so it can be seen. And when it is self-contained, it is co-existent in a perfect simultaneity; and in the other movement, it unfolds itself in a constant becoming. And when it unfolds itself, it necessarily creates Time and Space, while there it is outside Space, outside Time and beyond all possible perception. But it is the same thing in two opposite movements.

And that is what *truly* is.

It is like that. And when it does this (*outward gesture*), it does not cease to be like that (*inward gesture*); that is to say, when it is self-contained, it does not cease to manifest itself and when it manifests, it does not cease to be self-contained. To put it otherwise, it is a permanent and simultaneous duality, but it is the same thing, one single thing in two opposite aspects.

Has all this gone in a little? No?

Nothing? You have nothing more to ask?

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, may I ask you a question I have already asked before? For I haven't understood you properly.

Ah! let us see if I can make myself clearer.

I haven't yet understood the meaning of "Personal" and "Impersonal": "The two great elements of the divine Mystery, the Personal and Impersonal, are here fused together."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 116

Yes.

You, you are personal, aren't you? You feel you are a person. And then there's the air, you don't feel the air is a person — so the air is impersonal.

This is not altogether correct, it is an analogy: the air, wind, water, do have a personality, but this is only to make you understand. To the air you cannot give a precise and definite form, it is everywhere: in your body, outside your body, here, there; but it has no precise form. It has an exact, precise composition, but of course we are not talking about chemistry, we are speaking only of the appearance. You don't get the feeling of a person when you think of the air.

I wouldn't say as much of water, because water has very specific characteristics. The water of one river is not the same as that of another; and this is perceptible, so it also has something of a personal character.

But air or steam gives you the impression of something which is not a person; well, that's it. When a force or a quality manifests in a definite body like yours or someone else's, it becomes personal. But when it is everywhere at the same time and without particular characteristics, expressed in an indefinite way, it is called "impersonal".

So, the personal God is the God to whom a form is given. For example, the inner God of each one is a personal God, for

11 April 1956

He has a personal relation with each one, He is the God who belongs to this person, who is his very own.

But something which has neither form nor characteristics nor any definite outline of any kind, and with which one cannot have a personal relation — that is the impersonal Divine.

And so Sri Aurobindo says that there is a state in which the two are one. Still it is the same thing: it is like the right and wrong side of the same material. If you approach the Divine in a certain way, you meet Him in His impersonal form, that is to say, you cannot have any personal contact with Him. But if you approach Him in the other way, you meet Him as a person — who is quite out of proportion to your little person, but with whom you can have personal relations. And yet it is the same Divine, seen in this way or that.

18 April 1956

“At one pole of it the seeker may be conscious only of the Master of Existence putting forth on him His energies of knowledge, power and bliss to liberate and divinise; the Shakti may appear to him only an impersonal Force expressive of these things or an attribute of the Ishwara. At the other pole he may encounter the World-Mother, creatrix of the universe, putting forth the gods and the worlds and all things and existences out of her spirit-substance. Or even if he sees both aspects, it may be with an unequal separating vision, subordinating one to the other, regarding the Shakti only as a means for approaching the Ishwara. There results a one-sided tendency or a lack of balance, a power of effectuation not perfectly supported or a light of revelation not perfectly dynamic. It is when a complete union of the two sides of the Duality is effected and rules his consciousness that he begins to open to a fuller power that will draw him altogether out of the confused clash of Ideas and Forces here into a higher Truth and enable the descent of that Truth to illumine and deliver and act sovereignly upon this world of Ignorance.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 117

Yes, if he sees the two aspects — that is to say, the Master of Existence and the World-Mother — he may see them with an unequal vision, which would mean that he still separates them and gives more importance to one than to the other. And in that case there is a one-sided tendency; he sees only one side or there is a lack of balance between the two perceptions. And so the power of effectuation is not perfectly supported, that is to say, the action of the Mother does not have the support of

18 April 1956

what he calls the Master, the action of the Mother does not have a sufficient basis of support from the Master; or else it is the light of a revelation — that is, the Consciousness of the Master — which is not realised, not perfectly dynamic, that is, it is not translated into a creation.

Either the creative Power is not supported by the revelation, or the revelation is not expressed in the creative Power. This is what Sri Aurobindo means. There is a tendency to go towards one or the other, instead of having both at the same time, if one no longer separates them in one's consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo says that when one succeeds in not separating them in one's consciousness, one can fully understand who the Lord of the Sacrifice is. Otherwise one leans to one side or the other and naturally what one does is incomplete. He says very clearly, doesn't he? that if one leans to the side of the Master without laying stress on the Shakti or the Mother, one goes into the Impersonal and out of the creation, one returns into Nirvana. He says that this tendency towards the Impersonal may exist even in the yoga of works, in Karmayoga, and that impersonal force, impersonal action is always considered as the liberating aspect which frees you from the narrowness of the person. And that is why there is nothing surprising in the overwhelming strength of this experience.... Till today this is what has always been considered as yoga: to abandon the personal and enter into the consciousness of the impersonal. Sri Aurobindo speaks of it as an overwhelming experience, for it gives you the impression of liberation from all the ego's limitations. And later, he describes the union: insistence on the personal side and union with the divine Person; then the world is no longer an illusion nor something transient which will disappear after a time, but the constant and dynamic expression of the eternal divine Person.

That is the other side.

And when one has the two together, one is perfect. Anything else?

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, what is this “fine flower of the cosmic Energy” of which he speaks here: “This fine flower of the cosmic Energy carries in it a forecast of the aim and a hint of the very motive of the universal labour”?

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 118–19

It is the soul which he calls this fine flower of the cosmic Energy.

(Mother reads:) *“...that personality, like consciousness, life, soul, is not a brief-lived stranger in an impersonal Eternity, but contains the very meaning of existence.”*

This is the presence of the divine Person.

“This fine flower of the cosmic Energy carries in it...”

This is the soul.

“...carries in it the forecast of the aim and a hint of the very motive of the universal labour.”

The realisation of the conscious and living Eternal.

That’s it.

It is a hint of the aim.

And the very motive of the labour.

Immediately afterwards, Sri Aurobindo writes: “As an occult vision opens in him [the seeker], he becomes aware of worlds behind in which consciousness and personality hold an enormous place and assume a premier value.”

And so, what do you want? We have spoken about this I don’t know how many times. What do you want to know about this? You want a description of these worlds, or the means of going there — which of the two?

18 April 1956

The means of going there.

The means of going there, oh! oh!

Do you know how to exteriorise yourself?

Do you even know what it means to exteriorise oneself? Not philosophically or psychologically, I mean occultly. Are you conscious in your exteriorisation, do you do it at will? Do you know how to leave your body and live in a more subtle body, and then again leave that body and live in another more subtle body and so on? Do you know how to do all that? Have you ever done it? No. Then we shall speak about it again another day.

It happens in dreams, Mother.

In dreams? Do you know where you are in your dreams?

A little.

A little? This is becoming interesting! And where do you go in your dreams?

Often in regions...

What regions?

Vital regions.

Oh! oh! You go into the vital world — and nothing unpleasant happens to you there?

Most often.

Ah! and how do you get out of it?

Questions and Answers

Rush back into the body!

Is that where your knowledge ends?

No. Sometimes there is a call and then one sees there is no need to rush back. But it doesn't last long.

It doesn't last. But do you go in and out at will?

Not at will.

Can you return to a place you have already been to several times before?

No, Mother.

You don't find the same place again several times?

Not at will.

Ah! but there are children who know how to do this, they continue their dreams. Every evening when they go to bed they return to the same place and continue their dream.

When I was a child I used to do that.

You are no longer a child, that's a pity!

Because I had no preoccupations then.

Well, become a child once more and you will know how to do it again.

Nothing is more interesting. It is a most pleasant way of passing the nights. You begin a story, then, when it is time to wake up, you put a full stop to the last sentence and come back

18 April 1956

into your body. And then the following night you start off again, re-open the page and resume your story during the whole time you are out; and then you arrange things well — they must be well arranged, it must be very beautiful. And when it is time to come back, you put a full stop once again and tell those things, “Stay very quiet till I return!” And you come back into your body. And you continue this every evening and write a book of wonderful fairy-tales — provided you remember them when you wake up.

But this depends on being in a quiet state during the day, doesn't it?

No, it depends on the candour of the child.

And on the trust he has in what happens to him, on the absence of the mind's critical sense, and a simplicity of heart, and a youthful and active energy — it depends on all that — on a kind of inner vital generosity: one must not be too egoistic, one must not be too miserly, nor too practical, too utilitarian — indeed there are all sorts of things one should not be... like children. And then, one must have a lively power of imagination, for — I seem to be telling you stupid things, but it is quite true — there is a world in which you are the supreme maker of forms: that is your own particular vital world. You are the supreme fashioner and you can make a marvel of your world if you know how to use it. If you have an artistic or poetic consciousness, if you love harmony, beauty, you will build there something marvellous which will tend to spring up into the material manifestation.

When I was small I used to call this “telling stories to oneself”. It is not at all a telling with words, in one's head: it is a going away to this place which is fresh and pure, and... building up a wonderful story there. And if you know how to tell yourself a story in this way, and if it is truly beautiful, truly harmonious, truly powerful and well co-ordinated, this story will be realised in your life — perhaps not exactly in the form in which you

Questions and Answers

created it, but as a more or less changed physical expression of what you made.

That may take years, perhaps, but your story will tend to organise your life.

But there are very few people who know how to tell a beautiful story; and then they always mix horrors in it, which they regret later.

If one could create a magnificent story without any horror in it, nothing but beauty, it would have a *considerable* influence on everyone's life. And this is what people don't know.

If one knew how to use this power, this creative power in the world of vital forms, if one knew how to use this while yet a child, a very small child... for it is then that one fashions his material destiny. But usually people around you, sometimes even your own little friends, but mostly parents and teachers, dabble in it and spoil everything for you, so well that very seldom does the thing succeed completely.

But otherwise, if it were done like that, with the spontaneous candour of a child, you could organise a wonderful life for yourself — I am speaking of the physical world.

The dreams of childhood are the realities of mature age.

25 April 1956

“Beyond the limited human conception of God, he will pass to the one divine Eternal....”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 121

What man calls God is a limited consciousness of God, not the full consciousness of God; so he will go beyond this limited consciousness of God and towards the true Divine.

Sri Aurobindo means that man has a limited knowledge, a limited consciousness and perception and experience of God, *not* the full experience of the Divine, and that he must pass beyond this knowledge and perception in order to go to the vaster and truer perception.

Sweet Mother, the justification of earthly existence...

Yes, the justification of earthly existence is that one is on earth to realise the Divine.

Without this reason earthly life would be a monstrosity.

(Silence)

If there were not this supreme reason, of rediscovering the Divine and becoming Him, manifesting Him, realising Him externally, earthly life as it is would be something monstrous.

Naturally, the more people are unconscious, the less do they understand this, for they do not objectify, they live mechanically, according to habit, without even objectifying or being aware of their way of living. And as the consciousness grows, they realise the kind of monstrous hell life is — life as it is.

And it is only when one becomes conscious of *that towards which* this life leads, that one can accept it and understand it. It is only this purpose of life which makes it acceptable.

Questions and Answers

Without that it would truly be a frightful monstrosity.

*Sweet Mother, what is a “divine pleasure”?*¹

It is the pleasure of the Divine.

How...?

What do you want me to tell you, child? You must live it and then you will know what it is.

It is what is called Ananda in Sanskrit. And we have often said before that to know this Ananda, one must first have completely renounced all human pleasures, to begin with, for so long as a human pleasure delights you, you are not in the right state to know the Ananda.

It may come to you and you will not even be aware of it.

“A spiritual Truth and Right have convicted the good and evil of this world of imperfection or of falsehood and unveiled a supreme good.... But behind all these and in them he has felt a Divinity who is all these things, a Bringer of Light, a Guide and All-Knower, a Master of Force, a Giver of Bliss, Friend, Helper, Father, Mother, Playmate in the world-game, an absolute Master of his being, his soul’s Beloved and Lover.”

Ibid., p. 120

Can the Godhead be all these things at once for anybody?

Yes, and many more.

¹ “A Bliss has invaded him and shown that it can make suffering and sorrow impossible and turn pain itself into divine pleasure.”

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 120

25 April 1956

This is only a very brief description!

But here too, if one wants to have this experience, one must not seek in life and among men for these relationships, because if one seeks them in the ordinary life, as ordinary relationships, one becomes incapable of feeling them exactly as the Divine can give them. And usually, most people, even those who have a living soul, seek these relations with the Divine only after they have had the most bitter and disappointing experiences in their search for human relationships.

This makes them lose much time and wastes a lot of energy. And usually, they are already quite worn out and spent when they reach the state in which they are capable of having these relations in all their splendour with the divine Presence.

That means much time lost and much wastage of energy; but it would seem that very few people can go straight avoiding all these roundabout ways. Mostly, when they are told that there is a divine Joy and a divine Plenitude which far surpass all they can imagine in ordinary life, they don't believe it; and to believe it they must have, as I said, gone through a painful experience of all that is false, deceptive and disappointing in ordinary relationships.

It is said that example is the best teacher, but in fact there are very few who care to follow an example — especially when the examples are a little too far beyond them. They all want to have their own experience; they have the right to it, but that makes the path interminable.

Sweet Mother, if one needs something, like a mother's affection or some help, how can one feel it in the Divine, according to one's need?

What exactly do you want to say?

If, for example, one wants to know something or one needs guidance, or something else, how can one have it

Questions and Answers

from the Divine, according to one's need?

By asking the Divine for it. If you do not ask Him, how can you have it?

If you turn to the Divine and have full trust and ask Him, you will get what you need — not necessarily what you imagine you need; but the true thing you need, you will get. But you must ask Him for it.

You must make the experiment sincerely; you must not endeavour to get it by all sorts of external means and then expect the Divine to give it to you, without even having asked Him. Indeed, when you want somebody to give you something, you ask him for it, don't you? And why do you expect the Divine to give it to you without your having asked Him for it?

In the ordinary consciousness the movement is just the opposite. You assume something, saying, "I need this, I need this relationship, I need this affection, I need this knowledge, etc. Well, the Divine ought to give it to me, otherwise He is not the Divine." That is to say, you reverse the problem completely.

First of all, you say, "I need." Do you know whether you truly need it or whether it is only an impression you have or a desire or quite an ignorant movement? First point: you know nothing about it.

Second point: it is precisely your own will you want to impose upon the Divine, telling Him, "I need this." And then you don't even ask Him for it: "Give it to me." You say, "I need it. Therefore, since I need it, it must come to me, quite naturally, spontaneously; it's the Divine's job to give me all that I need."

But if it so happens that truly you don't know what you need and it is merely an illusion and not a truth and that, into the bargain, you ask it from life around you and don't turn to the Divine, don't create any relationship between yourself and Him, don't think of Him or turn to Him with at least some sincerity in your attitude, then, as you ask nothing from Him, there is no reason for Him to give you anything.

25 April 1956

But if you ask Him, as He is the Divine He knows a little better than you what you need; He will give you what you need.

Or else, if you insist and want to impose your own will, He may give you what you want in order to enlighten you and make you conscious of your mistake, that it was truly not the thing you needed. And then you begin to protest — I don't mean you personally, I am speaking of all human beings — and you say, "Why has the Divine given me something which harms me?" — completely forgetting that it was you who asked for it!

In both cases you protest all the same. If He gives you what you ask and then that brings you more harm than good, you protest. And again, if He doesn't give it, you also protest: "What! I told Him I needed it and He doesn't give it to me."

In both cases you protest, and the poor Divine is accused.

Only, if instead of all that, you simply have an aspiration within you, an urge, an intense ardent need to find That, which you conceive more or less clearly to be the Truth of your being, the Source of all things, the supreme Good, the Answer to all we desire, the Solution to all problems; if there is this intense need in you and you aspire to realise it, you won't any longer say to the Divine, "Give me this, give me that", or, "I need this, I must have that." You will tell Him, "Do what is necessary for me and lead me to the Truth of my being. Give me what Thou in Thy supreme Wisdom seest as the thing I need."

And then you are sure of not being mistaken, and He will not give you something which harms you.

There is a still higher step, but it's a little more difficult to begin with that.

But the first one is already a much truer approach than that of telling the Divine, "I need this. Give it to me." For indeed, very few people really know what they need — very few. And the proof of it is that they are always in pursuit of the fulfilment of their desires, all their effort is bent upon that, and each time one of their desires is fulfilled, they are disappointed. And they pass on to another.

Questions and Answers

And after much seeking, making many mistakes, suffering a good deal and being very disappointed, then, sometimes, one begins to grow wise and wonders if there isn't a way out of all this, that is to say, a way to come out of one's own ignorance.

And it is then, at that moment that one can do this (*Mother opens her arms*): "Here I am, take me and lead me along the true path."

Then all begins to go well.

2 May 1956

Sri Aurobindo says that the union has a threefold character: first, the liberation from the Ignorance and identification with the Real and Eternal....

This is the yoga of knowledge.

Then the dwelling of the soul with or in the Divine....

That is the aim of the yoga of love.

Then, identity of nature, likeness to the Divine: "to be perfect as That is perfect."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 122

That is to say, not only is there union in the depths, but there is also union outwardly, in the activities. There is union in knowledge, union in love and union in works. To put it otherwise: the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of love and devotion, and the yoga of works. These are the three modes of approach he speaks about.

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the soul's native world". What is the soul's native world?

It is the divine Principle.

(Silence)

Is that all?

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, you have said: The Supramental has descended upon earth. What does that mean exactly? You have also said: "The things that were promised are fulfilled." What are these things?¹

Ah, that's ignorance indeed! This was promised a very long time ago, this was said very long ago — not only here — since the beginning of the earth. There have been all kinds of predictions, by all kinds of prophets; it has been said, "There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a new race will be born, the world will be transformed...." Prophets have spoken about this in all the traditions.

You have said, "They are fulfilled."

Yes. And so?

Where is the new race?

The new race? Wait for something like... a few thousand years, and you will see it!

When the mind descended upon earth, between the time the mind manifested in the earth-atmosphere and the time the first man appeared, nearly a million years elapsed. Now it will go faster because man expects it, he has a vague idea; he is expecting in some sense the advent of the superman, while, certainly, the apes did not expect the birth of man, they had never thought of

¹ Mother announced the Supramental Manifestation of February 29 in two messages published in the *Bulletin* of April 1956:

"Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled."

"The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

"It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it."

2 May 1956

it — for the good reason that they probably don't think much. But man has thought of it and awaits it, so it will go faster. But faster means still thousands of years probably. We shall speak about it again after a few thousand years!

(Silence)

People who are inwardly ready, who are open and in contact with higher forces, people who have had a more or less direct personal contact with the supramental Light and Consciousness are able to feel the difference in the earth-atmosphere.

But for that... Only the like can know the like, only the supramental Consciousness in an individual can perceive this Supermind acting in the earth-atmosphere. Those who, for some reason or other, have developed this perception, can see it. But those who are not even conscious of an inner being — just slightly within — and who would be quite at a loss to say what their soul is like, these certainly are not ready to perceive the difference in the earth-atmosphere. They still have a long way to go for that. Because, for those whose consciousness is more or less exclusively centred in the outer being — mental, vital and physical — things need to take on an absurd and unexpected appearance for them to be able to recognise them. Then they call them miracles.

But the constant miracle of the intervention of forces which changes circumstances and characters and has a very widespread result, this they do not call a miracle, for only the mere appearance is seen and this seems quite natural. But, truly speaking, if you were to reflect upon the least little thing that happens, you would be obliged to acknowledge that it is miraculous.

It is simply because you don't reflect upon it that you take things as they are, for what they are, without questioning; otherwise every day you would have any number of occasions to tell yourself, "Really, but this is quite astonishing! How did it happen?"

Questions and Answers

Quite simply, it is a habit of seeing things in a purely superficial way.

Sweet Mother, what should our attitude be towards this new Consciousness?

That depends on what you want to do with it.

If you want to look at it as a curiosity, you have only to watch, to try to understand.

If you want it to change you, you must open yourself and make an effort to progress.

Will people profit collectively or individually from this new manifestation?

Why do you ask this question?

Because many people who have come here are asking, "How are we going to profit from it?"

Oh!

And why should they profit from it? What are their claims to profit? Just because they have taken a train to come here?

I knew some people who came here quite a long, long time ago, something like — oh! I don't remember now, but very long ago — certainly more than twenty years ago, and the first time someone died in the Ashram, they showed considerable dissatisfaction, saying, "But I came here because I thought this yoga would make me immortal; but if people can die, why would I have come?"

Well, it is the same thing. People take the train to come here — there were nearly a hundred and fifty more than usual this time,² just because they wanted to "profit". But perhaps this is

² Darshan of 24 April 1956.

2 May 1956

just why they did not profit! For That has not come to make people profit in any way whatever.

They ask if it will be easier to overcome their inner difficulties.

I shall repeat the same thing. What grounds and what right have they to ask that it should be easier? What have they done, these people, on their side? Why would it be easier? To satisfy people's laziness and indolence — or what?

Because when something new happens, people always have the idea of profiting from it.

No! not only when there is something new: everywhere and always people have the idea of profiting. But that is indeed the best way of not getting anything.

Whom do they want to deceive here? The Divine?... That is hardly possible.

It is the same with those who ask for an interview. I tell them, "Listen, you have come in large numbers, and if everybody asks me for an interview, I won't even have enough minutes in all these days to see everyone. During your stay, I won't have even a minute." Then they say, "Oh! I have taken *so much* trouble. I have come from *so far away*, I have come down from this place, I have come down from that far, I travelled so many hours — and have I no right to an interview?" I say, "I am sorry, but you are not the only one in that position."

That is it, you see: it is give and take, bargaining. We are not a commercial establishment, we have said we didn't do business.

*The number of disciples is increasing now day by day.
What does that indicate?*

But naturally it will go on increasing more and more! And that is

Questions and Answers

why I can't do now what I used to do when there were a hundred and fifty people in the Ashram. If only they had a little common sense, they would understand that I can't have the same relations with people now — there were 1800 of them here recently, my children! So I can't have the same relations with 1845 people — I believe that was the exact number — as with about thirty or even a hundred. This seems to me a logic easy enough to understand.

But *they* want everything to remain as it used to be, and, as you say, they want to be the first to “benefit”.

Mother, when mind descended into the earth-atmosphere, the apes had not made any effort to change into man, had they? It was Nature which provided the effort. But here...

But it is not man who is going to change himself into superman!

No?

Just try! (*Laughter*)

That's it, you see, it is something else which is going to work.

So, we are...

Only — yes, there is an only, I don't want to be so cruel: Now MAN CAN COLLABORATE. That is to say, he can lend himself to the process, with goodwill, with aspiration, and help as best he can. And that is why I said it would go faster. I hope it will go *much* faster.

But even so, much faster is still going to take a little time!

(*Silence*)

Listen. If all of you who have heard about this, not once but perhaps hundreds of times, who have spoken about it yourselves,

2 May 1956

thought of it, hoped for it, wanted it — there are people who came here for that, with the intention of receiving the supramental Force and being transformed into supermen — that was their aim, wasn't it?... But how is it that all of you were so unfamiliar with this Force that when it came you didn't even feel it?

Can you solve this problem for me? If you have the solution to this problem, you will have the solution to the difficulty.

I am not speaking of people from outside who have never thought of this, never been concerned with it, and who don't even know that there is something like a Supermind to be received, you understand. I am speaking of those who have based their life on this aspiration — and I do not doubt their sincerity, not for a moment — who have worked, some for thirty years, some for thirty-five, some a little less, who have done everything saying, “When the Supermind comes... When the Supermind comes...”, that was the refrain, “When the Supermind comes...” Therefore, they were truly in the best possible state, one couldn't dream of a better. How is it that the inner preparation was so — let us say simply — so incomplete, that when the Vibration came they did not immediately feel it with the impact of identity?

Individually, the aim of each one was to prepare himself, to enter into a more or less close individual relation with this Force, to help; or, if they could not help, at least to be ready when the Force would manifest, to recognise it and open to it. And instead of being an alien element in a world where what you carry within yourself is not manifested, you suddenly become *that*, you enter straight in, fully, into this very atmosphere: it is this Force that is there, surrounding you, penetrating you.

If you had had even a little inner contact, immediately you would have recognised it, wouldn't you?

Well, anyway, that is what happened to those who had a little inner contact; they recognised it, felt it; they said, “Ah! here it is, it has come.” But how is it, then, that so many hundreds of people, not to speak of the small handful of those who truly wanted nothing but that, thought of nothing but that, had staked

Questions and Answers

their whole life on that, how is it that they did not feel anything? What can this mean?

Of course, it is only like that knows like. That is an obvious fact.

There was a possibility of coming into contact with the Thing individually — Sri Aurobindo had even described it as the necessary process: a certain number of people who, through their inner effort and aspiration, enter into contact with this Force. That was what we used to call the ascent to the Supermind. And so, even if it were by an inner ascent — that is to say, by freeing themselves from the material consciousness — if by an inner ascent they had touched the Supermind, they should *naturally* have recognised it the moment it came. But it was indispensable to have had a previous contact: if they had not touched it, how could they have recognised it?

That is to say, the universal movement is like that — I read that to you some days ago — certain individuals, who are the pioneers, the vanguard, through inner effort and inner progress enter into communication with the new Force which is to manifest and receive it into themselves. And then, as there are calls of this kind, the thing is made possible, and the age, the time, the moment of the manifestation comes. This is how it happened — and the Manifestation took place.

But, then all those who were ready must have recognised it.

I hasten to tell you that there are some who did recognise it, but still... But those who ask questions, who even came here, took the train in order to drink this up as one drinks a glass of syrup, if they had not made any preparation, how could they feel anything at all? And already they talk about benefiting: “We want to profit from it...”

After all, it is quite possible — I am joking a little — it is quite possible that if they have even the least bit of sincerity — not too much, for that is tiring! just a little sincerity — that will give them a few good knocks to make them go faster. This is possible. In fact, I think, this is what will happen.

2 May 1956

But indeed, this attitude... this attitude, which is a little too mercenary, is not usually very profitable. If one aspires sincerely and if one has difficulties, perhaps these difficulties will diminish. Let us hope so.

(*Turning to the disciple*) So this is what you can tell them: be sincere and you will be helped.

Mother, a statement has gone round here, very recently — it says, “What has just happened, with this Victory, is not a descent but a manifestation. And it is more than an individual event: the Supermind has emerged into the universal play.”

Yes, yes, yes. In fact I said all this, I acknowledge it. So?

They say, “The supramental principle is at work...”

But I have just explained all this to you at length (*Mother laughs*), this is terrible!

What I call a “descent” is this: first the consciousness rises in an ascent, you catch the Thing up there, and come down with it. That is an *individual* event.

When this individual event has happened in a way that proves sufficient to create a possibility of a general kind, it is no longer a “descent”, it is a “manifestation”.

What I call a descent is the individual movement, in an individual consciousness. And when it is a new world manifesting in an old world — just as, for a comparison, when mind spread upon the earth — I call that a manifestation.

You may call it whatever you like, it’s all the same to me, but we should understand each other.

What I call a descent is in the individual consciousness. Just as one speaks of ascent — there is no ascent, you see: there is neither above nor below nor any direction, it is a way of speaking — you speak of ascent when you have the feeling of rising up

Questions and Answers

towards something; and you call it a descent when, after having caught that thing, you bring it down into yourself.

But when the gates are open and the flood comes in, you can't call it a descent. It is a Force which is spreading out. Understood?... Ah!

It's all one to me, the words you use. I am not particularly attached to words, but I explain them to you, and it is better to understand each other, for otherwise there is no end to explanations.

Now, to people who ask you these insidious questions, you may reply that the best way of receiving anything whatever is not to pull, but to give. If they want to give themselves to the new life, well, the new life will enter into them.

But if they want to pull the new life down into themselves, they will close their door with their own egoism. That's all.

9 May 1956

Sweet Mother, where does our true spiritual life begin?

The true spiritual life begins when one is in communion with the Divine in the psychic, when one is conscious of the divine Presence in the psychic and in constant communion with the psychic. Then the spiritual life begins, not before. The *true* spiritual life.

When one is united with one's psychic being and conscious of the divine Presence, and receives the impulses for one's action from this divine Presence, and when the will has become a conscious collaborator with the divine Will — that is the starting-point.

Before that, one may be an aspirant to the spiritual life, but one doesn't have a spiritual life.

Sweet Mother, I would like to have the explanation of a sentence. Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere, "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything."

That means that it is the Spirit, the spiritual consciousness and the divine Presence which give to life all its value, that without this spiritual consciousness and divine Presence life has no value.

The same holds true for the individual, whatever his material capacities and the material conditions in which he lives, his only worth is that of the divine Presence and the spiritual consciousness in him.

And so from the point of view of the truth of things, a man who has no material possessions and no remarkable capacities or possibilities, but who is conscious of his psychic being and united with the Divine in him, is infinitely greater than a ruler upon earth or a millionaire who possesses considerable material power but is unconscious of his psychic being.

Questions and Answers

From the point of view of the truth, it is like that. This is what Sri Aurobindo means: no apparent and outer things have any true value. The only thing which is valuable is the divine consciousness and union with the Spirit.

Mother, according to what you said last time, there is still the question of those who are not consciously open to the new Force. Then how will they be influenced? Will it be by the spiritual force but not by the supramental?

What, what, what?

What difference do you make between the spiritual force and the supramental?

No. But you said that those who have done nothing or have not given themselves, how can they hope to be influenced or to profit by this Force? Those who are here but are not consciously open, will they be influenced also?

Influenced, yes.

They will also be helped?

But if they don't care to be helped! You want to help them despite themselves?

If one aspires, wants the help, even if the opening is very small, still there is necessarily some opening. But if one doesn't want to be helped... Or rather, I could say there are people who are sure they don't need to be helped, they feel that they can help themselves quite well, that they need no help, that it is they who do the work, they who make the progress, they who do everything. So they don't want help, they feel no need for it. Why do you want them to be helped when they don't care for it?

9 May 1956

But you said that even the blind will be obliged to realise it.

I said that it will be visible even to those who are ill-willed — is that what you mean? But that's quite different. When you receive a punch on the nose, you have to recognise something even though it hasn't helped you!

No. When one recognises this Force...

Yes.

One is bound to be open...

Yes.

So even one who didn't want to be helped so far, will want it.

Recognise this Force? — Oh! when he has received the punch!
(*Laughter*)

Perhaps. It may happen. Anything can happen.

So, even one who is now unconscious will open under the blow.

And then? What is your conclusion? What do you expect to happen?

That is to say, he will see that it is a miracle.

That he's been punched? (*Laughter*)

He won't call that a miracle, he will call it a bad deed. He will say, "That's bad luck, it's my unfortunate fate, it is an injustice", he will say anything at all, as people are in the habit of saying.

Questions and Answers

But what I have not yet caught is the point of your question. What are you driving at? You mean the whole world whether it wants it or not, whether it aspires or not, whether it recognises it or not, will sooner or later come under the influence of the supramental presence on earth — is that what you mean?

No.

Ah! what a pity, for that had some meaning. (*Laughter*) And I would have answered, “Yes” — and then it would have been over!

No. Those who are half open...

They will receive half more than those who are not open at all! (*Laughter*)

This manifestation will make them aspire more?

Ah! that I don't know. It must depend on the case. For each one it will be different.

Is it for yourself you are pleading?

Yes.

Oh! Oh! You want to know what will happen to you?

Set your mind at rest, it will be quite all right. I could almost say as for the banner of Joan of Arc: “You have shared in the labour, you will share in the Glory.” There then, are you satisfied?

Yes.

16 May 1956

“In sum, it may be safely affirmed that no solution offered can be anything but provisional until a supramental Truth-Consciousness is reached by which the appearances of things are put in their place and their essence revealed and that in them which derives straight from the spiritual essence. In the meanwhile our only safety is to find a guiding law of spiritual experience — or else to liberate a light within that can lead us on the way until that greater direct Truth-Consciousness is reached above us or born within us. For all else in us that is only outward, all that is not a spiritual sense or seeing, the constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, the suggestions or instigations of the Life-force, the positive necessities of physical things are sometimes half-lights, sometimes false lights that can at best only serve for a while or serve a little and for the rest either detain or confuse us.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 128-29

The necessities of physical things also? I don't understand.

All this, not only physical necessities. All these things are at times lights, that is to say, knowledge diminished and mixed with ignorance, at times false lights, that is, no knowledge at all: simply ideas, conceptions, ways of seeing, ways of feeling — all these things considered as knowledge by the ordinary human consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo speaks even of physical needs, the needs of the body, which are generally considered as imperative and which have their own truth; he says that even that can be only quite

Questions and Answers

a partial light, that is to say, a semblance of knowledge or even something false.

That goes against all modern ideas.

People always have the impression that what they call the needs of the body, what the body demands, is an absolute law; that if it is not obeyed, well, one commits a great wrong against one's body which will suffer the consequences. And Sri Aurobindo says that these needs in themselves are either very partial lights, that is to say, only a way of seeing things, or even no lights at all — completely false.

If one were to study the problem attentively enough, one would find out to what an extent these so-called needs of the body depend on the mental attitude. For example, the need to eat. There are people who literally die of hunger if they have not eaten for eight days. There are others who do it deliberately and observe fasting as a principle of yoga, as a necessity in yoga. And for them, at the end of eight days' fasting, the body is as healthy as when they started, and sometimes healthier!

Finally, for all these things, it is a question of proportion, of measure. It is obvious that one can't always live without eating. But it is as obvious that the idea people have about the need to eat is not true. Indeed, it is a whole subject for study: The importance of the mental attitude in relation to the body.

Sri Aurobindo does not recognise the needs of the body as things true in themselves. He says: it is not true, it is only an idea you have, an impression, it is not something true which carries its truth in itself.

Sweet Mother, what is this "imperious law", this "spiritual and supramental law"?

It is the truth of each being.

Each being carries in himself his own spiritual law, his supramental law. It is not the same for everyone, it is not one single identical law. For each one it is the truth of his being, that is to

16 May 1956

say, *the* thing he must realise in the universe and *the* place he must occupy in the world.

That is the truth of his being.

“Inadequate too is the very frequent attempt at a mis-alliance between the vital and the spiritual, a mystic experience within with an aestheticised intellectual and sensuous Paganism or exalted hedonism outside leaning upon it and satisfying itself in the glow of a spiritual sanction.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 128

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by “an aestheticised Paganism”?

That is how Sri Aurobindo describes the different pantheons of different countries, specially of Greece or India. That is to say, it is an aesthetic and intellectual way of transforming all things into divine creatures, divine beings: all the forces of Nature, all the elements, all spiritual forces, all intellectual forces, all physical forces, all these are transformed into a number of godheads and they are given an aesthetic and intellectual reality. It is a symbolic and artistic and literary and poetic way of dealing with all the universal forces and realities. That is how these pantheons came into existence, like the Greek or Egyptian pantheon or else the pantheon of India.

All these gods are representations which Sri Aurobindo calls “aesthetic and intellectual” — a way of conceiving the universe. This is not to say that they do not correspond to a truth — to a reality rather than a truth. There are beings like that; but this is a particular way of approaching the universal world or rather the universal worlds.

Sweet Mother, hasn't morality helped us to increase our consciousness?

Questions and Answers

That depends on people. There are people who are helped by it, there are people who are not helped *at all*.

Morality is something altogether artificial and arbitrary, and in most cases, among the best, it checks the true spiritual effort by a sort of moral satisfaction that one is on the right path and a true gentleman, that one does one's duty, fulfils all the moral requirements of life. Then one is so self-satisfied that one no longer moves or makes any progress.

It is very difficult for a virtuous man to enter the path of God; this has been said very often, but it is altogether true, for he is *most* self-satisfied, he thinks he has realised what he ought to have realised, he no longer has either the aspiration or even that elementary humility which makes one want to progress. You see, one who is known here as a sattwic man¹ is usually very comfortably settled in his own virtue and never thinks of coming out of it. So, that puts you a million leagues away from the divine realisation.

What really helps, until one has found the inner light, is to make for oneself a certain number of rules which naturally should not be too rigid and fixed, but yet should be precise enough to prevent one from going completely out of the right path or making irreparable mistakes — mistakes the consequences of which one suffers all one's life.

To do that, it is good to set up a certain number of principles in oneself, which, however, should be for each one, in conformity with his own nature. If you adopt a social, collective rule, you immediately make yourself a slave to this social rule, and that prevents you almost radically from making any effort for transformation.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo has said that one must find

¹ According to the Indian terminology, a sattwic person is one who is moved by the principle of knowledge, equanimity and light, as opposed to a rajasic man who is moved by his desires and passions and a tamasic man who lives in inertia and obscurity.

16 May 1956

a light within, then surrender to the divine Shakti. Now that the Supermind has come down, will this be easier?

Well, *that* is the light within, now.

What is the difficulty? Where do you see any objection or contradiction? What is your difficulty?

How can we understand that it has become easier? What is the effect of this descent?

Well, wait until it occurs in you and you will know it!

All right. Imagine that in a dark room you have put an oil lamp, one which burns oil, as we used to have fifty years ago — we had oil lamps in the rooms, as now there are lanterns; they were a little better but it was the same thing. So you were lighting your room with that, and then suddenly somebody invented the means of lighting it by electricity. So your oil lamp is replaced by a beautiful electric lamp which gives ten times more light.

What is your difficulty, your problem?

You have always had a light to illumine your room — your inner room — but instead of an oil lamp it has become an electric lamp. That's all.

You don't understand? No? It is not very difficult to understand.

One wants to see that light.

To see? Ah!... Enter the room, you will see it.

(Silence)

Is that all?

Mother, after the first question there is a sentence I don't understand: "And for the rest [they] either detain or confuse us." What is this "rest"?

Questions and Answers

Sri Aurobindo is speaking of the mental constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, of the suggestions and instigations of the Life-force, of the needs of the body. Now, all this, these half-lights or false lights can serve a little on the path, can help us a little, and only for a while. And all that is not this, all the rest, that is to say, all the countless thoughts and movements, sensations and feelings one has, well, all this is of no use at all. And worse than being quite useless, it detains us on the way, that's all. It confuses us. That is to say, it creates an inner confusion and must be altogether ignored.

All the countless things one thinks, experiences, feels, sees, does... all that is of no use at all. Naturally, if one looks at it from the point of view of yoga.

(*Turning to the child who wanted to see the light*) You have still another question?

How to enter the room?

You take a key and open the door!

You must find the key.

Or you sit down in front of the door until you have found the word, the idea or the force which opens it — as in the *Arabian Nights* tales.

It is not a joke, it is very serious. You must sit down in front of the door and then concentrate until you have found the key or the word or the power to open it.

If one doesn't try, it doesn't open by itself. Perhaps after thousands of years, but you want to do it immediately — so? To do it immediately, you must sit down *obstinately* before the door until you have found the means. It may be a key, it may be a word, it may be a force, it may be anything at all, and you remain there before the door until it opens.

And you do not think of anything else.

Only of the door.

16 May 1956

Is there no key-hole through which the light can escape?

A key-hole! What do you mean? A chink through which the light can escape?... Perhaps it is escaping, but perhaps no one sees it either!

It is escaping.

But then that's another problem: you must open your eyes. You must learn to open your eyes, to look.

Very small babies do not see, even very small animals do not see, tiny baby kittens do not see. It takes them several hours or several days — they don't see.

You must learn to see.

23 May 1956

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between yoga and religion?

Ah! my child... it is as though you were asking me the difference between a dog and a cat!

(Long silence)

Imagine someone who, in some way or other, has heard of something like the Divine or has a personal feeling that something of the kind exists, and begins to make all sorts of efforts: efforts of will, of discipline, efforts of concentration, all sorts of efforts to find this Divine, to discover what He is, to become acquainted with Him and unite with Him. Then this person is doing yoga.

Now, if this person has noted down all the processes he has used and constructs a fixed system, and sets up all that he has discovered as absolute laws — for example, he says: the Divine is like this, to find the Divine you must do this, make this particular gesture, take this attitude, perform this ceremony, and you must admit that *this* is the truth, you must say, “I accept that this is the Truth and I fully adhere to it; and your method is the only right one, the only one which exists” — if all that is written down, organised, arranged into fixed laws and ceremonies, it becomes a religion.

Can one realise the Divine by this method [of religion]?

Those who carry within themselves a spiritual destiny and are born to realise the Divine, to become conscious in Him and live Him, will arrive, no matter what path, what way they follow. That is to say, even in religion there are people who have had

23 May 1956

the spiritual experience and found the Divine — not because of the religion, usually in spite of it, notwithstanding it — because they had the inner urge and this urge led them there despite all obstacles and through them. Everything served their purpose.

But if these very people want to express their experience, they naturally use the terms of the religion in which they were brought up, so they restrict their experience and inevitably limit it very much, they make it sectarian, so to say. But they themselves may very well have gone beyond all the forms and all the limitations and all the conventions and may have had the true experience in its pure simplicity.

Sweet Mother, in the world today most people follow some sort of religion. Are they helped?

Not much.

Perhaps they are taking it up again now, but for a very long time, towards the beginning of this century, they had repudiated religion as something opposed to knowledge — at least all intellectual people had. And it is only recently that a movement of return to something other than a thorough-going positivism has begun.

People follow religion by social habit, in order not to get into the bad books of others. For instance, in a village it is difficult not to go to religious ceremonies, for all your neighbours will point at you. But that has absolutely nothing to do with spiritual life, nothing at all.

(Silence)

The first time I came to India I came on a Japanese boat. And on this Japanese boat there were two clergymen, that is, Protestant priests, of different sects. I don't remember exactly which sects, but they were both English; I think one was an Anglican and the other a Presbyterian.

Questions and Answers

Now, Sunday came. There had to be a religious ceremony on the boat, or else we would have looked like heathens, like the Japanese! There had to be a ceremony, but who should perform it? Should it be the Anglican or should it be the Presbyterian? They just missed quarrelling. Finally, one of them withdrew with dignity — I don't remember now which one, I think it was the Anglican — and the Presbyterian performed his ceremony.

It took place in the lounge of the ship. We had to go down a few steps to this lounge. And that day, all the men had put on their jackets — it was hot, I think we were in the Red Sea — they put on their jackets, stiff collars, leather shoes; neckties well set, hats on their heads, and they went with a book under their arm, almost in a procession from the deck to the lounge. The ladies wore their hats, some carried even a parasol, and they too had their book under the arm, a prayer-book.

And so they all crowded down into the lounge, and the Presbyterian made a speech, that is to say, preached his sermon, and everybody listened very religiously. And then, when it was over, they all came up again with the satisfied air of someone who has done his duty. And, of course, five minutes later they were in the bar drinking and playing cards, and their religious ceremony was forgotten. They had done their duty, it was over, there was nothing more to be said about it.

And the clergyman came and asked me, more or less politely, why I had not attended. I told him, "Sir, I am sorry, but I don't believe in religion."

"Oh! oh! you are a materialist?"

"No, not at all."

"Ah! then why?"

"Oh!" I said, "if I were to tell you, you would be quite displeased, perhaps it is better for me not to say anything."

But he insisted so much that at last I said, "Just try to see, I don't feel that you are sincere, neither you nor your flock. You all went there to fulfil a social duty and a social custom, but not

23 May 1956

at all because you really wanted to enter into communion with God.”

“Enter into communion with God! But we can’t do that! All that we can do is to say some good words, but we have no capacity to enter into communion with God.”

Then I said, “But it was just because of that I didn’t go, for it doesn’t interest me.”

After that he asked me many questions and admitted to me that he was going to China to convert the “heathens”. At that I became serious and told him, “Listen, even before your religion was born — not even two thousand years ago — the Chinese had a very high philosophy and knew a path leading them to the Divine; and when they think of Westerners, they think of them as barbarians. And so you are going there to convert those who know more about it than you? What are you going to teach them? To be insincere, to perform hollow ceremonies instead of following a profound philosophy and a detachment from life which lead them to a more spiritual consciousness?... I don’t think it’s a very good thing you are going to do.”

Then he felt so suffocated, the poor man; he said to me, “Eh, I fear I can’t be convinced by your words!”

“Oh!” I said, “I am not trying to convince you, I only described the situation to you, and how I don’t quite see why barbarians should want to go and teach civilised people what they have known long before you. That’s all.”

And there, that was the end of it.

Mother, in the Buddhist traditions it is said...

Oh! Oh! you are becoming a Buddhist. It’s the fashion.

Yes?

It is said that two thousand five hundred years after his birth...

Questions and Answers

Yes, he will return to earth to preach a new Buddhism, is that it?

It seems his teaching will come to an end, and will be replaced by something new.

Yes, it is that gentleman, what is his name... X, who told you that?

But that is his theory. He told me also that he thought that it was Sri Aurobindo who had realised the teachings of the Buddha. Is that it? You didn't go to his lecture?... No, then what did you want to ask?

Because it is now — tomorrow is the day the two thousand five hundred years will be over — does this correspond to the new thing?

What new thing?

The new Supramental Manifestation.

Oh! Listen, this seems to me just the kind of discovery one makes when one wants something sensational.

There are always many ways of interpreting texts, and one does it according to what one likes them to say.

(Silence)

That reminds me of something: (*turning to a teacher*) have they found the sounds with which hieroglyphs are to be read?

Egyptian?

Yes, hieroglyphs are Egyptian!

23 May 1956

I think so.

That means they have found the spoken language of five thousand years ago?

I think so. And there are hieroglyphs which are also phonetic.

Phonetic! Where can we get this information from?

In the library, Mother, there is something.

Oh!... Because I was wondering how they had restored the names of the pharaohs and gods. Naturally, more recent peoples have spoken about them, the Greeks mention them, the Phoenicians speak of them; *they* had phonetic writing. But earlier than that? The first pharaohs and all those names of the gods, who discovered these?

According to tradition it is Champollion, with the Rosetta Stone; they found a stone with inscriptions in Egyptian, Greek and Coptic, which enabled them to solve the problem.

He was sure it was the same thing written in Egyptian and in Greek? How was he sure of that?

There was a vague idea, there were some points of reference and cross-checking.

But that was for the meaning, not for the sounds.

Yes.

What language was spoken in the Schools of Initiation? How did they express themselves, those people?

Questions and Answers

I know that sounds are given for the words. Now, whether they know the exact pronunciation or not is another matter. They don't even know the pronunciation of ancient Greek.

Greek? They don't know the pronunciation?

They don't know how it used to be pronounced.

Is the language of ancient Egypt contemporaneous with the earliest Sanskrit, or is it earlier still? And then, something else: was the cuneiform script of Assyria phonetic or hieroglyphic?

I believe that there too it is possible to read the sounds, for quite a number of names given in the Bible have been set right and it has been found that there were deformations: Nabuchodonsor, for example.

Yes. Oh! that has been changed.

Now, whether they are absolutely sure of having found the sounds...

Yes, that seems strange to me. For a book came to my hands in which the names had been restored, and had become a little queer! But still, there must have been a certain way of pronouncing them. I mean, does any other human language go back further than the earliest Sanskrit?

I don't know the dates of the earliest language.

And one last thing: is this hieroglyphic Egyptian language related to the Chaldean line or to the Aryan? There are Sanskrit roots in all the languages. That was precisely what I wanted to ask.

23 May 1956

I read somewhere that the priests of Egypt used to give initiation with mantras.

Sanskrit mantras? But that must be in a novel, surely!

A few Sanskrit words.

There are Sanskrit roots — with some distortions — in all languages. And there is a very old tradition claiming to be older than the two bifurcating lines, Aryan and Chaldean. But Greek, for instance, which is relatively recent, is it a language of Aryan or Chaldean origin?

Greek is entirely Aryan.

Entirely Aryan.

Egyptian is of Chaldean origin.

Chaldean, yes. But everywhere there was an intermixture of Egyptian and Greek.

The Phoenician language was older. From the point of view of the written language, it was earlier than Greek.

But Phoenician is phonetic, it is a phonetic language.

And hieroglyphs were written from top to bottom and from right to left, or was it from left to right?

From right to left.

From right to left. Chaldean languages are written like that. Chinese and Japanese also. Only Aryan languages are written from left to right.

Questions and Answers

(Meditation)

Much later, when this talk was first published, a disciple asked Mother what gave rise to these questions on hieroglyphs.

It used to interest me very much once, to know about them. I tried to recall the memory of the elements which existed at that time, but I could not get any answer. There was a complete blank.

Did you hear any sounds?

(After a silence) Look, I'll give you an instance. About two years ago, I had a vision about Z's son.... She had brought him to me, he was not quite one year old, and I had just seen him there, in the room where I receive people. He gave me the impression of someone I knew very well, but I didn't know who. And then, in the afternoon of the same day, I had a vision. A vision of ancient Egypt, that is to say, I was someone there, the great priestess or somebody — I don't know who, for one doesn't tell oneself "I am so and so": the identification is complete, there is no objectifying, so I don't know. I was in a wonderful building, immense! so high! but quite bare, there was nothing, except a place where there were magnificent paintings. So there I recognised the paintings of ancient Egypt. And I was coming out of my apartments and was entering a kind of large hall. There was a sort of gutter running all round the base of the walls, for collecting water. And then I saw the child, who was half naked, playing in it. And I was quite shocked, I said, "What! this is disgusting!" — but the feelings, ideas, all that was translated into French in my consciousness. There was the tutor who came, I had him called. I scolded him. I heard sounds. Well, I don't know what I said, I don't remember the sounds at all now. I heard the sounds I was articulating, I knew what they meant, but the translation was in French, and the sounds I could not remember. I spoke

23 May 1956

to him, told him, “How can you let the child play in there?” And he answered me — and I woke up with his reply — saying — I did not hear the first words, but in my thought it was — “Amenhotep likes it.” I heard Amenhotep, I remembered. Then I knew the child was Amenhotep.

So I know that I spoke: I spoke a language but I don’t remember it now. I remembered “Amenhotep” because I know it in my waking consciousness: “Amenhotep.” But otherwise, the other sounds did not remain. I have no memory for sounds.

And I know I was his mother; at that moment I knew who I was, for I know Amenhotep is the son of so-and-so — besides, I looked up the history. Otherwise there is no connection: a blank.

I always admire those mediums — usually very simple people — who have the exact memory of the sound, who can tell you, “Look, I said this and this.” In that way one would have the phonetic notation. If I could remember the sounds I pronounced, we would have the notation, but I don’t.

I remember this conversation; suddenly I said to myself, “It would be so interesting if one could hear that language”, and then, from curiosity, “How did they discover the pronunciation? How?” Besides, all the names we were taught as children, in ancient history, have been changed today. They say they have discovered the sounds, or at least they claim to have discovered them. But I don’t know.

It is the same thing for ancient Babylon: I have extremely precise memories, completely objective, but when I speak I don’t remember the sounds I utter, there is only the mental translation.

I have no memory for sounds.

I was wondering what had prompted all your questions.

It’s just that, it is that I am aware I have no memory for sounds. There are people who have a memory for sounds, I don’t have that memory. So I would be interested to know that. Otherwise I have always been able — when there was something of the

Questions and Answers

past which was doubtful for me, or interesting or incomplete — I have always found the means of making it come back to my consciousness. But sounds don't come. It comes as a state of consciousness which is translated mentally, and so it is translated mentally into words which I know. So it is not at all interesting.

Even now, while I was playing music, the memory of the sounds was vague and incomplete. I had the memory of the sounds I heard in the "source of music" (*with an upward gesture*), and then, when the material music reproduced something of these sounds, I recognised them; but there is not that precision, that exactness which would make it possible for me to reproduce with the voice or with an instrument the exact sound. That is not there, that is missing. While the memory of the eyes was... it was stupefying. A thing I had seen just *once* — it was fixed, never forgotten.

Several times in this way, in visions — "visions", actually memories: memories relived — I have spoken the language of that time, spoken it, heard myself speaking, but the sound has not remained. The *sense* of what I said has remained but the sound hasn't.

It is a pity.

30 May 1956

“The Yogin’s aim in the sciences that make for knowledge should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine Consciousness-Puissance in man and creatures and things and forces, her creative significances, her execution of the mysteries, the symbols in which she arranges the manifestation.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 133

I have already told you, explained to you, that outer forms, if looked at not in themselves, for themselves, in their outer appearance alone, but as the expression of a deeper and more lasting reality, all these forms — as indeed all circumstances and events — all become symbolic of the Force which is behind and uses them to express itself. There is not a single circumstance, not a form, not an action, not a movement which is not symbolic of something deeper, something which stands behind and which, normally, ought to animate all action.

For a certain state of consciousness there is not a single word, not a gesture, not an action which does not express a deeper or higher reality, more lasting, more essential, more true; and once one has seen and felt that, everything takes on a meaning, and one sees more clearly how things ought to be organised, arranged, so that a deeper truth may express itself still better than it does at present.

“The Yogin’s aim in the Arts should not be a mere aesthetic, mental or vital gratification, but, seeing the Divine everywhere, worshipping it with a revelation of the meaning of its works, to express that One Divine in gods and men and creatures and objects.”

Ibid., p. 133

Questions and Answers

How can we “express that One Divine”?

It depends on the subject one wants to express: gods, men or things.

When one paints a picture or composes music or writes poetry, each one has his own way of expression. Every painter, every musician, every poet, every sculptor has or ought to have a unique, personal contact with the Divine, and through the work which is his speciality, the art he has mastered, he must express this contact in his own way, with his own words, his own colours. For himself, instead of copying the outer form of Nature, he takes these forms as the covering of something else, precisely of his relationship with the realities which are behind, deeper, and he tries to make them express that. Instead of merely imitating what he sees, he tries to make them speak of what is behind them, and it is this which makes all the difference between a living art and just a flat copy of Nature.

Mother contemplates a flower she is holding in her hand. It is the golden champak flower (*Michelia champaka*).

Have you noticed this flower?

It has twelve petals in three rows of four.

We have called it “Supramental psychological perfection”.

I had never noticed that it had three rows: a small row like this, another one a little larger and a third one larger still. They are in gradations of four: four petals, four petals, four petals.

Well, if one indeed wants to see in the forms of Nature a symbolic expression, one can see a centre which is the supreme Truth, and a triple manifestation — because four indicates manifestation — in three superimposed worlds: the outermost — these are the largest petals, the lightest in colour — that is a physical world, then a vital world and a mental world, and then at the centre, the supramental Truth.

And you can discover all kinds of other analogies.

Is that all?

Mother, about the division of works, Sri Aurobindo writes here: "A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bonds slave of material Nature. If a division of works has to be made, it is between those that are nearest to the heart of the sacred flame and those that are least touched or illumined by it because they are more at a distance, or between the fuel that burns strongly or brightly and the logs that if too thickly heaped on the altar may impede the ardour of the fire by their damp, heavy and diffused abundance."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 132

Psychologically, to what does this division correspond in our life?

I suppose it is different for each one. So each one must find those activities which increase his aspiration, his consciousness, his deeper knowledge of things, and those which, on the contrary, mechanise him and bring him back more thoroughly into a purely material relation with things.

It is difficult to make a general rule.

That means that everything ought to be done exactly, as an offering?

Questions and Answers

Truly speaking, it depends more on the way of doing a thing than on the thing itself.

You take up some work which is quite material, like cleaning the floor or dusting a room; well, it seems to me that this work can lead to a very deep consciousness if it is done with a certain feeling for perfection and progress; while other work considered of a higher kind as, for example, studies or literary and artistic work, if done with the idea of seeking fame or for the satisfaction of one's vanity or for some material gain, will not help you to progress. So this is already a kind of classification which depends more on the inner attitude than on the outer fact. But this classification can be applied to everything.

Of course, there is a kind of work which is done only for purely pecuniary and personal reasons, like the one — whatever it may be — which is done to earn a living. That attitude is exactly the one Sri Aurobindo compares with the damp logs of wood which are heaped so thick the flame cannot leap up. It has something dark and heavily dull about it.

And this brings us to something which I have already told you several times, but which presents a problem not yet solved by circumstances. I think I have already spoken to you about it, but still I shall speak about it again this evening because of this sentence of Sri Aurobindo's.

At the beginning of my present earthly existence I came into contact with many people who said that they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but that they were tied down, subjected, slaves to that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed them down so much, took up so much of their time and energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard this very often, I saw many poor people — I don't mean poor from the monetary point of view, but poor because they felt imprisoned in a material necessity, narrow and deadening.

I was very young at that time, and I always used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world — oh!

30 May 1956

quite a small one, but still... a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied with food and lodging and clothing and the imperative necessities of life, so as to see whether all the energies freed by this certainty of a secure material living would turn spontaneously towards the divine life and the inner realisation.

Well, towards the middle of my life — at least, what is usually the middle of a human life — the means were given to me and I could realise this, that is, create such conditions of life. And I have come to this conclusion, that it is *not* this necessity which hinders people from consecrating themselves to an inner realisation, but that it is a dullness, a *tamas*, a lack of aspiration, a miserable laxity, an I-don't-care attitude, and that those who face even the hardest conditions of life are sometimes the ones who react most and have the intensest aspiration.

That's all. I am waiting for the contrary to be proved to me.

I would very much like to see the contrary but I haven't yet seen it. As there are many energies which are not utilised, since this terrible compulsion of having something to eat or a roof to sleep under or clothes on one's back does not exist — as one is sure of all that — there is a whole mass of energies which are not utilised for that; well, they are spent in idle stupidities. And of these, the foolishness which seems to me the most disastrous is to keep one's tongue going: chatter, chatter, chatter. I haven't known a place where they chatter more than here, and say everything they should not say, busy themselves with things they should not be concerned with. And I know it is merely an overflow of unused energy.

That is all.

So the division in works is perhaps not quite what one thinks....

6 June 1956

Once or twice, as a game, you took one of your books or Sri Aurobindo's and opened a page at random, and read out a sentence. Can these sentences give one a sign or an indication? What should we do to get a true answer?

Everybody can do it. It is done in this way: you concentrate. Now, it depends on what you want. If you have an inner problem and want the solution, you concentrate on this problem; if you want to know the condition you are in, which you are not aware of—if you want to get some light on the state you are in, you just come forward with simplicity and ask for the light. Or else, quite simply, if you are curious to know what the invisible knowledge has to tell you, you remain silent and still for a moment and then open the book. I always used to recommend taking a paper-knife, because it is thinner; while you are concentrated you insert it in the book and with the tip indicate something. Then, if you know how to concentrate, that is to say, if you really do it with an aspiration to have an answer, it always comes.

For, in books of this kind (*Mother shows* “The Synthesis of Yoga”), books of revelation, there is always an accumulation of forces—at least of higher mental forces, and most often of spiritual forces of the highest knowledge. Every book, on account of the words it contains, is like a small accumulator of these forces. People don't know this, for they don't know how to make use of it, but it is so. In the same way, in every picture, photograph, there is an accumulation, a small accumulation representative of the force of the person whose picture it is, of his nature and, if he has powers, of his powers. Now, you, when you are sincere and have an aspiration, you emanate a certain vibration, the vibration of your aspiration which goes

6 June 1956

and meets the corresponding force in the book, and it is a higher consciousness which gives you the answer.

Everything is contained potentially. Each element of a whole potentially contains what is in the whole. It is a little difficult to explain, but you will understand with an example: when people want to practise magic, if they have a bit of nail or hair, it is enough for them, because within this, potentially, there is all that is in the being itself. And in a book there is potentially — not expressed, not manifest — the knowledge which is in the person who wrote the book. Thus, Sri Aurobindo represented a totality of comprehension and knowledge and power; and every one of his books is at once a symbol and a representation. Every one of his books contains symbolically, potentially, what is in him. Therefore, if you concentrate on the book, you can, through the book, go back to the source. And even, by passing through the book, you will be able to receive much more than what is just in the book.

There is always a way of reading and understanding what one reads, which gives an answer to what you want. It is not just a chance or an amusement, nor is it a kind of diversion. You may do it just “like that”, and then nothing at all happens to you, you have no reply and it is not interesting. But if you do it seriously, if seriously your aspiration tries to concentrate on this instrument — it is like a battery, isn't it, which contains energies — if it tries to come into contact with the energy which is there and insists on having the answer to what it wants to know, well, naturally, the energy which is there — the union of the two forces, the force given out by you and that accumulated in the book — will guide your hand and your paper-knife or whatever you have; it will guide you exactly to the thing that expresses what you ought to know.... Obviously, if one does it without sincerity or conviction, nothing at all happens. If it is done sincerely, one gets an answer.

Certain books are like this, more powerfully charged than others; there are others where the result is less clear. But

Questions and Answers

generally, books containing aphorisms and short sentences — not very long philosophical explanations, but rather things in a condensed and precise form — it is with these that one succeeds best.

Naturally, the value of the answer depends on the value of the spiritual force contained in the book. If you take a novel, it will tell you nothing at all but stupidities. But if you take a book containing a condensation of forces — of knowledge or spiritual force or teaching power — you will receive your answer.

So now, what do you want to know? I have explained the mechanism to you; you want me to do it? Is that what you wanted, or did you only want to know how it is done?

No, Mother, before the class, as we had no questions I opened many books and tried to find something in this way, but I couldn't find anything.

You didn't find anything, because probably at that time there was no curiosity in your mind!

There are many explanations in this book [*The Synthesis of Yoga*], so if you tumble into the midst of an explanation... It should be rather a book like *Thoughts and Glimpses*, or *Prayers and Meditations*, or *Words of the Mother*; also *Questions and Answers*.

We tried the Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Mother, the third series.

The *Letters*?... Give me the book. Isn't this the one about literature?

Yes, Mother.

Then it's the worst of them all! (*Laughter*)

6 June 1956

No, it is the second series.

Then I am going to draw first for the collectivity. That is, what will answer and express the collective state of all those who are gathered here. We are going to see what it will do. (*Mother concentrates and inserts a small card in the book.*)

My child, this is in English! I must translate it off-hand.

My card was on this, which indeed seems to me quite a general problem for everybody here: the true attitude in work. (*Laughter*) Sri Aurobindo says this, that the true attitude in work comes “when the work is always associated with the thought of the Mother, done as an offering to her, with the call to do it through you.” This is the sentence I have found, I think that’s not bad for a beginning!

Now, does anyone want me to draw for him?

I.

You! And what do you want? Do you want to know the state you are in, or what?

The state I ought to be in.

(*Mother concentrates for a moment, opens the book and reads silently.*) This is the problem you are interested in: the purpose of the Avatar:

“I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness....”

This is where I put my paper-knife. He adds this:

“If nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is also that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life

Questions and Answers

and action of the Avatar is quite futile.”

Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 408

I don't know if this is a problem which you have been thinking about, but anyway this is what has come in reply.... It was obviously for someone who had asked him: "The Avatar comes and opens the Way, but if there is nobody to follow him, what happens?" Sri Aurobindo says: either his conception is wrong or his life is quite futile. That is to say, if a divine Power comes on earth to open the Way to a higher realisation and it so happens that there is nobody on earth to follow the path, it is quite obvious that it was useless for him to come. But as a matter of fact, I don't think it has ever happened.

Let me see the end of the sentence.... Yes, it is in reply to someone who said:

*“There is no way and no possibility of following it”, and
“that all the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are
unreal and all humbug” —*

That well-known English word! This person declared that there was

“no possibility of struggle or effort for one who represents the Divine.”

That is to say, the denial of the life of all those mentioned here. And Sri Aurobindo adds that

“Such a conception makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood;” and “there is then no reason in it, no necessity in it, no meaning in it.”

He adds (*Mother laughs*):

6 June 1956

“The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth.”

He can do it just like this (*gesture*), he is all-powerful, he has only to pull them up and then they will be lifted up. Why should he come and take all this trouble here?

And Sri Aurobindo says in conclusion:

“It is only if it is a part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that the Avatar has any meaning.”

Letters on Yoga, pp. 408–09

There he touches on a problem you were concerned about, no? You have never asked yourself this question: what was the purpose of a divine incarnation in a human body, whether it was necessary or not, and how it happened and why it happened? This question has never interested you? No?

Not in this way.

Not in this way. Then it was in reply to something you were not conscious of. I know what it was an answer to, but you were not conscious.

Ah! does anyone else want anything? Nobody?... Oh! how shy you all are.

Me.

Ah! what are we going to find for you? (Mother opens the *Letters...*) These are answers to people who want scholarly knowledge. You want to know in Indian terminology what the transcendental Mother is?... People always ask scholarly questions — there is no life in them, it goes on only in the head.

Wait, I am going to try with this (*Mother takes The Synthesis of Yoga*), we’ll see if by any chance we can find something.

Questions and Answers

(Mother concentrates and opens the book.) Ah! this answers very well:

“The most disconcerting discovery is to find that every part of us — intellect, will, sense-mind, nervous or desire self, the heart, the body — has each, as it were, its own complex individuality and natural formation independent of the rest;...”

This is the very thing for you ! (Laughter)

It continues, he explains:

“...it neither agrees with itself nor with the others nor with the representative ego which is the shadow cast by some central and centralising self on our superficial ignorance.”

Why! this is really very fine. (Mother reads again:) “The representative ego which is the shadow cast by some central and centralising self on our superficial ignorance.” And then:

“We find that we are composed not of one but many personalities and each has its own demands and differing nature. Our being is a roughly constituted chaos into which we have to introduce the principle of a divine order.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 69

This is indeed very fine.

(Another disciple) *I had prepared a question.* (He takes the *Synthesis* and reads:) *“The central Consciousness in its turn will take up more and more the outer mental activities of knowledge and turn them into a parcel of itself or an annexed province; it will infuse into them its more authentic movement and make a more and more*

6 June 1956

spiritualised and illumined mind its instrument in these surface fields, its new conquests.... There will be less and less individual choice, opinion, preference, less and less of intellectualisation, mental weaving, cerebral galley-slave labour; a Light within will see all that has to be seen, know all that has to be known, develop, create, organise....

“But this cannot be the whole scope of the transformation.... For, if it were so, knowledge would still remain a working of the mind, liberated, universalised, spiritualised....”

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 137–38

So, what do you want to know?

That means that the spiritualised mind is of no value at all!

Sri Aurobindo says,

“If it were so, knowledge would still remain a working of the mind,” the mind “liberated, universalised, spiritualised, but still, as all mind must be, comparatively restricted, relative, imperfect in the very essence of its dynamism.”

I don’t understand.

Yes, it’s clear to me that you haven’t understood! He says it is not like that. That is not what happens, for if it were like that, it would be absurd.

He says later:

“The spiritualised mind will exceed itself and transmute into a supramental power of knowledge.”

Ibid., p. 138

Questions and Answers

If the spiritualised mind continues to function like the ordinary mind, there would be no difference. But in fact that is just the opposite of what happens.

But when it is spiritualised, how can it function as before?

You must not read just one sentence and not read what goes ahead and what follows, because in this way one can prove anything at all.

But here, with you, one doesn't need to go through all these experiences, isn't that so, Mother?

Need to go through.... But he has said all along that everyone follows his own path, in his own way, and that no two paths are alike, and each one has his own road. So, what "need", need for whom? For you? I don't know. Go through what? Putting one's ideas in some order? That is quite necessary for everybody perhaps.

I don't know what you want to know!

To reach the Supermind, Sri Aurobindo says there are stages: first, the mind, then the purified mind, the illumined mind and all that.... Is it necessary for everyone to go through all these stages?

(After a silence) It is likely that a sequence of this kind always occurs. But the duration of the stages and their importance vary considerably according to individuals.... For some the passage may be rapid enough to be hardly perceptible, while for others it may take a very long time; and according to the nature of the resistance in each one, the stress on one or another of these stages varies enormously.

6 June 1956

For some, it may be so rapid that it seems almost instantaneous, as though it didn't exist. For others it may take years.

There is one phenomenon which obviously seems indispensable if one wants the realisation to become stable.... Experiences come, touch the consciousness, sometimes bring great illuminations, then get blurred, retreat into the background and, outwardly, in your ordinary consciousness, you don't feel that there is a great change, a great difference. And this phenomenon may occur very often, may repeat itself for many years. Suddenly you get a sort of revelation, like an illumination, you are in the true consciousness and have the feeling of having got hold of the real thing. And then, slowly or suddenly, it seems to recede behind you, and you seek but do not find that there is any great change in you.... These things seem to come as heralds or as promises: "See, it will happen", or to tell you, "Well, have faith, it *will be* like that."

And this may recur very often. There is progress, obviously, but it is very slow and hardly apparent.

But then, suddenly — perhaps because one is sufficiently prepared, perhaps simply because the time has come, and it has been so decreed — suddenly, when such an experience occurs, its result in the part of the being where it takes place is a complete reversal of consciousness. It is a very clear, very concrete phenomenon. The best way of describing it is this: a complete reversal. And then the relation of the consciousness with the other parts of the being and with the outer world is as if completely changed. Absolutely like an overturning. And that reversal no longer comes back to the same old place, the consciousness no longer returns to its former position — Sri Aurobindo would say "status". Once this has happened in any part of the being, this part of the being is stabilised.

And until that happens, it comes and goes, comes and goes, one advances and then has the impression of marking time, and one advances again and then marks time again, and sometimes one feels as though one were going backwards, and it

Questions and Answers

is interminable — and indeed it is interminable. It may last for years and years and years. But when this reversal of consciousness takes place, whether in the mind or a part of the mind, whether in the vital or a part of the vital, or even in the physical consciousness itself and in the body-consciousness, once this is established, it is over; you no longer go back, you do not ever return to what you were before. And this is the true indication that you have taken a step forward definitively. And before this, there are only preparations.

Those who have experienced this reversal know what I am speaking about; but if one hasn't, one can't understand. One may have a kind of idea by analogy, people who have tried to describe yoga compare it with the reversal of a prism: when you put it at a certain angle, the light is white; when you turn it over, it is broken up. Well, this is exactly what happens, that is to say, you restore the white. In the ordinary consciousness there is decomposition and you restore the white. However, this is only an image. It is not really *that*, this is an analogy. But the phenomenon is extremely concrete. It is almost as though you were to put what is inside out, and what is outside in. And it isn't that either! But if you could turn a ball inside-out, or a balloon — you can't, can you? — if you could put the inside out and the outside in, it would be something like what I mean.

And one can't say that one “experiences” this reversal — there is no “feeling”, it is almost a mechanical fact — it is extraordinarily mechanical. (*Mother takes an object from the table beside her and turns it upside down....*) There would be some very interesting things to say about the difference between the moment of realisation, of *siddhi* — like this reversal of consciousness for example — and all the work of development, the *tapasya*; to say how it comes about.... For the sadhana, *tapasya* is one thing and the *siddhi* another, quite a different thing. You may do *tapasya* for centuries, and you will always go as at a tangent — closer and closer to the realisation, nearer and nearer, but it is only when the *siddhi* is given to you... then, everything is

6 June 1956

changed, everything is reversed. And this is inexpressible, for as soon as it is put in words it escapes. But there is a difference — a real difference, essential, total — between aspiration, the mental tension, even the tension of the highest, most luminous mind and realisation: something which has been decided above from all time, and is absolutely independent of all personal effort, of all gradation. Don't you see, it is not bit by bit that one reaches it, it is not by a small, constant, regular effort, it is not that: it is something that comes suddenly; it is established without one's knowing how or why, but all is changed.

And it will be like that for everybody, for the whole universe: it goes on and on, it moves forward very slowly, and then one moment, all of a sudden, *it will be done*, finished — not finished: it's the beginning!

(*Silence*)

It is usually the first contact with the psychic being which brings this experience, but it is only partial, only that *part* of the consciousness — or of the activity in any part of the being — that part of the consciousness which is united with the psychic has the experience. And so, at the moment of that experience, the position of that part of the consciousness, in relation to the other parts and to the world, is completely reversed, it is different. And that is never undone. And if you have the will or take care or are able to put into contact with this part all the problems of your life and all the activities of your being, all the elements of your consciousness, then they begin to be organised in such a way that your being becomes one unity — a single multiplicity, a multiple unity — complex, but organised and centralised around a fixed point, so well that the central will or central consciousness or central truth has the power to govern *all* the parts, for they are all in order, organised around this central Presence.

It seems to me impossible to escape from this necessity if one wants to be and is to be a conscious instrument of the divine

Questions and Answers

Force. You may be moved, pushed into action and used *as unconscious* instruments by the divine Force, if you have a minimum of goodwill and sincerity. But to become a conscious instrument, capable of identification and conscious, willed movements, you must have this inner organisation; otherwise you will always be running into a chaos somewhere, a confusion somewhere or an obscurity, an unconsciousness somewhere. And naturally your action, even though guided exclusively by the Divine, will not have the perfection of expression it has when one has acquired a conscious organisation around this divine Centre.

It is an assiduous task, which may be done at any time and under any circumstances, for you carry within yourself all the elements of the problem. You don't need anything from outside, no outer aid to do this work. But it requires great perseverance, a sort of tenacity, for very often it happens that there are bad "creases" in the being, habits — which come from all sorts of causes, which may come from atavistic malformation or also from education or from the environment you have lived in or from many other causes. And these bad creases you try to smooth out, but they wrinkle up again. And then you must begin the work over again, often, many, many, many a time, without getting discouraged, before the final result is obtained. But nothing and nobody can prevent you from doing it, nor any circumstance. For you carry within yourself the problem and the solution.

(*Silence*)

And to tell the truth, the most common malady humanity suffers from is boredom. Most of the stupidities men commit come from an attempt to escape boredom. Well, I say for certain that no outer means are any good, and that boredom pursues you and will pursue you no matter what you try to escape from it; but that this way, that is, beginning this work of organising your being and all its movements and all its elements around the central

6 June 1956

Consciousness and Presence, this is the surest and most complete cure, and the most comforting, for all possible boredom. It gives life a tremendous interest. And an extraordinary diversity. You no longer have the time to get bored.

Only, one must persevere.

And what adds to the interest of the thing is that this kind of work, this harmonisation and organisation of the being around the divine Centre can only be done in a physical body and on earth. That is truly the essential and original reason for physical life. For, as soon as you are no longer in a physical body, you can no longer do it *at all*.

And what is still more remarkable is that only human beings can do it, for only human beings have at their centre the divine Presence in the psychic being. For example, this work of self-development and organisation and becoming aware of all the elements is not within the reach of the beings of the vital and mental planes, nor even of the beings who are usually called “gods”; and when they want to do it, when they really want to organise themselves and become completely conscious, they have to take a body.

And yet, human beings come into a physical body without knowing why, most of them go through life without knowing why, they leave their body without knowing why, and they have to begin the same thing all over again, indefinitely, until one day, someone comes along and tells them, “Be careful! you know, there is a purpose to this. You are here for this work, don’t miss your opportunity!”

And how many years are wasted.

13 June 1956

“Already in the process of spiritualisation it [the spiritualised mind] will have begun to pass out of the brilliant poverty of the human intellect; it will mount successively into the pure broad reaches of a higher mind and next into the gleaming belts of a still greater free intelligence illumined with a Light from above. At this point it will begin to feel more freely, admit with a less mixed response the radiant beginnings of an Intuition, not illumined, but luminous in itself, true in itself, no longer entirely mental and therefore subjected to the abundant intrusion of error. Here too is not an end, for it must rise beyond into the very domain of that untruncated Intuition, the first direct light from the self-awareness of essential Being and, beyond it, attain that from which this light comes. For there is an Overmind behind Mind, a Power more original and dynamic which supports Mind, sees it as a diminished radiation from itself, uses it as a transmitting belt of passage downward or an instrument for the creations of the Ignorance. The last step of the ascension would be the surpassing of Overmind itself or its return into its own still greater origin, its conversion into the supramental light of the Divine Gnosis.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 138-39

There are two stages, you see. One may rise beyond the mind into a certain domain, then *beyond* that domain pass into yet another which is the origin of all things. This implies two successive stages.

Sweet Mother, now that the Supermind has descended,

13 June 1956

why can't one pass from the rational mind directly to the Supermind?

Who said that one can't?

Sri Aurobindo is describing here what was to be done to enter into contact with the Supermind and prepare the ground for its manifestation; but now that it has entered the earth-atmosphere, I don't see why a single, precise procedure should be inflicted upon it in its manifestation. If it chooses to directly illuminate an instrument which it finds suitable or ready or adaptable, I don't see why it should not do so.

And I repeat this: who has said that it cannot be otherwise? Nobody. What Sri Aurobindo has described here is quite another thing and, indeed, this is what did happen. It was the preparation necessary for the manifestation to take place. But now I don't see why or on what basis a particular process should be imposed upon the supramental action and why it should not have the freedom to choose its own means.

I think that all possibilities are predictable and that all sincere aspiration and complete consecration will have a response, and that the processes, means, transitions, transformations will be innumerable in nature—not at all that things will happen only in a particular way and not otherwise.

In fact, anything, everything that is ready to receive even a particle or a particular aspect of the supramental consciousness and light must *automatically* receive it. And the effects of this consciousness and light will be innumerable, for they will certainly be adapted to the possibilities, the capacity of each one according to the sincerity of his aspiration.

The more total the consecration and the intenser the aspiration, the more integral and intense can be the result. But the effect of the supramental action will be countless in its manifestations—multiple, innumerable, infinitely varied, not necessarily following a precise line which is the same for all.

Questions and Answers

That is impossible. For it is contrary to the very nature of the supramental consciousness.

The very quality of the atmosphere has changed.

The consequences are bound to be infinitely varied, but perceptible. That is to say, it will be possible to distinguish the consequences of ordinary movements from the consequences of the supramental action, for these will have a particular nature, a special character.

But that does not mean that anybody at all, at any moment and in any way, is suddenly going to become a supramental genius. That is not to be expected.

I was going to say, if one only noticed that one was a little less stupid than before, that would already be something!

Will this influence manifest in the field of education also?

Why do you want to deny it one field or another?

Because the system of education we follow still remains, as Sri Aurobindo says, "a brilliant poverty of the human intellect".

You are speaking of the education which *you* give to your students, is that it? But it is high time it changed!

People have a lamentable habit of copying what has been done before and what is done by others. Long ago I told you this. That argument: "This must be done, because this is what is done everywhere!" I reply, "That is why perhaps it should not be done! For if all others do it, what is the use of doing it here also?"

But without your intervention, how can we do anything?

But why do you ask me that? You should first change your system of education in accordance with the principles of the

13 June 1956

Supermind. At least you should try. You must not ask, you must do it. If you always move in the same rut, you can continue indefinitely in that rut. You must try to get out of it.

Indeed, I am constantly discussing this subject. I think it was just today or perhaps yesterday, I was pleading for the right of everyone to remain in ignorance if it pleases him—I am not speaking of ignorance from the spiritual point of view, the world of Ignorance in which we live, I am not speaking of that. I am speaking of ignorance according to the classical ideas of education. Well, I say that if there are people who don't want to learn and don't like to learn, they have the right not to learn.

The only thing it is our duty to tell them is this, "Now, you are of an age when your brain is in course of preparation. It is being formed. Each new thing you study makes one more little convolution in your brain. The more you study, the more you think, the more you reflect, the more you work, the more complex and complete does your brain become in its tiny convolutions. And as you are young, it is best done at this time. That is why it is common human practice to choose youth as the period of learning, for it is infinitely easier." And it is obvious that until the child becomes at least a little conscious of itself, it must be subjected to a certain rule, for it has not yet the capacity of choosing for itself.

That age is very variable; it depends on people, depends on each individual. But still, it is understood that in the seven-year period between the age of seven and fourteen, one begins to reach the age of reason. If one is helped, one can become a reasoning being between seven and fourteen.

Before seven there are geniuses — there are always geniuses, everywhere — but as a general rule the child is not conscious of itself and doesn't know why or how to do things. That is the time to cultivate its attention, teach it to concentrate on what it does, give it a small basis sufficient for it not to be entirely like a little animal, but to belong to the human race through an elementary intellectual development.

Questions and Answers

After that, there is a period of seven years during which it must be taught to choose — to choose what it wants to be. If it chooses to have a rich, complex, well-developed brain, powerful in its functioning, well, it must be taught to work; for it is by work, by reflection, study, analysis and so on that the brain is formed. At fourteen you are ready — or ought to be ready — to know what you want to be.

And so I say: if at about that age some children declare categorically, “Intellectual growth does not interest me at all, I don’t want to learn, I want to remain ignorant in the ordinary way of ignorance”, I don’t see by what right one could impose studies on them nor why it should be necessary to standardise them.

There are those who are at the bottom and others who are at another level. There are people who may have very remarkable capacities and yet have no taste for intellectual growth. One may warn them that if they don’t work, don’t study, when they are grown up, they will perhaps feel embarrassed in front of others. But if that does not matter to them and they want to live a non-intellectual life, I believe one has no right to compel them. That is my constant quarrel with the teachers of the school! They come and tell me: “If they don’t work, when they are grown up they will be stupid and ignorant.” I say: “But if it pleases them to be stupid and ignorant, what right have you to interfere?”

One can’t make knowledge and intelligence compulsory. That’s all.

Now, if you believe that by abstaining from all effort and all study, you will become geniuses, and supramental geniuses at that, don’t have any illusions, it won’t happen to you. For even if you touch a higher light, through an inner aspiration or by a divine grace, you will have nothing in there, in your brain, to be able to express it. So it will remain quite nebulous and won’t in any way change your outer life. But if it pleases you to be like this, nobody has the right to compel you to be otherwise. You must wait till you are sufficiently conscious to be able to choose.

13 June 1956

Of course, there are people who at fourteen are yet like children of five. But these — there's little hope for them. Especially those who have lived here.

Here's something then which already changes your outlook on education completely.

Essentially, the *only thing* you should do assiduously is to teach them to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves *and* to will what they want to be. That is infinitely more important than teaching them what happened on earth in former times, or even how the earth is built, or even... indeed, all sorts of things which are quite a necessary grounding if you want to live the ordinary life in the world, for if you don't know them, anyone will immediately put you down intellectually: "Oh, he is an idiot, he knows nothing."

But still, at any age, if you are studious and have the will to do it, you can also take up books and work; you don't need to go to school for that. There are enough books in the world to teach you things. There are even many more books than necessary. You can exhaust all subjects simply by going there to Medhananda's, to the Library. You will have enough to fill you up to here! (*Gesture*)

But what is very important is to know what you want. And for this a minimum of freedom is necessary. You must not be under a compulsion or an obligation. You must be able to do things whole-heartedly. If you are lazy, well, you will know what it means to be lazy.... You know, in life idlers are obliged to work ten times more than others, for what they do they do badly, so they are obliged to do it again. But these are things one must learn by experience. They can't be instilled into you.

The mind, if not controlled, is something wavering and imprecise. If one doesn't have the habit of concentrating it upon something, it goes on wandering all the time. It goes on without a stop anywhere and wanders into a *world* of vagueness. And then, when one wants to fix one's attention, it hurts! There is a

Questions and Answers

little effort there, like this: “Oh! how tiring it is, it hurts!” So one does not do it. And one lives in a kind of cloud. And your head is like a cloud; it’s like that, most brains are like clouds: there is no precision, no exactitude, no clarity, it is hazy — vague and hazy. You have impressions rather than a knowledge of things. You live in an approximation, and you can keep within you all sorts of contradictory ideas made up mostly of impressions, sensations, feelings, emotions — all sorts of things like that which have very little to do with thought and... which are just vague ramblings.

But if you want to succeed in having a precise, concrete, clear, definite thought on a certain subject, you must make an effort, gather yourself together, hold yourself firm, concentrate. And the first time you do it, it literally hurts, it is tiring! But if you don’t make a habit of it, all your life you will be living in a state of irresolution. And when it comes to practical things, when you are faced with — for, in spite of everything, one is always faced with — a number of problems to solve, of a very practical kind, well, instead of being able to take up the elements of the problem, to put them all face to face, look at the question from every side, and rising above and seeing the solution, instead of that you will be tossed about in the swirls of something grey and uncertain, and it will be like so many spiders running around in your head — but you won’t succeed in catching the thing.

I am speaking of the simplest of problems, you know; I am not speaking of deciding the fate of the world or humanity, or even of a country — nothing of the kind. I am speaking of the problems of your daily life, of every day. They become something quite woolly.

Well, it is to avoid this that you are told, when your brain is in course of being formed, “Instead of letting it be shaped by such habits and qualities, try to give it a little exactitude, precision, capacity of concentration, of choosing, deciding, putting things in order, try to use your reason.”

Of course, it is well understood that reason is not the

13 June 1956

supreme capacity of man and must be surpassed, but it is quite obvious that if you don't have it, you will live an altogether incoherent life, you won't even know how to behave rationally. The least thing will upset you completely and you won't even know why, and still less how to remedy it. While someone who has established within himself a state of active, clear reasoning, can face attacks of all kinds, emotional attacks or any trials whatever; for life is entirely made up of these things — unpleasantness, vexations — which are small but proportionate to the one who feels them, and so naturally felt by him as very big because they are proportionate to him. Well, reason can stand back a little, look at all that, smile and say, "Oh! no, one must not make a fuss over such a small thing."

If you do not have reason, you will be like a cork on a stormy sea. I don't know if the cork suffers from its condition, but it does not seem to me a very happy one.

There, then.

Now, after having said all this — and it's not just once I have told you this but several times I think, and I am ready to tell it to you again as many times as you like — after having said this, I believe in leaving you entirely free to choose whether you want to be the cork on the stormy sea or whether you want to have a clear, precise perception and a sufficient knowledge of things to be able to walk to — well, simply to where you want to go.

For there is a clarity that's indispensable in order to be able even to follow the path one has chosen.

I am not at all keen on your becoming scholars, far from it! For then one falls into the other extreme: one fills one's head with so many things that there is no longer any room for the higher light; but there is a minimum that is indispensable for not... well, for not being the cork.

Mother, some say that our general inadequacy in studies comes from the fact that too much stress is laid on games, physical education. Is this true?

Questions and Answers

Who said that? People who don't like physical education? Stiff old teachers who can't do exercises any longer? These? — I am not asking for names!

Well, I don't think so.

You remember the first article Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bulletin*? He answers these people quite categorically.

I don't think it is that. I am quite sure it is not that, I believe, rather — and I put all the blame on myself — that you have been given a fantastic freedom, my children; oh! I don't think there is any other place in the world where children are so free. And, indeed, it is very difficult to know how to make use of a freedom like that.

However, it was worthwhile trying the experiment. You don't appreciate it because you don't know how it is when it is not like that; it seems quite natural to you. But it is very difficult to know how to organise one's own freedom oneself. Still, if you were to succeed in doing that, in giving yourself your own discipline — and for higher reasons, not in order to pass exams, to make a career, please your teachers, win many prizes, or all the ordinary reasons children have: in order not to be scolded, not to be punished, for all that; we leave out all those reasons — if you manage to impose a discipline upon yourself — each one his own, there is no need to follow someone else's — a discipline simply because you want to progress and draw the best out of yourself, then... Oh! you will be far superior to those who follow the ordinary school disciplines. That is what I wanted to try. Mind you, I don't say I have failed; I still have great hope that you will know how to profit by this unique opportunity. But all the same, there is something you must find out; it is the *necessity* of an inner discipline. Without discipline you won't be able to get anywhere, without discipline you can't even live the normal life of a normal man. But instead of having the conventional discipline of ordinary societies or ordinary institutions, I would have liked and I still want you to have the discipline you set yourselves, for the

13 June 1956

love of perfection, your own perfection, the perfection of your being.

But without that... Note that if one didn't discipline the body, one would not even be able to stand on two legs, one would continue like a child on all fours. You could do nothing. You are obliged to discipline yourself; you could not live in society, you could not live at all, except all alone in the forest; and even then, I don't quite know. It is absolutely indispensable, I have told you this I don't know how often. And because I have a very marked aversion for conventional disciplines, social and others, it does not mean that you must abstain from all discipline. I would like everyone to find his own, in the sincerity of his inner aspiration and the will to realise himself.

And so, the aim of all those who know, whether they are teachers, instructors or any others, the very purpose of those who know, is to inform you, to help you. When you are in a situation which seems difficult to you, you put your problem and, from their personal experience, they can tell you, "No, it is like this or it is like that, and you must do this, you must try that." So, instead of forcing you to absorb theories, principles and so-called laws, and a more or less abstract knowledge, they would be there to give you information about things, from the most material to the most spiritual, each one within his own province and according to his capacity.

It is quite obvious that if you are thrown into the world without the least technical knowledge, you may do the most dangerous things. Take a child who knows nothing, the first thing he will do if he has any matches, for instance, is to burn himself. So, in that field, from the purely material point of view, it is good that there are people who know and who can inform you; for otherwise, if each one had to learn from his own experience, he would spend several lives learning the most indispensable things. That is the usefulness, the *true* usefulness of teachers and instructors. They have learnt more or less by practice or through a special study, and they can teach you those things it is

Questions and Answers

indispensable to know. That makes you save time, a lot of time. But that is their only usefulness: to be able to answer questions. And, in fact, you should have a brain which is lively enough to ask questions. I don't know, but you never have anything to ask me or it is so seldom. But that shows a terrible mental laziness!

At times I tell you, "Don't question, try to find out by yourselves certain inner things", that is understood; but when I am here and tell you, "Haven't you any questions to ask?" — Silence.... So, that proves that you have no mental curiosity. And I don't ask you necessarily to put questions on what I have just read; I am always ready to answer any question whatsoever, asked by anyone. Well, I must say we are not very rich in questions! It is not often that I have an opportunity of telling you something.

I hasten to tell you that if you ask me technical questions on the sciences, physics or whatever, I could very well answer, "I know nothing about it, study your books or ask your teacher"; but if you ask me questions in my field, I shall always answer you.

So, one last attempt: Has anyone here a question to ask me?

(Silence)

Wonderful! *(Mother laughs)* Well, that's all then.

20 June 1956

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: “And yet there is in the heart or behind it a profounder mystic light...”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 140

What is this mystic light?

It is love.

But after that, Sri Aurobindo continues: “which, if not what we call intuition — for that, though not of the mind, yet descends through the mind — has yet a direct touch upon Truth and is nearer to the Divine than the human intellect in its pride of knowledge.” Is there a relation between this mystic light and intuition?

It is not intuition. It is knowledge through love, light through love, understanding through love. Sri Aurobindo says that it is not intuition, for intuition belongs to the intellect — at least in its expression, the expression of intuition is intellectual. While this is a kind of direct knowledge almost by identity, which comes from love.

And “the inner oracle”?

The oracle? That is the power of divination, of foresight, of understanding symbols, and that is in the psychic being. Prophets, for example, do not prophesy with the mind, it is through a *direct* contact, beyond emotions and sentiments. Sri Aurobindo even says that the Vedas, particularly, were not written with the mind and through the head. The form of the hymn welled up spontaneously from the psychic being, along with the words.

Questions and Answers

Mother, if someone has the psychic contact, does that mean that he has this power?

More or less, yes. The more perfect the contact, the greater the power.

It also depends on the outer possibilities of the being. But I have already explained that to you several times, I have already told you that when one enters into contact with one's psychic, certain faculties develop spontaneously. For instance, there are people with no intellectual education who suddenly get quite a remarkable power of expression, which comes in this way, spontaneously, through the inner contact with the psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo speaks here of "secular refrigeration".

What!

He writes: "It is indeed by the religio-ethical sense that the law of universal goodwill or universal compassion or of love and service to the neighbour, the Vedantic, the Buddhistic, the Christian ideal, was created; only by a sort of secular refrigeration extinguishing the fervour of the religious element in it could the humanitarian ideal disengage itself and become the highest plane of a secular system of mental and moral ethics."

Ibid., p. 142

Yes, this is the materialistic and purely physical thought which freezes and congeals the emotions, takes away all the warmth of the soul, all the fervour, all the ardour of the feelings and the religious consciousness, and makes you coldly reasonable.

Mother, if the heart can be the means of a more direct knowledge, what is the role of the intellect as an intermediary of knowledge?

20 June 1956

As an intermediary, did you say?

For the true role of the mind is the formation and organisation of action. The mind has a formative and organising power, and it is that which puts the different elements of inspiration in order, for action, for organising action. And if it would only confine itself to that role, receiving inspirations — whether from above or from the mystic centre of the soul — and simply formulating the plan of action — in broad outline or in minute detail, for the smallest things of life or the great terrestrial organisations — it would amply fulfil its function.

It is not an instrument of knowledge.

But it can use knowledge for action, to organise action. It is an instrument of organisation and formation, very powerful and very capable when it is well developed.

One can feel this very clearly when one wants to organise one's life, for instance — to put the different elements in their place in one's existence. There is a certain intellectual faculty which immediately puts each thing in its place and makes a plan and organises. And it is not a knowledge that comes from the mind, it is a knowledge which comes, as I said, from the mystic depths of the soul or from a higher consciousness; and the mind concentrates it in the physical world and organises it to give a basis of action to the higher consciousness.

One has this experience very clearly when one wants to organise one's life.

Then, there is another use. When one is in contact with one's reason, with the rational centre of the intellect, the pure reason, it is a powerful control over all vital impulses. All that comes from the vital world can be very firmly controlled by it and used in a disciplined and organised action. But it must be at the service of something else — not work for its own satisfaction.

These are the two uses of the mind: it is a controlling force, an instrument of control, and it is a power of organisation. That is its true place.

Questions and Answers

Sweet Mother, can one realise the Divine through love alone?

Oh! yes, my child, certainly. It is even the most direct way.

One can realise the Divine, that is to say, identify oneself with the Divine, become fully conscious of the Divine and be an instrument of the Divine. But naturally, one does not realise the integral yoga, for it is only along one line. But from the point of view of identification with the Divine it is even the most direct path.

But without mental development one won't be able to express the Divine?

One cannot express Him intellectually, but one can express Him in action, one can express Him in feelings, one can express Him in life.

(Silence)

Sweet Mother, sometimes when one feels depressed it lasts quite a long time; but when one feels a special kind of joy, it does not last.

Yes, that is very true.

Then what should one do to make it last longer?

But it is not the same part of the being that has the depression and the joy.

If you are speaking of pleasure, the pleasure of the vital is something very fleeting, and I think that in life — in life as it is at present — there are more occasions for displeasure than for pleasure. Pleasure in itself is extremely fleeting, for if the same vibration of pleasure is prolonged a little, it becomes unpleasant or even repulsive — exactly the same vibration.

20 June 1956

Pleasure in itself is something very fugitive. But if you are speaking of joy, that is something altogether different, it is a kind of warmth and illumination in the heart, you see — one may feel joy in the mind also, but it is a kind of warmth and beatific illumination occurring somewhere. That is a quality which is not yet fully developed and one is rarely in the psychological state that's needed to have it. And that is why it is fugitive. Otherwise joy is constantly there in the truth of the being, in the reality of the being, in your true Self, in your soul, in your psychic being, joy is constantly there.

It has nothing to do with pleasure: it is a kind of inner delight.

But one is rarely in a state to feel it, unless one has become fully conscious of one's psychic being. That is why when it comes it is fugitive, for the psychological condition necessary to perceive it is not often there. On the other hand, one is almost constantly in an ordinary vital state where the least unpleasant thing very spontaneously and easily brings you depression — depression if you are a weak person, revolt if you are a strong one. Every desire which is not satisfied, every impulse which meets an obstacle, every unpleasant contact with outside things, very easily and very spontaneously creates depression or revolt, for that is the normal state of things — normal in life as it is today. While joy is an exceptional state.

And so, pleasure, pleasure which is simply a pleasing sensation — if it lasts, not only does it lose its edge, but it ends up by becoming unpleasant; one can't bear it long. So, quite naturally it comes and goes. That is to say, the very thing that gives you pleasure — exactly the same vibration — after a short while, doesn't give it to you any longer. And if it persists, it becomes unpleasant for you. That is why you can't have pleasure for a long time.

The only thing which can be lasting is joy, if one enters into contact with the truth of the being which holds this joy permanently.

Questions and Answers

Mother, in the heart there is a double action: the action of vital impulse and that of pure emotion. What makes this mixture possible?

How does this mixture come about?

For both have their seat in the heart, don't they?

Not in the same place.

It is not our physical heart, you understand. It is this centre here (*Mother points to the middle of the chest*). But there are various depths. The more you come to the surface, the more is it mixed, naturally, with vital impulses and even purely physical reactions, purely physical sensations. The deeper you go, the less the mixture. And if you go deep enough, you find the feeling absolutely pure, behind. It is a question of depth.

One throws oneself out all the time; all the time one lives, as it were, outside oneself, in such a superficial sensation that it is almost as though one were outside oneself. As soon as one wants even to observe oneself a little, control oneself a little, simply know what is happening, one is always obliged to draw back or pull towards oneself, to pull inwards something which is constantly like that, on the surface. And it is this surface thing which meets all external contacts, puts you in touch with similar vibrations coming from others. That happens almost outside you.

That is the constant dispersal of the ordinary consciousness.

For instance, take a movement, an inspiration coming from the psychic depths of the being—for it comes even to those who are not conscious of their psychic—a kind of inspiration coming from the depths; well, in order to make itself perceptible it has to come to the surface. And as it comes to the surface, it gets mixed with all sorts of things which have nothing to do with it but which want to make use of it. As, for instance, all the desires and passions of the vital which, as soon as a force from the depths rises to the surface, catch hold of it for their

20 June 1956

own satisfaction. Or else people who live in the mind and want to understand and evaluate their experience, to judge it: then it is the mind that seizes upon this inspiration or this force which rises to the surface, for its own benefit, for its own satisfaction — and it becomes mixed, and that spoils everything. And this happens constantly; constantly surface movements creep into the inspiration from the depths and deform it, veil it, defile it, ruin it completely, deforming it to such an extent that it is no longer recognisable.

Why do these external impulses, when they come in contact with the inspiration rising from within, spoil everything, instead of being transformed?

Ah! excuse me, it is a reciprocal movement. And it depends on the proportion. The inspiration from within acts, of course. It is not that it is completely absorbed and destroyed, it isn't that. Necessarily, it acts but it becomes mixed, it loses its purity and original power. But all the same something remains, and the result depends on the proportion of the forces, and this proportion is very different depending on the individual.

There comes a time when one deliberately calls the deep inner inspiration and surrenders to it, when it can enter almost completely pure and make you act in accordance with the Divine Will.

The mixture is not unavoidable; it is only what usually happens. And the proportion is very different according to the individual. With some, when the psychic within takes a decision and sends out a force, it is quite visible, it is visibly a psychic inspiration. One can at times see a sort of shadow pass which comes from the mind or the vital; but these are interventions of no importance which cannot at all change the nature of the psychic inspiration, if one does not let them have the upper hand.

None of these things is irremediable, for otherwise there would be no hope of progress.

Questions and Answers

At the end of the previous talk, Mother commented that the students and sadhaks were “not very rich in questions”. Thereafter, they began to send her written questions, which one of them read aloud:

It is said: “Follow your soul and not your mind which leaps at appearances.” How to practise this in everyday life?

Why, what is the problem? What is the difficulty?

How to put this advice into practice, this recommendation to follow one’s soul and not one’s mind?

This is a purely individual matter.

The first condition is to receive inspirations from the soul — exactly what we were just speaking about — for if one does not receive them, how can one follow one’s soul? The first condition is to be a little conscious of one’s soul and receive its inspirations. Then, naturally, it goes without saying that one must obey them instead of obeying the reasoning intellect.

But how to do it? By what method?... This is something purely personal. Each one must find his own method. The principle is there; if one wants to apply it, for each one the method is different. It all depends on the extent to which one is conscious of the inspirations from the soul, on the degree of identity one has with it.

So one can’t give the same remedy for everybody.

Is that all?

“The more you give, the more you receive,” it is said. Does this apply to physical energy? Should one undertake physical work which seems beyond one’s capacity? And what should be one’s attitude while doing this kind of work?

20 June 1956

If one did not spend, one would never receive. The great force a child has for growth, for development is that he spends without stint.

Naturally, when one spends, one must recuperate and must have the time that is needed to recuperate; but what a child cannot do one day, he can do the next. So if you never go beyond the limit you have reached, you will never progress. It is quite obvious that people who practise physical culture, for example, if they make progress, it is just because they gradually exceed, go beyond what they could do.

It is all a matter of balance. And the period of receptivity should be in proportion to the period of expenditure.

But if one confines oneself to what one can do at a given moment... First of all it is impossible, for if one doesn't progress, one falls back. Therefore, one must *always* make a little effort to do a little more than before. Then one is on the upward path. If one is afraid of doing too much, one is sure to go down again and lose one's capacities.

One must always try a little more, a little better than one did the day before or the previous moment. Only, the more one increases one's effort, the more should one increase one's capacity of receptivity and the opportunities to receive. For instance, from the purely physical point of view, if one wants to develop one's muscles, a progressive effort must be made by them, that is to say, a greater and greater effort, but at the same time one must do what is needed: massage, hydrotherapy, etc. to increase at the same time their capacity to receive.

And rest. A rest which is not a falling into the unconscious — which generally tires you more than it refreshes — but a conscious rest, a concentration in which one opens oneself and absorbs the forces which come, the universal forces.

The limits of the body's possibilities are so elastic! People who undergo a methodical and scientific training, rational, systematic, arrive at absolutely startling results. They demand things from their bodies which, naturally, without training it

Questions and Answers

would be quite impossible to do. And certainly, they must gradually go beyond what they could do, not only from the point of view of perfection, but also from the point of view of strength. If they have that fear of doing more than they are able, of overdoing things, they will never progress. Only, at the same time one must do what is necessary for recuperating. That is the whole principle of physical culture. And one sees things which for an ignorant and untrained man are absolutely miraculous, performed by bodies which have been methodically trained.

What should be done to remember the Mother constantly? Should one repeat Her name, remember Her physical form or think or feel that She is the Divine? Is gratitude for the Divine a form of remembrance?

All this is good. And many other things are good. And it depends on what each one can do.

It is a little too personal a question, isn't it?

It depends on each one, it is the same thing. If one generalises, it makes no sense any longer. To remember, you must not forget, that's all!

Can there be a collective form of discipline which is self-imposed?

But very often it happens that people form groups and make rules for themselves. That is a discipline which is self-imposed. It constantly happens. All societies, secret or other, and all initiation groups have always done things like that: they make rules which they impose upon themselves and usually follow very strictly. And there are even terrible penalties and quite disastrous consequences when, after having taken the oath, one wants to leave the discipline. This happens constantly in the world.

One could discuss the effectiveness, that would be another thing. But in any case, the question is not "whether one can do

20 June 1956

it” — it does happen, it is something which has been happening since the most ancient times. Always man has tried to form groups in one way or another and impose laws on these groups.

And if it is a mystic group, they are mystic laws.

Perhaps they are imposed on those who want to enter the group; then they are not self-imposed, are they?

But one enters the group freely, and therefore one accepts them. Usually, in those groups the first thing they do is to tell you, “These are the laws, the rules of the group, do you accept them or not?” If you don’t accept them, you don’t enter; if you accept them, it is you who impose them on yourself. You are not forced into a group like that! It is not like being subject, for example, to the atavism of the family in which you are born. That is imposed from outside. You are born in a family and are subject to the atavism, the laws of a rigid family atavism, which is imposed from outside. For, almost universally, the permission of the one who is brought into the world or his acceptance is never asked: you are brought here by force, the environment is imposed on you by force, the laws of the atavism of the milieu by force, and indeed you do what you can with them — the best you can, let us hope! But when it is a group of friends or a society, unless you have no personal will and are carried away by someone else whom you obey, it is you yourself who decide whether you accept these laws or not.

It is obvious that the question becomes a little more subtle when it is a matter of religion, for that is a part of the imposition on the child before he is born. If he is born in a religion, that religion is imposed upon him. Obviously, according to the true rules, there is an age when, supposedly, after having been instructed in the religion in which you are born, you choose to be in it or not. But very few people have the capacity for individual choice. It is the custom of the family or the environment in which they live, and they follow it blindly, for it is more comfortable

Questions and Answers

than reacting; one is born into it and one is almost forced to follow that religion. One must have a very considerable strength and independence of character to come out of it, for usually you have to break through with much commotion and that has serious repercussions on your life.

27 June 1956

Last week I spoke to you about birth: how souls enter a body; and I told you that the body is formed in a very unsatisfactory way for almost everyone — exceptions are so rare that one can hardly speak of them.

I told you that due to this obscure birth one arrives with a whole physical baggage of things which generally have to be got rid of, if one truly wants to progress, and someone has quoted my own sentence which runs like this:

“You are brought here by force, the environment is imposed on you by force, the laws of atavism of the milieu by force...”

And now the person who wrote to me has asked me who does all that.

Of course I could have been more explicit, but I thought I had been clear enough.

The body is formed by a man and a woman who become the father and mother, and it is they who don't even have the *means* of asking the being they are going to bring into the world whether it would like to come or whether this is in accordance with its destiny. And it is on this body they have formed that they impose by force, by force of necessity, an atavism, an environment, later an education, which will almost always be obstacles to its future growth.

Therefore, I said here and I am repeating it — I thought I had been clear enough — that it was about the physical parents and the physical body I was speaking, nothing else. And that the soul which incarnates, whether it be in course of development or fully developed, has to struggle against the circumstances imposed on it by this animal birth, struggle in order to

Questions and Answers

find its true path and again discover its own self fully. That's all.

Now, if you have something else to ask.... Nobody has anything to say?

Sweet Mother, is it possible for the mother and father to give birth to... to ask for the soul they want?

To ask? For that they must have an occult knowledge which they don't usually have. But anyway, what is possible is that instead of doing the thing like an animal driven by instinct or desire and most of the time, without even wanting it, they do it at will, with an aspiration, putting themselves in a state of aspiration and almost of prayer, so that the being they are going to form may be one fit to embody a soul which they *can* call down to incarnate in that form. I knew people — not many, this does not often happen, but still I knew some who chose special circumstances, prepared themselves through special concentration and meditation and aspiration and sought to bring down, into the body they were going to form, an exceptional being.

In many countries of old — and even now in certain countries — the woman who was going to have a child was placed in special conditions of beauty, harmony, peace and well-being, in very harmonious physical conditions, so that the child could be formed in the best possible conditions. This is obviously what ought to be done, for it is within the reach of human possibilities. Human beings are developed enough for this not to be something quite exceptional. And yet it is quite exceptional, for very few people think of it, while there are *innumerable* people who have children without even wanting to.

That was what I wanted to say.

It is possible to call a soul, but one must be at least a little conscious oneself, and must want to do what one does in the best conditions. This is very rare, but it is possible.

27 June 1956

Mother, when a body is formed, is the soul which incarnates in it compelled to incarnate in that body?

I don't understand your question very well.

The formation of the body depends entirely on a man and a woman, but is the soul which manifests in the child, in the body which is being formed, compelled to manifest in this body?

You mean whether it can choose between different bodies?

Yes.

Well, it is very exceptional, after all, in the great mass of humanity, that a conscious soul incarnates voluntarily. It is something very unusual. I have already told you that when a soul is conscious, fully formed, and wants to incarnate, usually from its psychic plane it looks for a corresponding psychic light at a certain place upon earth. Besides, during its previous incarnation, before going away, before leaving the earth-atmosphere, usually as a result of the experience it had in the life that is coming to an end, the soul chooses more or less — not in all details but broadly — the conditions of its future life. But these are exceptional cases. Possibly we could speak of it for ourselves here, but for the majority, the vast majority of men, even those who are educated, it is out of the question. And what comes then is a psychic being in formation, more or less formed, and there are all the stages of formation from the spark which becomes a little light to the fully formed being, and this extends over thousands of years. This ascent of the soul to become a conscious being having its own will, capable of determining the choice of its own life, takes thousands of years.

So, you are thinking of a soul which would say, "No, I refuse this body, I am going to look for another"?... I don't

Questions and Answers

say it is impossible — everything is possible. It does happen, in fact, that children are still-born, which means that there was no soul to incarnate in them. But it may be for other reasons also; it may be for reasons of malformation only; one can't say. I don't say it is impossible, but generally, when a conscious and free soul chooses to take a body on earth again, even before its birth it works on this body. So it has no reason not to accept even the inconveniences which may result from the ignorance of the parents; for it has chosen the place for a reason which was not one of ignorance: it saw a light there — it might have been simply the light of a possibility, but there was a light and *that is why* it has come there. So, it is all very well to say, "Ah! no, I don't like it", but where would it go to choose another it likes?... That may happen, I don't say it is impossible, but it cannot happen very often. For, when from the psychic plane the soul looks at the earth and chooses the place for its next birth, it chooses it with sufficient discernment not to be altogether grossly mistaken.

It has also happened that souls have incarnated and then left. There are many reasons why they go away. Children who die very young, after a few days or a few weeks — this may be for a similar reason. Most often it is said that the soul needed just a little experience to complete its formation, that it had it during these few weeks and then left. Everything is possible. And as many stories would be needed to tell the story of souls as are needed to tell the story of men. That is to say, they are innumerable and the instances are as different as possible from one another.

So, to decide arbitrarily: "It is like that, not like this; this is what happens and not that", this is childishness. *Everything* can happen. There are instances which occur more frequently than others, one can generalise, but one can never say, "This is not possible and it is always like this or always like that." That is not how things happen.

But anyway — anyway — even in the best cases, even when

27 June 1956

the soul has come consciously, even when it has consciously participated in the formation of the physical body, still so long as the body is formed in the usual animal way, it will have to struggle and correct all those things which come from this human animality.

Inevitably, parents have a particular formation, they are particularly healthy or unhealthy; even taking things at their best, they have a heap of atavisms, habits, formations in the subconscious and even in the unconscious, which come from their own birth, the environment they have lived in, their own life; and even if they are remarkable people, they have a large number of things which are quite opposed to the true psychic life — even the best of them, even the most conscious. And besides, there is all that is going to happen. Even if one takes a great deal of trouble over the education of one's children, they will come in contact with all sorts of people who will have an influence over them, especially when they are very young, and these influences enter the subconscious, one has to struggle against them later on. I say: even in the best cases, because of the way in which the body is formed at present, you have to face innumerable difficulties which come more or less from the subconscious, but rise to the surface and against which you have to struggle before you can become completely free and develop normally.

Is that all?

(Silence)

Now, since the end of February, I have received a considerable number of questions on:

How is the Supermind going to act? What should be done to receive it? In what form will it manifest?...

I have answered as best I could. But it so happens that in Sri Aurobindo's book *On the Veda* there is a note on a certain

Questions and Answers

page, and in this note he answers these questions. I always tell people: if you were to take a little trouble to read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions would become useless, for Sri Aurobindo has already answered them. However, people probably have neither the time nor the patience nor the will, nor all that is needed, and they don't read. The books are published, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but few read them. Anyway, here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Try to think, and if you have a special question to ask I shall answer it.

Listen:

“The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting.”¹

That is to say, to hope to receive, use and form in oneself a supramental being, and consequently a supramental world, there must first of all be an expansion of consciousness and a *constant* personal progress: not to have sudden flights, a little aspiration, a little effort, and then fall back into somnolence. This must be the *constant* idea of the being, the *constant* will of the being, the *constant* effort of the being, the *constant* preoccupation of the being.

If for five minutes in the day you happen to remember that there is something in the universe like the supramental Force, and that, after all, “it would be nice if it manifested in me”, and

¹ This note occurs in Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the fourth hymn to Agni in the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda, “The Divine Will, Priest, Warrior and Leader of Our Journey”:

“O Knower of the Births, the man perfect in his works
for whom thou createst that other blissful world,*
reaches a felicity that is peopled happily with his
life's swiftnesses, his herds of Light, the children
of his soul, the armies of his energy.”

The Secret of the Veda, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 375

* The footnote occurs here.

27 June 1956

then all the rest of the time you are thinking of something else and are busy with other things, there is not much chance that it would come and do any serious work in you. Sri Aurobindo says this quite clearly and precisely. He does not tell you that *you* will do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don't come and say, "Ah! I can't." No one is asking you to do it. But there *must be* enough aspiration and adhesion in the being to make the expansion of the being, the expansion of consciousness possible. For, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is not enough room to put any supramental in! It is so small that it is already quite filled up with all the ordinary little human movements. There must be a great widening to make room for the movements of the Supermind.

And then there must also be an aspiration for progress: not to be satisfied with what one is, how one is, what one does, what one knows or thinks one knows; but to have a constant aspiration for something more, something better, for a greater light, a vaster consciousness, a truer truth and a more universal goodness. And over and above all this, a goodwill which never fails.

That can't be done in a few days.

Moreover, I believe that I had taken my precautions in this matter and that, when I announced that it had been granted to the earth to receive the supramental Force in order to manifest it, this did not mean that the manifestation would be instantaneously apparent, and that everybody would suddenly find himself transported to a peak of light and of possibilities and realisation, without any effort. I said immediately that it would not be like that. I even said that it would take quite a long time. But still, people have complained that its advent has not made things easier, and that even, in some cases, they have become more difficult. I am very sorry, but I can do nothing about it. For it is not the fault of the supramental Force, the fault lies in the way in which it was received. I know instances in which truly the aspiration was sincere and the collaboration complete,

Questions and Answers

and in which many things that had seemed very difficult in the past at once became infinitely easier.

However, there is a very great difference, always, between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with words and ideas, and a true aspiration of the being which means that truly, really, it is *that* which counts, essentially, and nothing else — that aspiration, that inner will because of which nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation; nothing counts except *that*; there is no other reason for existence, for living, than *that*.

And yet it is this that's needed if one wants the Supramental to become visible to the naked eye.

And mark that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for this everyone knows: you don't expect to become luminous and plastic overnight, to lose your weight, be able to displace yourself freely, appear in a dozen places at the same time and what not.... No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect this to happen right away. It will take some time.

But still, simply, the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over one's body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity of identification and a clear vision — instead of that hazy and vague sight which sees only the mere appearances that are so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised — a more direct perception, an inner perception, this ought to be able to come and come quickly if one has prepared oneself.

Simply to have that feeling that the air one breathes is more living, the strength one has more lasting. And instead of always groping like a blind man to know what should be done, to have a clear, precise, inner intimation: it is this — not that: *this*.

These are things one can acquire immediately if one is ready.

(*Silence*)

Today I received some other questions which have nothing to do with the subject before us at present, questions as old as the earth, which I have already answered hundreds of times; but

still, it seems that it couldn't have gone in, for again I am asked:

Why do bad thoughts come?

Haven't I told you why bad thoughts come?... For as many reasons as there are bad thoughts! Each one comes for its own special reason: it may be through affinity, it may be just to tease you, it may be because you call them, it may be because you expose yourself to attacks, it may be all this at once and many more things besides.

Bad thoughts come because there is something corresponding somewhere within you; otherwise you might see something *passing* like that, but they would not come inside you. I suppose the question means: why do you suddenly think something bad?

Because the stages are very different. I have already explained to you that the mental atmosphere is worse than any public place when a crowd is there: innumerable ideas, thoughts of all kinds and all forms criss-cross in such a complicated tangle that it is impossible to make out anything precise. Your head is in the midst of it, and your mind even more so: it bathes in it as one bathes in the sea. And all this comes and goes, passes, turns, collides, enters, goes out.... If you were conscious of the mental atmosphere in which you live, obviously it would be a little maddening! I think personal cerebral limits are quite necessary as a filter, for a very long time in life.

To be able to get out of all that and live fully in the mental atmosphere as it is, seeing it as it is — it is the same for the vital atmosphere, by the way; that is perhaps yet uglier! — to live in it and see it as it is, one must be strong, one must have a very steady sense of inner direction. But in any case, whether you see it or not, whether you feel it or not, it is a fact, it is like that. So one cannot ask where bad thoughts come from — they are everywhere. Why do they come? — where would they go? You are right in the midst of them!

What governs this filter of consciousness which makes you

Questions and Answers

conscious of certain thoughts and not conscious of others, is your inner attitude, your inner affinities, your inner habits — I am speaking of the mind, not of the psychic — it is your education, your cerebral development, etc. That is a kind of filter formed by your ego, and certain thoughts pass through it and others don't — automatically. That is why the nature of the thoughts you receive may be quite an important indication for you of the kind of character you have — it may be quite subconscious for you, for a man is not in the habit of really knowing himself, but it is an indication of the general tendency of your character. To put things in a very simplified way, if you take an optimist, for instance, well, in general, optimistic ideas will come to him; for a pessimist they will generally be pessimistic ideas — I am speaking very broadly — for a person with a rebellious nature, they will be rebellious ideas; and for a very sheepish person, they will be sheepish ideas! Granting that sheep have ideas! That is the usual normal condition.

Now, if it so happens that you have decided to progress and if you enter the path of yoga, then a new factor intervenes. As soon as you want to progress, you immediately meet the resistance of everything that does not want to progress both in you and around you. And this resistance naturally expresses itself in all the thoughts that correspond to it.

Suppose that you want to make a progress regarding attachment to food, for example; well, almost constantly there will come to you thoughts particularly interested in food, about what should be taken, what should not be taken, how it should be taken, how it should not be taken; and these ideas will come to you, they will seem quite natural to you. And the more you say within yourself, "Oh! how I would like to be free from all that, what a hindrance to my progress are all these preoccupations", the more will they come, quietly, until the progress is truly made within and you have risen to a level of consciousness where you can see all these things from above and put them *in their place* — which is not a very big place in the universe! And so on, for all

27 June 1956

things. Therefore, your occupations and affinities are going to put you almost contradictorily into contact not only with ideas having an affinity and relation with your way of being, but with the opposite. And if you don't take care from the beginning to keep an attitude of discernment, you will be turned into a mental battlefield.

If you know how to rise to a higher level, simply into a region of the speculative mind which is not quite the ordinary physical mind, you can see all this play and all this struggle, all this conflict, all these contradictions as a curiosity which does not touch or affect you. If you rise a step higher still and see the goal towards which you want to go, you will gradually come to discern between ideas favourable to your progress which you will keep, and ideas opposed to this progress which harm and impair it; and from above you will have the power to set them aside, calmly, without being otherwise affected by them. But if you remain there, at that level in the midst of that confusion and conflict, well, you risk getting a headache!

The best thing to do is to occupy yourself with something practical which will compel you to concentrate specially: studies, work or some physical occupation for the body which demands attention — anything at all that forces you to concentrate on what you are doing and no longer be a prey to these ramblings. But if you have the misfortune to remain there and look at them, then surely, as I said, you will get a headache. For it is a problem which must be resolved either by a descent into practical life and a concentration on some practical effort or else by rising above and looking from above at all this chaos so as to be able to bring some order into it and set it right.

But one must never remain on the same plane, it is a plane which is no good either for physical or moral health.

4 July 1956

Sweet Mother, it is said that if one sees a shooting star and at that moment one aspires for something, that aspiration is fulfilled within the year. Is this true?

Do you know what that means? — The aspiration must be formulated *during the time* the star is visible; and that doesn't last long, does it? Well, if an aspiration can be formulated while the star is visible, this means that it is all the time *there*, present, in the forefront of the consciousness — this does not apply to ordinary things, it has nothing to do with that, it concerns a spiritual aspiration. But the point is that if you are able to articulate your spiritual aspiration just at that moment, it means that it is right in front of your consciousness, that it dominates your consciousness. And, necessarily, what dominates your consciousness can be realised very swiftly.

I had the opportunity to make this experiment. Exactly this. The moment the star was passing, at that very moment there sprang up from the consciousness: "To realise the divine union, for my body." That very moment.

And before the end of the year, it was done.

But it was not because of the star! It was because that dominated my whole consciousness and I was thinking of nothing but that, I wanted only that, thought only of that, acted only for that. So, this thing which generally takes a whole lifetime — it is said the minimum time is thirty-five years! — before twelve months had passed, it was done.

But that was because I thought only of that.

And it was because I was thinking only of that, that just when the star flashed by I could formulate it — not merely a vague impression — formulate it in precise words like this: "To

4 July 1956

realise union with the Divine”, the inner Divine, the thing we speak of, the very thing we speak of.

Therefore, what is important is not the star but the aspiration. The star is only like an outer demonstration, nothing else. But it is not necessary to have a shooting star in order to realise swiftly! What is necessary is that the whole will of the being should be concentrated on one point.

(*Silence*)

(*Mother shows a series of written questions.*) What I have here isn't very interesting. There is one very practical question which I have already explained to you several times, but perhaps it will be good to explain it yet once again. It is this:

“When there is a clearly localised illness in the body, what is the best way of opening the physical consciousness to receive the healing Force?”

For this — as for everything else in this domain which may be called the “outposts” of occultism or the threshold of occultism — each one must find his own movement; for what is most effective for each one is the method for which he has been more or less prepared and which is most familiar to him. So it is very difficult to make a general rule.

But there is a preparation which may be of a general kind. That is, to accustom the body methodically to understand that it is only the outer expression of a truer and deeper reality and that it is this truer and deeper reality which governs its destiny — though it is not usually aware of it.

One can prepare the body through a series of observations, studies, understandings,¹ by showing it examples, making it

¹ For the body, to understand is to have the capacity of execution, obtained through the contagion of example. For, “to understand” for the body means to be able to do. (Mother's note).

Questions and Answers

understand things as one makes a child understand them, either by observing its own movements — but generally, in this, one is comparatively blind! — or by observing those of others. And in a more general way, this preparation will be based on recognised studies, on clear facts. Like this, for instance: that a certain number of persons, placed in exactly similar circumstances, experience, each one of them, very different effects. One may go even further: in a given set of definite circumstances, there is a certain number of particular, definite individuals, in apparently quite identical conditions, and for some the effects are catastrophic, while others escape without any harm.

During the war there was a very large number of such examples for study. In epidemics it is the same thing; in cataclysms of Nature, like tidal waves or earthquakes or cyclones, it is the same thing.

The body understands these things if they are shown and explained to it as one explains things to a child: “You see, there was something *else* that acted there, not only the plain material fact by itself.” And, unless some bad will is there, it understands.

This is a preparation.

Gradually, if you make use of this understanding, you must, with a methodical work of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body, infuse at the same time the truth of the divine Presence. This work takes time, but, if done methodically and constantly, it produces an effect.

So you have prepared the ground.

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

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

4 July 1956

like this and the more your attention is concentrated on it, the pain increases amazingly.

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

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

This is not always enough.

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

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

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

That's all, then.

Questions and Answers

(Silence)

Now, another question. It is about what I said last week in connection with the psychic, which sees from its psychic domain, which looks at the earth, seeking a place where it can reincarnate in favourable conditions. Then I said that from the psychic domain it looks at the earth to see a “corresponding light” there.

Someone asks me what I mean by a “corresponding light”.

I simply mean a psychic light. For there are people who have a more or less awakened psychic, and this psychic, more or less awakened, is visible from the psychic domain to psychic beings. So, when they see a light somewhere, they find it a favourable place to manifest....

(It begins to rain.) Now, I think we are going to have a wet meditation, my children!

(To a disciple) Take away this mike, these poor things don't like the rain.

(Meditation)

11 July 1956

I have received three questions, one of which would require some fairly unpleasant remarks which I don't want to make to you.... There are two others here which I could perhaps answer: One is about a sentence in *The Synthesis of Yoga* where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the psychic being as “insisting” on “beauty restored to its priesthood of interpretation of the Eternal.”¹ I have been asked what this means.

To tell the truth, I don't know why; I don't know if it is the old ascetic idea that beauty has no place in yoga, or if it is the word “priesthood” of interpretation of the Eternal, for which an explanation is being asked.

In the first case, I believe I have already said often enough and repeated that in the physical world, of all things it is beauty which best expresses the Divine. The physical world is the world of form, and the perfection of form is beauty. So I think it is not necessary to go over all that again. And once we admit this, that in the physical world beauty is the best and closest expression of the Divine, it is natural to speak of it as a “priestess”, who interprets, expresses, manifests the Eternal. Its true role is to put the whole of manifested nature into contact with the Eternal through the perfection of form, harmony, and through a sense of the ideal which raises you towards something higher. So I think this justifies the word “priesthood” and explains and answers the question.

(*Silence*)

The other question is about a phrase I used — I believe it was last week — when I spoke of the “threshold of occultism”. So a question is put to me about this occult world, that is to say,

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 146.

Questions and Answers

the world invisible to ordinary physical eyes, and I am asked for explanations or comments on the beings who live in these worlds which are invisible to ordinary eyes.

I am even told that I speak very often of negative entities, that is to say, of hostile formations, of small beings formed from the disintegration of human beings after their death — the disintegration of the vital or mental being at death — but that I have never spoken of the great beings, the magnificent beings or positive entities which help the evolution. I believe I have spoken to you about these quite often, but still I have been asked once again for explanations.

Well, the occult world is not one single region where everything is mixed, which only becomes occult because we can't see it. The occult world is a gradation of regions, one could perhaps say, of more and more etherial or subtle regions, anyway, those farther and farther removed in their nature from the physical materiality we ordinarily see. And each one of these domains is a world in itself, having its forms and inhabited by beings with a density, one might say, analogous to that of the domain in which they live. Just as in the physical world we are of the same materiality as the physical world, so in the vital world, in the mental world, in the overmind world and in the supramental world — and in many others, infinite others — there are beings which have a form whose substance is similar to the one of that world. This means that if you are able to enter consciously into that world with the part of your being which corresponds to that domain, you can move there quite objectively, as in the material world.

And there, there are as many, and even many more things to see and observe than in our poor little material world, which belongs to only *one* zone of this infinite gradation. You meet all sorts of things in these domains, and you need to make a study as profound, perhaps still more profound than in the physical world, to be able to know what is happening there, to have relations with the beings who live there.

11 July 1956

It is obvious that as one goes farther, as it were, from the material world, the forms and consciousness of those beings are of a purity, beauty and perfection much higher than our ordinary physical forms. It is only in the nearest vital world, the one which is, so to say, mixed with our material life — though it lies beyond it and there is a zone where the vital is no longer mixed with the material world — of that material vital one can say that in some of its aspects it is even uglier than things here, for it is filled with a bad will which is not counterbalanced by the presence of the psychic being which, in the physical world, amends, corrects, puts right, directs this bad will. But it is rather a limited zone and, as soon as one goes beyond it, one can find and meet things that are not favourable to human life, beings not on the same scale as human existence, but having their own beauty and grandeur, with whom one may establish relations which may become quite pleasant and even useful.

Only, as I have already told you, it is not very prudent to venture into these domains without a previous initiation and, above all, a purification of nature which prevents you from entering there all weighed down and deformed by your desires, your passions, egoisms, fears and weaknesses. Before undertaking these activities one needs a complete preparation of self-purification and widening of the consciousness which is absolutely indispensable.

In these invisible worlds there are also regions which are the result of human mental formations. One can find there all one wants. In fact, one very often finds there exactly what one expects to find. There are hells, there are paradises, there are purgatories. There are all sorts of things in accordance with the different religions and their conceptions. These things have only a very relative existence, but with a relativity similar to that of material things here; that is to say, for someone who finds himself there, they are entirely real and their effects quite tangible. One needs an inner liberation, a wideness of the consciousness and a contact with a deeper and higher truth to be able to escape from

Questions and Answers

the illusion of their reality. But this is something almost similar to what happens here: human beings here are mostly convinced that the only reality is the physical reality — the reality of what one can touch, can see — and for them, all that cannot be seen, cannot be touched, cannot be felt, is after all, problematical; well, what happens there is an identical phenomenon. People who at the moment of death are convinced, for one reason or another, that they are going to paradise or maybe to hell, *do find* themselves there after their death; and for them it is truly a paradise or a hell. And it is extremely difficult to make them come out of it and go to a place which is more true, more real.

So it is difficult to speak of all these worlds, these innumerable worlds, in a few minutes. It is a knowledge which needs a lived experience of many years, thoroughly systematic, and which requires, as I said, an inner preparation absolutely indispensable, to make it harmless.

We all get the chance to have a little contact — very partial, very superficial — with these worlds in our dreams. And the study of dreams itself already demands much time and care, and in itself may constitute a preparation for a deeper study of the invisible worlds.

I think that is all we can profitably say about it this evening.

(*Silence*)

The last question is from somebody who finds that I have made promises a little lightly and that, after all, I haven't kept my word!... Perhaps I expected more from humanity than it was capable of giving me — about that I don't know. Perhaps it is a purely superficial impression.

I said more or less this, that those who are here in the Ashram will know the descent of the Supermind — they can't blame me for not having informed them when it came, I made no mystery of it! — and that they will participate in it — indeed, I did not forbid anyone to participate in it! On the contrary, I

11 July 1956

believe I encouraged everybody to be open and to receive it, and try to profit by it.

And so I said: From that moment the transforming Grace will radiate in the most effective way. Well, I challenge anyone to tell me the opposite!

But here indeed it begins to be a little more... I added: And fortunately for the aspirants this happy future — I don't think I wrote it in this way, but that doesn't matter — this happy future will materialise for them in spite of *all* the obstacles that the unregenerate human nature may put up against it. I continue to hope that it will be like this!

But now that person, who is perhaps a bit impatient, tells me this: “Why have the difficulties increased for quite a large number of sadhaks?” (*Mother puts the paper down forcefully on the table.*) Who told you that it is not because you have become more conscious! that all your difficulties were there before, only you did not know it?... If you see more clearly and see things which are not very pretty, it is not the fault of the Supermind, it is your fault! It gives you a light, a mirror in which you can see yourself better than you did before, and you are a little troubled because it is not always very pretty? But what can I do?

And this person concludes: “Doesn't the supramental Force work here in spite of all the obstacles the unregenerate human nature puts up against it?” Truly, I hope it does! for otherwise, nothing could be done, the world would never be regenerated. But I have explained to you why it seems more difficult to you. It is because you are a little more conscious now and see things you did not see before.

There is yet another reason. When the Force which is at work is stronger, more insistent, naturally what resists, resists as strongly. And if instead — it is here I have to say something that's not very pleasant — if instead of being hypnotised by your little difficulties, your little inconveniences, your small discomforts, your “big” defects, if instead of being hypnotised by all that, you tried to see the other side, how much more powerful the

Questions and Answers

Force is, the Grace more active, the Help more tangible; in a word, if you were a little less egoistic and less concentrated on yourselves and had a little wider vision in which you could include things that don't concern you personally, perhaps your view of the problem would change.

Well, this is what I advise you to do, and then we shall speak about it later when you have tried my remedy: don't think so much about yourself.

After all, this perhaps is the problem which interests you most, but it is certainly not the most interesting!

18 July 1956

I would like an explanation, Sweet Mother. In Prayers and Meditations there is a sentence: “And the hours pass, fading away like unlived dreams.”

19 January 1917

This is an experience. Do you know what an unlived dream is?... I did not take the word “dream” in the sense of dreams at night; I took the word dream to mean something one has built up in the best and most clear-sighted part of one’s being, something which is an ideal one would like to see realised, something higher, more beautiful, more noble, more wonderful than all that has been created, and one has a power of imagination or creation somewhere in one’s consciousness and one builds something so that it may be realised.

And then, for some reason or other, it is not realised. Either the world was not ready or perhaps the formation was not sufficient, but it is not realised. And so the hours pass, sterile, unproductive — useless, vain, empty — they seem to fade away because they have no result and no usefulness.

And so I said: “And the hours pass, fading away like unlived dreams.”

(Silence)

I have received two questions. One is about a passage from *The Synthesis of Yoga* where it is said:

“For there is concealed behind individual love, obscured by its ignorant human figure, a mystery which the mind cannot seize, the mystery of the body of the Divine, the secret of a mystic form of the Infinite which we

Questions and Answers

can approach only through the ecstasy of the heart and the passion of the pure and sublimated sense, and its attraction which is the call of the divine Flute-player, the mastering compulsion of the All-Beautiful, can only be seized and seize us through an occult love and yearning which in the end makes one the Form and the Formless, and identifies Spirit and Matter. It is that which the spirit in Love is seeking here in the darkness of the Ignorance and it is that which it finds when individual human love is changed into the love of the Immanent Divine incarnate in the material universe.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 150

This brings us back to the symbol of Krishna and Radha.

Krishna is the One of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks here, the divine Flute-player, that is to say, the immanent and universal Divine who is the supreme power of attraction; and the soul, the psychic personality, called here Radha, who responds to the call of the Flute-player. So I have been asked to say something this evening on the Radha-consciousness, that is, in fact, on the way in which the individual soul answers the call of the Divine.

It so happens that this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has described in the chapter we have just read: it is that capacity of finding Ananda in all things through identification with the one divine Presence and a complete self-giving to that Presence. So I don't think I have much to add; what I could say would be a limitation or a diminution of the totality of this experience.

(After a silence) This consciousness has the capacity of changing everything into a perpetual ecstasy, for instead of seeing things in their discordant appearance, one now sees only the divine Presence, the divine Will and the Grace everywhere; and every event, every element, every circumstance, every form changes into a way, a detail through which one can draw more intimately and profoundly closer to the Divine. Discordances disappear, ugliness vanishes; there is now only the splendour of

the divine Presence in a Love shining in all things.

It is obvious that from a practical point of view one must be able to remain at a constant and unshakable height in order to be in that state without exposing oneself to fairly troublesome consequences. That is probably why those who wished to live in this state used to withdraw from the world and find the universal contact through Nature.... I must say, without meaning to be unpleasant to men, that it is infinitely easier to realise this state of consciousness when one is surrounded by trees, flowers, plants and even animals than by human beings. It is easier but not indispensable. And if one wants the state to be truly integral, one must be able to keep it at every moment, in the presence of anyone and anything.

There are countless legends or stories of this kind, like that of Prahlad,¹ for instance, which we saw recently in a film, stories which illustrate that state of consciousness. And I am not only convinced, but I myself have the quite tangible experience that if in the presence of some danger or an enemy or some ill-will, you are able to remain in this condition and see the Divine in all things, well, the danger will have no effect, the ill-will can do nothing to you, and the enemy will either be transformed or run away. That is quite certain.

But I must add a word which is quite important. You must not seek this state of consciousness with any motive or seek it because it is a protection or a help. You must have it sincerely, spontaneously, constantly; it must be a normal, natural,

¹ In Indian mythology Prahlad is the son of King Hiranyakashipu, an ardent enemy of the god Vishnu. The king had banned the worship of Vishnu in his kingdom, and when he learnt that his son Prahlad was worshipping this god in his own palace, he delivered him to serpents, but they did not bite him. Then he had him thrown down from the top of a hill into the sea, but the child was miraculously carried by the waters. When the enraged king asked his son, "Who has saved you?", the child replied, "Vishnu is everywhere, in the serpents and in the sea." It is interesting to note that the king himself had been a soul temporarily driven out from the heaven of Vishnu due to the curse of some rishis who had given him the choice between three lives on earth as the enemy of Vishnu and ten lives on earth as the worshipper of Vishnu — the king had chosen the shorter way back.

Questions and Answers

effortless way of being. Then it is effective. But if you try in the least to imitate the movement with the idea of obtaining a particular result, it won't succeed. The result is not obtained at all. And then in your ignorance you will perhaps say, "Oh! but they told me that, but it is not true!" That is because there was some insincerity somewhere.

Otherwise, if you are really sincere, that is, if it is an integral and spontaneous experience, it is all-powerful. If, looking into somebody's eyes, you can spontaneously see the divine Presence there, the worst movements vanish, the worst obstacles disappear; and the flame of an infinite joy awakes, sometimes in the other person as well as in oneself. If in the other person there is the least possibility or just a tiny rift in his ill-will, the flame shines forth.

Sweet Mother, about Radha, in all the Vaishnavite stories and in the accounts of many mystics, there are always tears and anguish: "She wept and the Divine did not come.... The Divine tormented her...." What does this mean? She was integral purity, then why...

That is just on the way! That happens when one is still on the way, when one has not reached the goal. They have that, they insist a lot on this, for... for they like to prolong the human road, simply because they enjoy this human road and because, as I told you, if you want to remain in life, in contact with life, a certain relativity necessarily remains in the experience. They like it that way — they like to quarrel with the Divine, they like the feeling of separation, these things give them pleasure! For they remain in the human consciousness and want to remain there. The moment there is perfect identification, all this disappears. So, it is as though one were depriving oneself of the pleasure of a drama! There is something that has gone out of life, that is, its illusion. They still need a reasonable amount of illusion; they can't enter directly into the Truth.

In fact, for the feeling of separation to disappear, you must have realised within yourself a perfect identity; and once this perfect identity is realised, well, the story comes to an end, there is nothing more to tell.

That is why it is said that if the world, if creation realised its perfect identity with the Divine, there would no longer be any creation. If you realise this perfect identity in which there is no longer any possibility of distinction and if the entire universe realised this perfect identity in which there is no longer any possibility of distinction, well, there would no longer be any universe. It would be a return to Pralaya.

So the solution is to find Ananda, even in the play, in this exchange in which one both gives and receives, in which one seems to be two; and that is why they keep the duality.

Otherwise, in identity, nothing remains but the identity. If the identity is complete and perfect, there is no more objectivisation.

But I said this somewhere when speaking about the story of love. I think nobody — oh! I don't know — probably very few people noticed the distinction. I said that it begins with the Ananda of identity, and that after the full circuit of the creation, it ends in the Ananda of union.² Well, if there had been no circuit,

² Later, someone asked Mother: "What is this 'it'? the universe?" To which Mother replied, "I said 'it' deliberately, so as not to make it precise. I don't like the word 'creation'; it immediately gives the impression of a special creation as though it were made out of nothing — but it is He Himself! And it is not the universe 'which begins': the universe 'is begun'. How to put it? It is not the universe which takes the initiative of the movement! And if one says that the Lord began the universe, it becomes false. All these are such fixed ideas! If I say: 'The Lord began the universe,' one sees at once a personal God deciding to begin the universe — it is not that!

"I have said that about Love, the manifestation of Love which is the supreme Ananda. Sri Aurobindo also said it: beyond Being and Non-being there is something which is, which manifests as supreme Love, and which is at once Being and Non-being. And the first manifestation of That is the Ananda of identity — essentially it is the identity becoming aware of itself in Ananda, and then, it makes the full circuit through the whole manifestation and all the forms taken by Love, and returns to the Oneness through union. And this adds to that Ananda, the Ananda of union, which would never have existed if the circuit had not been made."

Questions and Answers

there would never be the Ananda of union, there would only be the Ananda of identity. Were there no circuit, there would be no union.

This is perhaps a little subtle, but it is a fact: and perhaps it is just in order that the Ananda of identity may find what I might call its consummation and crowning in the Ananda of union, that the whole circuit was made.

But if there is perfect identity, there can be no union, the feeling of union does not exist, for it necessarily implies something other than perfect identity. There can be perfect union but there is no perfect identity.

Don't try to understand with words and with your head, for these two words express altogether different experiences. And yet the result is the same, but one is rich with all that was not in the other, the richness of the whole experience — the whole universal experience.

If union is experienced consciously, why do some mystics continue to have all kinds of emotions like ordinary people, and weep and lament?

This is perhaps because the union is not constant.

But Radha is sincere in her aspiration.

If you ask me, I believe this is just literature, my children! Anyway, it is certainly in order to give you an artistic picture of human life as it is!

Vaishnavism is based on that.

But these people live in the vital and like it. Ah! one can't talk about that, because...

Well, I have another question here, a very small question, but not without interest.

18 July 1956

It is from someone who is trying to prepare himself to receive the Supermind, and in this preparation, among other things come prayer and meditation. And then there is this reflection which is very frank and which very few would have the courage to make. Here it is:

“I begin to meditate and pray ardently and fervently, my aspiration is intense and my prayer full of devotion; and then, after a certain length of time — sometimes short, sometimes long — the aspiration becomes mechanical and the prayer purely verbal. What should I do?”

This is not an individual case, it is extremely common. I have already said this a number of times, but still it was in passing — that people who claim to meditate for hours every day and spend their whole day praying, to me it seems that three-fourths of the time it must be absolutely mechanical; that is to say, it loses all its sincerity. For human nature is not made for that and the human mind is not built that way.

In order to concentrate and meditate one must do an exercise which I could call the “mental muscle-building” of concentration. One must really make an effort — as one makes a muscular effort, for instance, to lift a weight — if you want the concentration to be sincere and not artificial.

The same thing for the urge of prayer: suddenly a flame is lit, you feel an enthusiastic *élan*, a great fervour, and express it in words which, to be true, must be spontaneous. This must come from the heart, directly, with ardour, without passing through the head. That is a prayer. If there are just words jostling in your head, it is no longer a prayer. Well, if you don't throw more fuel into the flame, after a time it dies out. If you do not give your muscles time to relax, if you don't slacken the movement, your muscles lose the capacity of taking strains. So it is quite natural, and even indispensable, for the intensity of the movement to cease after a certain time. Naturally, someone who

Questions and Answers

is accustomed to lifting weights can do it much longer than one who has never done it before. It is the same thing; someone who is accustomed to concentration can concentrate much longer than one who is not in the habit. But for everybody there comes a time when one must let go, relax, in order to begin again. Therefore, whether immediately or after a few minutes or a few hours, if the movement becomes mechanical, it means that you have relaxed and that you need no longer pretend that you are meditating. It is better to do something useful.

If you cannot manage to do a little exercise, for instance, in order to neutralise the effect of the mental tension, you may read or try to note down what happened to you, you may express things. Then that produces a relaxation, the necessary relaxation. But the duration of the meditation is only relatively important; its length simply shows how far you are accustomed to this activity.

Of course, this may increase a great deal, but there is always a limit; and when the limit is reached one must stop, that's all. It is not an insincerity, it is an incapacity. What becomes insincere is if you pretend to meditate when you are no longer meditating or you say prayers like many people who go to the temple or to church, perform ceremonies and repeat their prayers as one repeats a more or less well-learnt lesson. Then it is no longer either prayer or meditation, it is simply a profession. It is not interesting.

Just a while ago you said that if one can spontaneously see the Divine in one's enemy, the enemy is converted. Is that true?

Not necessarily! I said: either he will be converted or he will run away. I did not say he is always converted! I said: if there is the least little rift in his bad will, the thing will enter; and then he can suddenly be changed, or at any rate become incapable of acting. But if that is not there, well, he will go away. But he

18 July 1956

won't be able to do anything. What I assert is that he won't be able to do anything; and if he can do something it is a sign that the state of consciousness you were in was not sufficiently pure and complete.

Why then are there so many enemies of the Divine, since the Divine can see Himself in His enemies?

I don't quite understand your question.

Why are there so many enemies of the Divine?

So many enemies of the Divine?

These hostile forces.

But why are there so many completely unconscious human beings? I find that still more astonishing! For it is quite simply an act of unconsciousness: to be an enemy of the Divine is nothing but being unconscious.

(A teacher) He means that they should have been converted since the Divine can see the Divine...

But, excuse me, the Divine where? I don't understand your reasoning.

When a man is the Divine's enemy...

But after all, suppose there is one man in a million who has realised this consciousness in himself. It is possible he may have had an effect on those around him — and yet I took care to tell you that for this state to be perfectly realised, generally it is necessary to live in solitude, otherwise there are too many contradictory things, there are too many brutally material necessities which contradict it, for you to be able to attain that state

Questions and Answers

absolutely perfectly. But if you do attain it absolutely perfectly, everything around you will necessarily become divine.

And so? I don't even understand the argument.

(The teacher) *He was objectifying the Divine and was thinking: when somebody is the Divine's enemy, he is an enemy of a divine form, and this divine form sees the Divine in his enemy, therefore the enemy must be converted.*

No, I still haven't caught it!

(Another disciple) *Sweet Mother, it is perfect but it doesn't exist!* (Laughter) *What he says doesn't exist.*

No, I admit I don't follow you at all, neither him, nor you, nor you! (Laughter) Good Lord, what do you all mean!

When one is an enemy of the Divine, one is an enemy of what?

Oh!... That depends exclusively upon each one. Usually one is an enemy of one's own idea of the Divine, and that is why it is said that one who denies the Divine is very often the greatest devotee. For if he did not have within himself the certitude that the Divine exists, he would not take the trouble of denying Him. And this is still stronger in one who hates Him, for if he did not have somewhere far within himself the certitude of the Divine's existence, how could he hate Him?

This has been symbolised here in India in the stories of those who wanted to identify themselves with the divine Reality and chose to become His enemies, for the path of the enemy was more direct than the path of the worshipper. These are well-known stories here, all the old legends and Indian mythology speak about it. Well, this simply illustrates the fact that one who

18 July 1956

has never put the problem to himself and never given the faintest thought to the existence of the Divine is certainly farther away from the Divine than one who hates Him or denies Him. For one can't deny something one has never thought about.

He who says or writes: "I declare, I certify, all my experience goes to prove that there is no Divine, no such thing exists, it is just man's imagination, man's creation...", that means he has already thought over the problem any number of times and that something within him is prodigiously interested in this problem.

As for the one who detests Him — there it is even more obvious: one can't be the enemy of an illusion.

So (*speaking to the disciple*), your question no longer holds. For perhaps, after all, this is one more form of meeting which may have its interest. One sometimes says in a lighter vein: "My intimate enemy", and it is perhaps not altogether wrong. Perhaps there is more intimacy in hatred than in ignorance. One is nearer to what one hates than to what one is ignorant of.

This doesn't mean I recommend hatred! That is not what I am saying, but I have very often happened to see more love in a look or an expression of fury and hatred than in an absolutely dull and inert state. It is deformed, spoilt, disfigured, whatever you like, but there is something living, a flame is there.

Of course, even in unconsciousness and immobility, in the complete inertia — apparently — of the stone, one may find a dazzling Light, that of the divine Presence. But then that is the state we were just speaking about: one sees Him everywhere, meets Him everywhere, and in so manifold and marvellously harmonised a way that all these difficulties disappear.

(*Silence*)

Truly speaking, to be practical, the problem could be expressed like this. If the Divine had not conceived His creation as progressive, there could have been from the beginning a beatific, immobile and unchangeable condition. But the minute... How

Questions and Answers

shall I explain it, I don't know. Just because the universe had to be progressive, perfect identity, the bliss of this identity, the full consciousness of this identity had necessarily to be veiled, otherwise nothing would have ever stirred.

A static universe may be conceived. One could conceive of something which is "all at one and the same time": that there is no time, only a kind of objectivisation — but not an unfolding in which things manifest progressively one after another, according to a special rhythm; that they are all manifested at the same time, all at once. Then all would be in a blissful state and there would be no universe as we see it, the element of unfolding would be missing, which constitutes... well, what we live in at present.

But once we admit this principle that the universe is progressive, the unfolding progressive, that instead of seeing everything together and all at once, our perception is progressive, then everything takes its right place within it. And inevitably, the future perfection must be felt as something higher than what was there before. The realisation towards which we are moving must necessarily seem superior to the one which was accomplished before.

And this opens the door to everything — to all possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo often said this: what appeared beautiful, good, even perfect, and marvellous and divine at a given moment in the universe, can no longer appear so now. And what now seems to us beautiful, marvellous, divine and perfect, will be an obscurity after some time. And in the same way, the gods who were all-powerful at a certain period belong to a lower reality than the gods who will manifest tomorrow.

And that is a sign that the universe is progressive.

This has been said, this has been repeated, but people don't understand, you know, when it concerns all those great ages, that they are like a reduction of the universal progress to the human measure.

That is why if one enters the state in which everything, as it is, appears perfectly divine, one necessarily goes out of

18 July 1956

the universal movement at the same time. This is what people like Buddha or Shankara had understood. They expressed in their own way that if you could realise the state in which everything appears to you perfectly divine or perfectly perfect, you necessarily go out of the universal movement and enter the Unmanifest.

This is correct. It is like that.

They were sufficiently dissatisfied with life as it was and had very little hope that it could become better; so for them this was the ideal solution. I call it escaping, but still.... It is not so easy! But for them it was the ideal solution — up to a certain point, for... there is perhaps one more step to take.

But it is a fact. If one wants to remain in the universe, one must admit the principle of progress, for this is a progressive universe. If you want to realise a static perfection, well, you will inevitably be thrown out of the universe, for you will no longer belong to its principle.

It is a choice.

Only, Sri Aurobindo often used to say: people who choose the exit forget that at the same time they will lose the consciousness with which they could congratulate themselves on their choice! They forget that.

25 July 1956

“It may be said that a complete act of divine love and worship has in it three parts that are the expressions of a single whole,—a practical worship of the Divine in the act, a symbol of worship in the form of the act expressing some vision and seeking or some relation with the Divine, an inner adoration and longing for oneness or feeling of oneness in the heart and soul and spirit.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 152–53

I have not understood the first two parts very well.

There is a purely physical form of the act, like those forms in cults in which a particular gesture, a particular movement is meant to express the consecration. That is purely material, as for example, lighting incense, arranging offerings, or even looking after a temple, decorating an idol, indeed all such purely physical acts.

The second part is a sort of mental consecration which makes the act that is performed a symbol. One is not satisfied with merely lighting the incense, but while lighting the incense one makes this gesture symbolic—for example, of the aspiration burning in the body or of self-giving in a dissolution, in the purification of the fire. That is to say, first the act, then the symbol in this act and the symbolic understanding of what is done.

And finally, behind these two, an aspiration for union; that all this, these acts and the symbol you make of them, may be only a means of drawing closer and closer to the Divine and making yourself fit to unite with Him.

These three things must be there for the act to be complete: that is, something purely material, something mental, and something psychic, the psychic aspiration. If one of the three is there

25 July 1956

without the other two, it is incomplete. As a rule, very rarely are the three consciously combined. That produces beings of exceptional sincerity and consecration: the entire being, in all its parts, participates in the action.

(Silence)

(Mother shows a packet of written questions.) Well, there was a time we had some difficulty in finding questions; now we have gone to the other extreme! I have so many that they would keep us at least till midnight if they were all to be answered! So I shall have to make a selection.... There is one at once very common and very practical which seems to me quite appropriate.

I have noted — much too often, I must say — that most of you do not listen to what I say, so much so that many a time I have answered a question in detail and immediately afterwards someone or other among you asks me exactly the same question, as though I had not said anything! And the phenomenon is explainable: each one is shut up in his own thought, just as, I suppose, you are in the habit of doing at school where you repeat your lesson to yourself if you are attentive and hardworking, and don't listen to what the teacher is asking or what the other students are answering, and thus lose three-quarters of the advantage of not being alone in the class. Here, it is more serious, for I never give a personal, individual answer, I reply for everybody to profit by it and if, instead of listening, you continue thinking of what is in your head, it is quite obvious that you lose the opportunity of learning something. That's the first point. If you are here, well, first listen, don't think of something else.... But that too is not enough, that's just the beginning: there is one good way of listening and many bad ways of listening.

I don't know if any of you are so fond of music as to know how to hear it. But if you want to listen to music, you must create an absolute silence in your head, you must not follow or accept a single thought, and must be entirely concentrated, like

Questions and Answers

a sort of screen which receives, without movement or noise, the vibration of the music. That is the only way, there is no other, the only way of hearing music and understanding it. If you admit in the least the movements and fancies of your thought, the whole value of the music escapes you. Well, to understand a teaching which is not quite of the ordinary material kind but implies an opening to something more deep within, this necessity of silence is far greater still. If, instead of listening to what you are told, you begin to jump on the idea in order to ask another question or even to discuss what is said under the false pretext of understanding better, all that you are told passes like smoke without leaving any effect.

Similarly, when you have an experience, you must never, during the period of the experience, try to understand what it is, for you immediately cause it to vanish, or you deform it and take away its purity; in the same way, if you want a spiritual teaching to enter into you, you must be absolutely *immobile* in your head, immobile like a mirror which not only reflects but absorbs the ray of light, lets it enter and go deep within, so that from the depths of your consciousness it may spring up again, some day or other, in the form of knowledge.

If you don't do that, you are wasting your time, and, into the bargain, wasting mine. That's a proved fact. I thought I had already told you this several times, but still perhaps I didn't tell you clearly enough. If you come here, come with the intention of *listening in silence*. What happens you will know later; the effect of this silent attitude you will recognise later; but for the moment, the only thing to do is to be like this (*gesture*), silent, immobile, attentive, concentrated.

That is all.

The second question is of an altogether external kind—relatively. But it seems quite indispensable, for it concerns our sports education and also, generally, the psychological basis on which we have founded our activity here. These things have been

25 July 1956

written by Sri Aurobindo, I have written them very often, have explained them to you many a time, but I am really sorry I am obliged to state that it has not entered your consciousness.

I don't want to start a war against what you feel and do, but I should like you at least to understand *why* things are done here as they are, instead of letting yourselves go in a retrograde impulsiveness and copying all that is done elsewhere under the pretext that it is "like that" that things are done, under the pretext that your parents and great-grandparents, your relatives and friends, and the grandparents of your friends, all those who stay outside continue to do things in this way and consider it the normal, natural way of doing them.

I don't dispute the fact, in the sense that humanity was created by Nature for a special purpose and special ends, and in order to realise her ends she has produced beings and also given them special habits and special functions. Therefore, if you speak of "natural" things, I cannot tell you that this is not "natural", for that is the way of Nature. But still, I believe I have told you — not only once but many times, and Sri Aurobindo also has written this, not once but many a time — that we are not here to recommence, perpetuate, continue what is done elsewhere. And we have given a concrete form to this fact specially in our education; for I must say, without offending anyone, that those who come here after having already seen much of life, those who have quite a heavy past behind them, may find it difficult to change their attitude and point of view immediately, but if you take very young children who have not yet been too spoiled — they are always spoiled — but those who have not yet been too spoiled by ordinary education, the ideas of their family, the atavism of their parents, etc., you have a chance of orientating the consciousness on the right path and getting a tangible and concrete result.

To tell the truth, we have nothing to complain about, for we have had striking proofs that if one knows how to do it, what we claim is possible.

Questions and Answers

What we claim is this, that in similar conditions, with the same education and the same possibilities, there is no reason to make a categorical distinction, final and imperative, between what we call men and women. For us, human beings are the expression of a single soul. It is true, as I said at the beginning, that Nature has differentiated her expressions for the satisfaction of her needs and the realisation of her purpose, but if our needs and purposes are of *another* kind and we don't recognise the physical ends conceived by Nature as final, and absolute, then we can try to develop consciousness on another line.

Unfortunately, we have noticed one thing. As the years pass and the little girls grow up into big girls, suddenly we find that they begin to remember that they are girls, that they must be pretty, they must please, must dress up in a special way, put on little affectations to attract attention — and the whole result of our work collapses.

There are some — there are always exceptions to the rule — who have understood and who try to realise. But even among these there is still in the background that kind of little satisfaction of not being quite “like the others”, of being able to do what the others cannot, and for this to be clearly seen, well, they must compare themselves with the others!

So that is exactly the occasion of what I have just told you. It is a question from one of you which has given rise to another question, and I hope that if I explain to you once more in detail, insisting on the fact, we shall perhaps be able to start anew and realise something more complete and more clear.

We come down altogether to earthly things: somebody has been very successful in athletics and has come first in one event. This somebody is a “she”, for convenience in speaking. And so, ah! besides the satisfaction of having done well, there was a little satisfaction in having done better than the others, and she came to ask:

“Why are women's records not announced?”

25 July 1956

We have, I believe, repeated and reiterated that there are no “women’s” and no “men’s” records, there are only group records. There is the green group — the various green groups — there is the red group, the grey group, the blue group, the khaki group, the white group. You may tell me that some of these groups are exclusively men’s or women’s. I shall answer what I have just said, that unless one comes here very young, it is difficult to change one’s habits, and that is what has made this separation necessary — but it is not the ideal. And if we made it a habit to announce gloriously: “This very remarkable girl has done what no other girl could do before”, oh, la, la, what a fall it would be! Not to mention that this encourages vanity — which is not good — it is also an assertion that this fact is remarkable *because it is a girl*; now it is not at all a remarkable fact that it is a girl: it is remarkable because she has done very well, and there are many boys who have not done so well. But if one wants to magnify this fine fact by comparing her with other girls who have not done as well, it becomes deplorable.

So this question was brought to me. I believe that person has been given the answer which I have just told you, that there are only group records and no records of sexes.

But that is not all. I am told that some have heard — not once but hundreds of times, especially from those who come from outside with all the ideas of the world outside — this question:

“Why do you have the same programme of physical education for boys and girls?”

There are some who consider it a scandal; some consider it a glaring error from the physical, material point of view. “Why aren’t girls treated in a special way and quite differently from boys?” — then the great argument — “*as it is done everywhere.*”

Ah! thank you. Then why do we have an Ashram? Why do we have a Centre of Education? If everywhere the same things

Questions and Answers

are done, we don't need to repeat them, we won't do them any better than others.

And when they put this argument in my way, they couldn't tell me anything that appears more utterly stupid to me. It is done everywhere? That is just the reason for not doing it; for if we do what others do, it is not worth the trouble doing anything at all. We want precisely to introduce into the world something which is not there; but if we keep all the habits of the world, all the preferences of the world, all the constructions of the world, I don't see how we can get out of the rut and do something new.

My children, I have told you, repeated it in every tone, in every way: if you really want to profit by your stay here, try to look at things and understand them with a new vision and a new understanding based on something higher, something deeper, vaster, something more true, something which is not yet but will be one day. And it is because we want to build this future that we have taken this special stand.

I tell you that we have had quite material proofs of the correctness and truth of our position, but... they are not lasting. Why? Because it is extremely easy to fall back into the ordinary consciousness, and there is nothing more difficult than to always stand on the top of the ladder and try to look at the world from up there.

We *don't want* to obey the orders of Nature, even if these orders have millions of years of habits behind them. And one thing is certain, the argument of Nature when she is opposed to things changing, is: "It has always been thus." I claim this is not true. Whether she likes it or not, things change, and a day will come when it will be said: "Ah! yes, there was a time when it was like that, but now it is different."

Well, grant only for some time, in a way which is still that of faith and trust, that we are in fact bringing about this change, that we have come to a point where things are going to take a turn and a new orientation. You are simply asked to have just a little faith and trust and allow yourselves to be guided.

25 July 1956

Otherwise, well, you will lose the advantage of being here, that's all. And you will go back with the same weaknesses and same habits one sees in life as it is outside. There you are.

You thought I was a little severe, a little hard, and that after all it was not easy to satisfy me! That is why you tie pretty little pink ribbons in your hair or on pigtails hanging at the back. I say, perhaps a little uncharitably: "You look ridiculous!" For you think you are very fine to look at, but truly this makes you ridiculous. If you want to go out into the world and preen yourselves as girls do in the world and give yourselves airs in order to please because that is your sole defense and sole weapon, to attract attention and to please, and be quite pretty, quite seductive, you are quite free to do so, it's no longer my concern. But indeed to do all that here is ridiculous. It is ridiculous and you also bring yourselves down immediately to a level which is not very pretty.

Naturally, you may blame me for telling you all this in front of "the other sex". But I include him in the ridicule, for if he did not think as he does, if he did not feel as he does and did not act as he does, you would have long ago been disgusted with these childish little affectations. There we are.

Now I have told you all I wanted to say. I think this is enough for today, isn't it? You have really had it!

With this talk we are publishing a few extracts from a brochure of Mother's entitled "To Women About Their Body". These are answers to questions on the sports education of women. The brochure opens with the following lines:

For God's sake, can't you forget that you are a girl or a boy, and try to become a human being?

What is the ideal for a girl, from the point of view of physical education?

I don't see why there should be one special ideal for the physical

Questions and Answers

education of girls and another for the education of boys.

Physical education aims at developing all the possibilities of the human body — possibilities of harmony, strength, suppleness, skill, endurance — and increasing the mastery of the functions of its members and organs, making the body a perfect instrument at the disposal of the conscious will. This programme is excellent for all human beings equally; there is no reason for wanting to have another one for girls.

*What part will man and woman play in the new life?
What relations will they have?*

Why make a distinction between the two? They are both human beings trying to become fit instruments for the divine work, above questions of sex, caste, creed and nationality; they are all children of the same infinite Mother and aspirants to the one and eternal Godhead.

What is the ideal of physical beauty for a woman?

Perfect harmony of proportions, suppleness and strength, grace and force, plasticity, endurance and, above all, an excellent health, unvarying, unchanging, the result of a pure soul, of a joyful trust in life and an unshakable faith in the divine Grace.

The brochure ends with the following words:

One word more to finish:

I have told you these things because you needed to hear them. But don't make an absolute dogma from them, for that takes away all their truth.

1 August 1956

*Sweet Mother, does the worship offered to the goddess
Durga and to Kali have any spiritual value?*

That depends on who offers the worship.

It is not that which is of importance for the spiritual value. For the integrality and the complete truth of the Yoga it is important not to limit one's aspiration to one form or another. But from the spiritual point of view, whatever the object of worship, if the movement is perfectly sincere, if the self-giving is integral and absolute, the spiritual result can be the same; for, whatever object you take, through it — sometimes in spite of it, despite it — you always reach the supreme Reality, in the measure and proportion of the sincerity of your consecration.

That is why it is always said that, no matter what aspect of the Divine you adore or even what guide you choose, if you are perfect in your self-giving and absolutely sincere, you are *sure* to attain the spiritual goal.

But the result is no longer the same when you want to realise the integral yoga. Then you must not limit yourself in any way, even in the path of your consecration.... Only, these are two very different things.

Spiritual realisation — as it was formerly understood, as it is still commonly understood — is union with the Supreme in some way or other, either within you or through some form or other; it is the fusion of your being with the Supreme, with the Absolute, almost the disappearance of your individuality in this fusion.¹ And that depends absolutely on the sincerity and

¹ Later a disciple asked Mother: "Why did you say 'almost'? Isn't then the disappearance complete?" To which Mother answered: "Somewhere, I believe it is in 'The Yoga of Self-Perfection' [*The Synthesis of Yoga*], regarding those who wish to merge in the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo says or rather hints that this cannot be done, for the Supreme

Questions and Answers

the integrality of your self-giving, rather than on the choice you make of that to which you want to give yourself. For... the very sincerity of your aspiration will make you cross all limitations and find the Supreme, for you carry Him within yourself.

Whether you seek Him outside, whether you seek Him within, whether you seek Him in a form or without form, if your aspiration is sincere enough and your resolution sincere enough, you are sure to reach the goal.

But if you want to make the complementary movement of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, that is to say, to return to the outer consciousness and world after having realised this union in yourself, and transform this outer consciousness and world, then in this case you cannot limit yourself in any way, for otherwise you will not be able to accomplish your work.

Essentially, you must be able to find this oneness with the Divine in all forms, all aspects, in every way that has been used to reach Him. And you must go beyond that and find a new way.

So, the first point to clear up in your thought — and it is a point of capital importance: you must not confuse the integral yoga with other spiritual realisations, which may be very high but cover a very limited field, for theirs is a movement only in depth.

You may pierce a hole, you see, with your aspiration and make a movement in depth through anything at all. All depends on the intensity and sincerity of your aspiration — on the sincerity, that is to say, on how far your self-giving is complete, integral, absolute. But it does not depend on the form you have chosen: necessarily, you will have to pass through in order to find what is behind.

wants it otherwise. But Sri Aurobindo says it without saying it, it is just an allusion in passing. The idea is that beyond Being and Non-Being, the total Summit necessarily includes a form — what might be called an essential form — of the individuality, which no longer contradicts or is even distinct from the One, but is included in the One without any separation. But the words at our disposal mean nothing! And one is reduced to giving a childish explanation. That is why I said ‘almost’.”

1 August 1956

But if you want to transform your nature and your being, and if you want to participate in the creation of a new world, then this aspiration, this sharp and linear point is no longer enough. One must include everything and contain everything in one's consciousness.

Naturally, that is much more difficult.

Mother, what is this "divine element in human nature" which always demands symbols for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction?

What?

Which demands a form, an expression in form.

Oh! what I have just read to you today?²

² "In any cult the symbol, the significant rite or expressive figure is not only a moving and enriching aesthetic element, but a physical means by which the human being begins to make outwardly definite the emotion and aspiration of his heart, to confirm it and to dynamise it. For if without a spiritual aspiration worship is meaningless and vain, yet the aspiration also without the act and the form is a disembodied and, for life, an incompletely effective power. It is unhappily the fate of all forms in human life to become crystallised, purely formal and therefore effete, and although form and cult preserve always their power for the man who can still enter into their meaning, the majority come to use the ceremony as a mechanical rite and the symbol as a lifeless sign and because that kills the soul of religion, cult and form have in the end to be changed or thrown aside altogether. There are those even to whom all cult and form are for this reason suspect and offensive; but few can dispense with the support of outward symbols and even a certain divine element in human nature demands them always for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction. Always the symbol is legitimate in so far as it is true, sincere, beautiful and delightful, and even one may say that a spiritual consciousness without any aesthetic or emotional content is not entirely or at any rate not integrally spiritual. In the spiritual life the basis of the act is a spiritual consciousness perennial and renovating, moved to express itself always in new forms or able to renew the truth of a form always by the flow of the spirit, and to so express itself and make every action a living symbol of some truth of the soul is the very nature of its creative vision and impulse. It is so that the spiritual seeker must deal with life and transmute its form and glorify it in its essence."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 153

Questions and Answers

It is precisely that part of the being which is not satisfied with abstractions and with escaping from life and evading it and leaving it as it is. It is that part of the being which wants to be integral, wants to be integrally transformed or at any rate to participate integrally in the inner adoration.

In every normal being there is the necessity, the need — an absolute need to translate into a physical form what he feels and wants internally. I consider those who always want to evade life in order to have self-realisation as abnormal and incomplete. And in fact, these are usually weak natures. But those who have strength, force and a kind of healthy equilibrium in themselves, feel an absolute need to realise materially their spiritual realisation; they are not satisfied with going away into the clouds or into worlds where forms no longer exist. They must have their physical consciousness and even their body participate in their inner experience.

Now, it may be said that the need to adopt or follow or participate in a religion as it is found all ready-made, arises rather from the “herd instinct” in human beings. The true thing would be for each one to find that form of adoration or cult which is his own and expresses spontaneously and individually his own special relation with the Divine; that would be the ideal condition.

To adopt a religion because one is born in that religion or because the people one loves and trusts practise that religion or because when one goes to a particular place where others pray and worship, one feels helped in one’s own prayer and worship, is not the sign of a very strong nature; I should say it is rather the sign of a weakness or at any rate of a lack of originality.

But to want to translate into the forms of one’s physical life the inner aspiration and adoration is quite legitimate, and it is much more sincere than what is done by a man who splits himself into two, leads a physical life quite mechanically and ordinarily and, when he can do it, when he has the time or when it suits him, withdraws within himself, escapes from physical

1 August 1956

life and the physical consciousness and goes to far-off heights to find his spiritual joys.

Someone who tries to make his material life the expression of his highest aspiration is certainly more noble, more upright and sincere in character than a man who splits himself into two saying that the outer life is of no importance and will never change and must be accepted as it is, and that, in reality only the inner attitude counts.

(Silence)

My file of questions is increasing! And I must say they are not all equally interesting; but still, I could perhaps take one or two of them for the satisfaction of those who have asked them.

First, some of you have got into the habit of sending me questions without signing them, for fear that I may reveal the identity of the one who has asked the question! I shall never reveal it, you may rest assured; and even if I make an unpleasant remark, nobody will know who it is for! *(Laughter)*

There is another thing. Some of you don't take the trouble of asking your questions in French. As I did not give you notice openly that I would reply only to questions in French, I have translated one or two of them for the moment; but in future, if you want me to consider your questions, they must be expressed in French. Even if there are many mistakes, it does not matter, I shall correct them!

Here is one which has been asked in English, to which the answer is very short. I am asked:

“What is the fundamental virtue to be cultivated in order to prepare for the spiritual life?”

I have said this many times, but this is an opportunity to repeat it: it is *sincerity*.

Questions and Answers

A sincerity which must become total and absolute, for sincerity *alone* is your protection on the spiritual path. If you are not sincere, at the very next step you are sure to fall and break your head. All kinds of forces, wills, influences, entities are there, on the look-out for the least little rift in this sincerity and they immediately rush in through that rift and begin to throw you into confusion.

Therefore, before doing anything, beginning anything, trying anything, be sure *first of all* that you are not only as sincere as you can be, but have the intention of becoming still more so.

For that is your only protection.

Can this effort to cultivate this initial virtue be a collective one?

Certainly it can. And this is what used to be attempted long ago in the schools of initiation. Even now, in more or less secret societies or very small groups, the collectivity seeks to be sufficiently united and to make a collective effort sufficiently complete for the result to be a group result instead of an individual one.

But naturally, that complicates the problem terribly.... Each time they meet, they try to create a collective entity; but for a virtue to be collectively realised, a tremendous effort is required. However, it is not impossible.

(Silence)

I have been asked another question which is a little more subtle, but it seems to me it has quite a special interest.... Somebody asks what is the true intensity for wanting the Divine, in the will to unite with the Divine. And then this person says that he has found within himself two different modes of aspiration, especially in the intensity of aspiration for the Divine: in one of these movements there is a sort of anguish, like a poignant pain, in the other, there is an anxiety, but at the same time a great joy.

1 August 1956

This observation is quite correct.
And the question is this:

“When do we feel this intensity mixed with anguish, and when the intensity containing joy?”

I don't know if several or many of you have a similar experience, but it is very real, this experience, very spontaneous. And the answer is very simple.

As soon as the presence of the psychic consciousness is united with the aspiration, the intensity takes on quite a different character, as if it were filled with the very essence of an inexpressible joy. This joy is something that seems contained in everything else. Whatever may be the outer form of the aspiration, whatever difficulties and obstacles it may meet, this joy is there as though it filled up everything, and it carries you in spite of everything.

That is the sure sign of the psychic presence. That is to say, you have established a contact with your psychic consciousness, a more or less complete, more or less constant contact, but at that moment it is the psychic being, the psychic consciousness which fills your aspiration, gives it its true contents. And that's what is translated into joy.

When that is not there, the aspiration may come from different parts of the being; it may come mainly from the mind or mainly from the vital or even from the physical, or it may come from all the three together — it may come from all kinds of combinations. But in general, for the intensity to be there, the vital must be present. It is the vital which gives the intensity; and as the vital is at the same time the seat of most of the difficulties, obstacles, contradictions, it is the friction between the intensity of the aspiration and the intensity of the difficulty which creates this anguish.

This is no reason to stop one's aspiration.

You must know, you must understand the reason for this anguish. And then, if you can introduce just one more element

Questions and Answers

in your aspiration, that is, your trust in the divine Grace, trust in the divine Response, it counterbalances all possible anguish and you can aspire without any disturbance or fear.

This brings us to something else, which is not positively a question, but a request for an explanation, a comment or a development of the subject. It is about Grace.

I have said somewhere, or maybe written, that no matter how great your faith and trust in the divine Grace, no matter how great your capacity to see it at work in all circumstances, at every moment, at every point in life, you will never succeed in understanding the marvellous immensity of Its Action, and the precision, the exactitude with which this Action is accomplished; you will never be able to grasp to what extent the Grace does everything, is behind everything, organises everything, conducts everything, so that the march forward to the divine realisation may be as swift, as complete, as total and harmonious as possible, considering the circumstances of the world.

As soon as you are in contact with It, there is not a second in time, not a point in space, which does not show you *dazzlingly* this perpetual work of the Grace, this constant intervention of the Grace.

And once you have seen this, you feel you are never equal to it, for you should never forget it, never have any fears, any anguish, any regrets, any recoils... or even suffering. If one were in union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin living a life of exultation, of all-power, of infinite happiness.

And that would be the best possible collaboration in the divine Work.

8 August 1956

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo writes: "A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 155

Isn't the psychic fire always lit?

It is not always lit.

Then how to light it?

By aspiration.

By the will for progress, by the urge towards perfection.

Above all, it is the will for progress and self-purification which lights the fire. The will for progress. Those who have a strong will, when they turn it towards spiritual progress and purification, automatically light the fire within themselves.

And each defect one wants to cure or each progress one wants to make — if all that is thrown into the fire, it burns with a new intensity. And this is not an image, it is a fact in the subtle physical. One can feel the warmth of the flame, one can see in the subtle physical the light of the flame. And when there is something in the nature which prevents one from advancing and one throws it into this fire, it begins to burn and the flame becomes more intense.

"For devotion by its embodiment in acts not only makes its own way broad and full and dynamic, but brings at once into the harder way of works in the world the divinely passionate element of joy and love which is often absent in its beginning when it is only the austere spiritual will that follows in a struggling uplifting tension

Questions and Answers

the steep ascent, and the heart is still asleep or bound to silence. If the spirit of divine love can enter, the hardness of the way diminishes, the tension is lightened, there is a sweetness and joy even in the core of difficulty and struggle.”

Ibid., pp. 154–55

How can one feel sweetness and joy when one is in difficulty?

Exactly, when the difficulty is egoistic or personal, if one makes an offering of it and throws it into the fire of purification, one immediately feels the joy of progress. If one does it sincerely, at once there is a welling up of joy.

That is obviously what ought to be done instead of despairing and lamenting. If one offers it up and aspires sincerely for transformation and purification, one immediately feels joy springing up in the depths of the heart. Even when the difficulty is a great sorrow, one may do this with much success. One realises that behind the sorrow, no matter how intense it may be, there is a divine joy.

(Silence)

Is that all?

(Mother shows a packet of written questions.) My portfolio is getting fatter! More questions come to me than I can answer.... One, of a very practical kind, I shall answer first because it will be quickly over. Besides, it is a question which I have been asked very often, and perhaps I have already answered it several times. But still, it is always worth repeating.

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

Then a sub-question:

“What can thought do?”

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

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

Now, what is it that gives strength and persistence to mental formations?—It is emotion and will. If you know how to add to your mental formation an emotion, affection, tenderness, love, and an intensity of will, a dynamism, it will have a much greater chance of success. That is the first method. It is within the scope of all those who know how to think, and even more of those who know how to love. But as I said, the power is limited and there is great competition in that world.

Therefore, even if one has no knowledge at all but has trust

Questions and Answers

in the divine Grace, if one has the faith that there is something in the world like the divine Grace, and that this something can answer a prayer, an aspiration, an invocation, then, after making one's mental formation, if one offers it to the Grace and puts one's trust in it, asks it to intervene and has the faith that it will intervene, then indeed one has a chance of success.

Try, and you will surely see the result.

But, Mother, when one prays sincerely for the intervention of the Grace, doesn't one expect a particular result?

Excuse me, that depends on the tenor of the prayer. If one simply invokes the Grace or the Divine, and puts oneself in His hands, one does not expect a particular result. To expect a particular result one must formulate one's prayer, must ask for something. If you have only a great aspiration for the divine Grace and evoke it, implore it, without asking it for anything precise, it is the Grace which will choose what it will do for you, not you.

That is better, isn't it?

Ah! that's quite another question.

Why, it is higher in its quality, perhaps. But still, if one wants something precise, it is better to formulate it. If one has a special reason for invoking the Grace, it is better to formulate it precisely and clearly.

Of course, if one is in a state of complete surrender and gives oneself entirely, if one simply offers oneself to the Grace and lets it do what it likes, that is very good. But after that one must not question what it does! One must not say to it, "Oh! I did that with the idea of having this", for if one really has the idea of obtaining something, it is better to formulate it in all sincerity, simply, just as one sees it. Afterwards, it is for the Grace to choose if it will do it or not; but in any case, one will

8 August 1956

have formulated clearly what one wanted. And there is no harm in that.

Where it becomes bad is when the request is not granted and one revolts. Then naturally it becomes bad. It is at that moment one must understand that the desire one has, or the aspiration, may not have been very enlightened and that perhaps one has asked for something which was not exactly what was good for one. Then at that moment one must be wise and say simply, "Well, let Thy Will be done." But so long as one has an inner perception and an inner preference, there is no harm in formulating it. It is a very natural movement.

For example, if one has been foolish or has made a mistake and one truly, sincerely wishes never to do it again, well, I don't see any harm in asking for it. And in fact, if one asks for it with sincerity, a true inner sincerity, there is a great chance that it will be granted.

You must not think that the Divine likes to contradict you. He is not at all keen on doing it! He can see better than you what is really good for you; but it is only when it is absolutely indispensable that He opposes your aspiration. Otherwise He is always ready to give what you ask.

Is that all?

(Silence)

There are three texts here which I have been asked to comment on or explain. The last one is a sort of continuation of what we have just said; I am going to begin with that:

"If one were in union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin living a life of exultation, of all-power, of infinite happiness.

"And that would be the best possible collaboration in the divine Work."

Talk of 1 August 1956 (p. 250)

Questions and Answers

The first condition is not very easy to realise. It is the result of a conscious growth, a constant observation and perpetual experience in life.

I have already told you this several times. When you are in a particular set of circumstances and certain events take place, these events often oppose your desire or what seems best to you, and often you happen to regret this and say to yourself, “Ah! how good it would have been if it were otherwise, if it had been like this or like that”, for little things and big things.... Then years pass by, events are unfolded; you progress, become more conscious, understand better, and when you look back, you notice — first with astonishment, then later with a smile — that those very circumstances which seemed to you quite disastrous or unfavourable, were exactly the best thing that could have happened to you to make you progress as you should have. And if you are the least bit wise you tell yourself, “Truly, the divine Grace is infinite.”

So, when this sort of thing has happened to you a number of times, you begin to understand that in spite of the blindness of man and deceptive appearances, the Grace is at work everywhere, so that at every moment it is the best possible thing that happens in the state the world is in at that moment. It is because our vision is limited or even because we are blinded by our own preferences that we cannot discern that things are like this.

But when one begins to see it, one enters upon a state of wonder which nothing can describe. For behind the appearances one perceives this Grace — infinite, wonderful, all-powerful — which knows all, organises all, arranges all, and leads us, whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, towards the supreme goal, that is, union with the Divine, the awareness of the Godhead and union with Him.

Then one lives in the Action and Presence of the Grace a life full of joy, of wonder, with the feeling of a marvellous strength, and at the same time with a trust so calm, so complete, that nothing can shake it any longer.

8 August 1956

And when one is in this state of perfect receptivity and perfect adherence, one diminishes to that extent the resistance of the world to the divine Action; consequently, this is the best collaboration one can bring to the Action of the Divine. One understands what He wants and, with all one's consciousness, adheres to His Will.

15 August 1956

“It is here that the emergence of the secret psychic being in us as the leader of the sacrifice is of the utmost importance; for this inmost being alone can bring with it the full power of the spirit in the act, the soul in the symbol. It alone can assure, even while the spiritual consciousness is incomplete, the perennial freshness and sincerity and beauty of the symbol and prevent it from becoming a dead form or a corrupted and corrupting magic; it alone can preserve for the act its power with its significance. All the other members of our being, mind, life-force, physical or body consciousness are too much under the control of the Ignorance to be a sure instrumentation and much less can they be a guide or the source of an unerring impulse. Always the greater part of the motive and action of these powers clings to the old law, the deceiving tablets, the cherished inferior movements of Nature and they meet with reluctance, alarm or revolt or obstructing inertia the voices and the forces that call and impel us to exceed and transform ourselves into a greater being and a wider Nature. In their major part the response is either a resistance or a qualified or temporising acquiescence; for even if they follow the call, they yet tend — when not consciously, then by automatic habit — to bring into the spiritual action their own natural disabilities and errors. At every moment they are moved to take egoistic advantage of the psychic and spiritual influences and can be detected using the power, joy or light these bring into us for a lower life-motive. Afterwards too, even when the seeker has opened to the Divine Love transcendental, universal or immanent, yet if he tries to pour it into life, he meets the power of obscuration and

perversion of these lower Nature-forces. Always they draw away towards pitfalls, pour into that higher intensity their diminishing elements, seek to capture the descending Power for themselves and their interests and degrade it into an aggrandised mental, vital or physical instrumentation for desire and ego. Instead of a Divine Love creator of a new heaven and a new earth of Truth and Light, they would hold it here prisoner as a tremendous sanction and glorifying force of sublimation to gild the mud of the old earth and colour with its rose and sapphire the old turbid unreal skies of sentimentalising vital imagination and mental idealised chimera. If that falsification is permitted, the higher Light and Power and Bliss withdraw, there is a fall back to a lower status; or else the realisation remains tied to an insecure half-way and mixture or is covered and even submerged by an inferior exaltation that is not the true Ananda. It is for this reason that the Divine Love which is at the heart of all creation and the most powerful of all redeeming and creative forces has yet been the least frontally present in earthly life, the least successfully redemptive, the least creative. Human nature has been unable to bear it in its purity for the very reason that it is the most powerful, pure, rare and intense of all the divine energies; what little could be seized has been corrupted at once into a vital pietistic ardour, a defenceless religious or ethical sentimentalism, a sensuous or even sensual erotic mysticism of the roseate coloured mind or passionately turbid life-impulse and with these simulations compensated its inability to house the Mystic Flame that could rebuild the world with its tongues of sacrifice. It is only the inmost psychic being unveiled and emerging in its full power that can lead the pilgrim sacrifice unscathed through these ambushes and pitfalls; at each moment it catches, exposes, repels the mind's and the life's falsehoods, seizes

Questions and Answers

hold on the truth of the Divine Love and Ananda and separates it from the excitement of the mind's ardours and the blind enthusiasm of the misleading life-force. But all things that are true at their core in mind and life and the physical being it extricates and takes with it in the journey till they stand on the heights, new in spirit and sublime in figure."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 155-57

This is the most powerful, the most complete and true answer to all the questions which so many people have in their heads but do not dare to ask.

So many people doubt the effectiveness of the Protection, the safety of the Path, because others go astray. And in their egoism they tremble with fear instead of telling themselves what I have just been reading to you this evening, what is the cause of all catastrophes, small or great, which threaten those who follow the path of yoga without having taken the necessary care to be sufficiently pure and sincere.

No protection, no Grace can save those who refuse the indispensable purification.

And I would add this: that fear is an impurity, one of the greatest impurities, one of those which come most directly from the anti-divine forces which want to destroy the divine action on earth; and the first duty of those who really want to do yoga is to eliminate from their consciousness, with all the might, all the sincerity, all the endurance of which they are capable, even the shadow of a fear. To walk on the path, one must be dauntless, and never indulge in that petty, small, feeble, nasty shrinking back upon oneself, which is fear.

An indomitable courage, a perfect sincerity and a sincere self-giving, so that one does not calculate or bargain, does not give with the idea of receiving, does not trust with the idea of being protected, does not have a faith which asks for proofs — it is this that is indispensable in order to walk on the path, and

15 August 1956

it is this alone which can truly shelter you from all danger.

(Silence)

You have a question, yes?

Sweet Mother, why does one feel a different atmosphere on Darshan days?¹ What should one do on these days?

Different? You ask this question!... There is an invasion of more or less dark and foreign elements, who may come with goodwill, possibly, but who come with an almost total ignorance and throw it all out in the atmosphere; and so, naturally, if one is the least bit open to what is happening, one feels crushed under the weight of this increased ignorance.

I don't mean that there is no ignorance here! But still, the dose is different. Here, for all that, there is a sort of manipulation of the consciousness going on constantly, night and day, visibly, invisibly; and whether one wants it or not, in spite of everything one takes it in, and after some time it acts.

When a few people come, something changes, but it is not so much as to give a painful feeling; but when it is a rush like this, dashing in all at once, then the whole level comes down immediately, and unless one is able to withdraw into oneself and keep one's head above these submerging waters, this swamping flood of ignorance, if one can't raise one's head above it, well, one feels very uneasy.

No, Mother, it is an atmosphere of joy!

You find it an atmosphere of joy!

¹ On Darshan days visitors and disciples were allowed to pass one-by-one in front of Mother (and formerly Sri Aurobindo) to receive directly their spiritual help. August 15, Sri Aurobindo's birthday, is one of the four Darshans of the year. This year (1956) there was a particularly large number of visitors.

Questions and Answers

Yes, Mother.

Then it is personal, my child. It is something purely personal. And you ought to be able to keep it.

It comes because at this time there are memories awakening in you, a certain concentration. Or perhaps what you call joy is a vital pleasure, no? Isn't it a sort of excitement? When do you feel this joy?

Today, it was after Darshan.

I think it is the same thing that happens to people who are more receptive on their birthdays or who need to remember an event to awaken their receptivity.

In the days when Sri Aurobindo used to give Darshan, before he gave it there was always a concentration of certain forces or of a certain realisation which he wanted to give to people. And so each Darshan marked a stage forward; each time something was added. But that was at a time when the number of visitors was very limited. It was organised in another way, and it was part of the necessary preparation.

But this special concentration, now, occurs at other times, not particularly on Darshan days. And it occurs much more often, on other kinds of occasions, in other circumstances. The movement is much accelerated, the march forward, the stages succeed each other much more rapidly. And perhaps it is more difficult to follow; or in any case, if one doesn't take care to keep up, one is much more quickly out-distanced than before; one gets the feeling of being late or of being abandoned. Things change quickly.

And I ought to say that these Darshan times with all this rush of people serve not so much for an inner progress — that is to say, inside the Ashram — as for a diffusion outside. The use we make of these days is a little different; above all, it is to go farther, have a vaster field, reach more distant points. But the

15 August 1956

concentration is less and there is this inconvenience of a large crowd, which was always there but which has been much greater during these last years than at the beginning. At the beginning there was not such a crowd; and perhaps the quality of the crowd was also a little different.

So the joy you were speaking about would rather be a kind of excitement or the feeling of a more intense or more active life; but it is not actually a greater Presence. One puts oneself, perhaps, into a more receptive state in which one receives more, but there is no intensification of the Presence — not to my knowledge.

So it must be within you that you have to find the reason, and the remedy for keeping this joy.

*But Mother, what is the significance of the message you give every Darshan? For example, today you gave the picture of the flower that symbolises the supramental manifestation.*²

Yes, as I have just told you, this is spread in thousands of copies all over the world. It is an externalisation of the thing, it is a way of spreading the influence, spreading the message, reaching farther. Everything that is said in a Darshan message has been studied, proved, tested, *beforehand*. And on Darshan day it is given. First the experiment is made, then it is declared publicly. The first movement is the individual development; at the Darshan time it is spread abroad.

Sri Aurobindo always spoke of two movements: the formation of the individual in order to be able to reach the goal individually, and the preparation of the world.... For the progress of the individual is, so to say, not exactly delayed or helped by the condition of the whole, but this brings about a certain balance between the two. The individual movement is always

² The *haemanthus*, which is like a ball composed of hundreds of red and gold stamens.

Questions and Answers

much more rapid and more penetrating; it goes farther, more deeply and more quickly. The collective movement forms a sort of basis which both restrains and supports at the same time. And it is the balance between these two movements which is necessary. So, the more rapidly one goes individually, the more necessary it is to try to extend and strengthen the collective basis.

Mother, has this day, the fifteenth of August, an occult or a simple significance? For, in history, important events occurred on this day.

What exactly do you mean? The fifteenth of August is Sri Aurobindo's birthday. Therefore, it is a date which has a capital importance in the life of the earth, from the physical point of view. So?

On August fifteenth other important events took place?...

What, the liberation of India? Is it because the liberation of India came about on the fifteenth of August? And so, it is necessary to tell you why it happened, you can't find it out by yourself, can you? It needs to be said, does it? I think Sri Aurobindo has written it also, hasn't he, in the message he gave? Hasn't he said it?³

(Silence)

Yes, it is exactly that....

Today, there came into my hands one of those greeting cards which people send on puja days or for the new year or other such festivals; and on this card was written something like this — I don't recall the exact words — but anyway they were,

³ Mother is referring to the message Sri Aurobindo gave on 15 August 1947. The full text is given in an appendix to this talk.

15 August 1956

“Greetings on the occasion of this memorable day of the birth of our nation.” It is sent by someone who, I think, proclaimed himself a disciple of Sri Aurobindo quite a long time ago.... That seemed to me one of those enormities which human stupidity alone can commit. If he had said: “On this memorable day of the birth of Sri Aurobindo *and* its natural consequence, the birth of the nation”, it would have been quite all right. But still, the important point was left out and the other mentioned, which is quite simply a consequence, a natural result: it *had* to be like that, it could not be otherwise.

But people always think like that, the wrong way up. Always. They take the effect for the cause, they glorify the effect and forget the cause.

And that is why the world walks on its head with its feet in the air. Quite simply, there is no other reason.

(Silence)

I have a huge collection of questions here. I received yet one more today. This question raises perhaps the most difficult problem for the world; so I don't quite know if, precisely, in this Darshan atmosphere, it is very appropriate to touch upon such a problem. However, it is something infinitely interesting. One would like to find a fully satisfactory solution, for then at the same time one would have the key which opens the last door.

Man has always been faced with two possible attitudes when he has wanted to find a solution to the problem of the existence of the universe. It could be said from the practical point of view, that since the universe exists and exists as it does, the wisest thing is to take it as it is, and if one is not satisfied with it, well, to try to make it better. But even if one takes this very practical attitude, the problem remains: How to make it better? And once again one is facing the same fact which it seems impossible to resolve. Here you are, then:

The divine Will — and the Grace which manifests it — is

Questions and Answers

all-powerful and nothing can exist which is not the expression of this divine Will and this Grace which manifests it.... The logical attitude — precisely the one described in the little book I read to you on Fridays now, *Wu Wei*⁴ — a perfect peace, a total surrender, putting aside all effort and all personal will, giving oneself up to the divine Will and letting it act through oneself.

Mind you, this is not at all easy, it is not as simple as it looks. But still, if one sincerely takes up this attitude, it is certain that immediately there comes a perfect inner peace, an unmixed bliss, and whatever may be the events of your life, they leave you totally indifferent. This has always been recommended for individual salvation; and I may remark in passing that in this little book, which is also very beautiful and very well written, the sage compares the state of surrender of which he speaks to a sea which is calm, blue, peaceful, vast, moved by a deep force, swelling up at the right moment, subsiding at the right moment — indeed, it is an ideal description. But a practical and somewhat objective mind immediately tells you, “Well, yes, but there are also tempests at sea, there are also terrible storms, tidal waves, engulfed islands. And so that is perhaps another aspect of the Divine, but it does not bring peace, at least not in the way described by the sage. One would have to be in another state of consciousness to be at peace in such circumstances, one must not compare oneself with the sea!” So the problem presents itself again.

Sri Aurobindo has made a study of all this in *The Life Divine*, and he tells us that there are sure signs of a progressive evolution. An evolution naturally tends towards a goal, and if it is a progressive evolution one may continue to think that all is the expression of the divine Grace and Will, but that at the same time all is not as it ought to be. Everything is in accordance with the divine Will, but everything is not as it ought to be, otherwise things would not move.

⁴ *Wu Wei*: a novel based upon the philosophy of Lao Tse, by Henri Borel (Librairie Fischbacher, 33 rue de Seine, Paris).

15 August 1956

And there we are faced with the problem once more.
The question I have been asked is this:

“Now that the Supermind has manifested on the earth, it must naturally follow that the divine Grace is all-powerful”, and I am asked: “Is this right?”

The divine Grace has always been all-powerful.

And yet, if we compare the world as it is with the more or less ideal world we can imagine when we come out of our ignorant consciousness and enter a consciousness which we call more divine, how is it that it is not always so good, if the Grace is all-powerful?

It would seem that the vision of what ought to be comes long before the execution — and this is what gives rise to the whole problem.... One sees ahead — or up above — the realisation, perhaps not of the next step, but still what will happen one day; and then as one sees it, one tells oneself, “But this conception is more divine than what is realised at present; therefore, if the Grace is all-powerful, it ought to be realised immediately.” I am now looking at the problem as the human mind, it seems to me, would put it or approximately so, in order to try and make myself understood.

But what does one call an all-powerful Grace? I don't want to speak of the conceptions of an ordinary mind for which the all-powerful Grace is that which would instantaneously realise what it wants or believes to be the right thing; I am not speaking of that, we may eliminate this case, which is childish. But granting that somebody has a deeper, higher vision, a sort of inner perception of an ideal world where all the things which for us are very shocking would disappear; then one is truly faced with a problem which seems insoluble.

This translates itself in very ordinary minds into an over-simple and very childish form: either the divine Will is something unthinkable for us — which would not be surprising! —

Questions and Answers

unthinkable and almost monstrous if It allows things to be as they are, if It wants things as they are, or else... the Grace is powerless.

That—I warn you to put you on your guard against the trap—that is the great argument of the Adversary. He uses it to cloud the mind and raise up revolt; but still, it is well thought out as a trap.

Then come those who say, “It is because you are in the Ignorance that you see like that; change your consciousness, enter into contact with the divine Consciousness and you will see differently.” This is perfectly correct. I was just telling you, and I repeat, that if you can manage to get out of the Ignorance and enter ever so little into union with the divine Reality, you live an ecstatic life in which everything is marvellous, sublime, and where the Grace manifests in all things. Therefore, you have solved the problem for yourself, on condition that you can remain in that state perpetually, which is not very easy. But still it is possible. But it draws you out of the world, prevents you from participating in the life of the world, and above all, if everything had to be changed in that way, I think an eternity would not suffice for all the elements of the world to be so transformed.

And the problem presents itself again. In whatever manner, by whatever way you approach it, it will always present itself again.

There is a solution.

Think about it, we shall speak about it again another time. There, I would like you to make an effort. For it is beneficial, because this is a sort of conflict in the human consciousness which comes up constantly; because it is a conflict which forms the basis of all oppositions to a concrete work; because this conflict makes people—I am speaking even of those who are the most enlightened in this field—always confuse spiritual life with an annihilation of the physical, material creation, as for them this is the sole means of escape: “Let us escape from the material reality and we escape the problem”, for, to be in the

15 August 1956

state where the problem doesn't present itself any longer, one must get out of life — *according to them*.

There is a solution.

That will be for another time.

When back at the Ashram, after the class, Mother made the following remark:

I gave the solution, this evening. I gave it twice in the class, without speaking.

Has this solution any connection with the date, August fifteenth? Is there any connection between the Feast of the Assumption in the Catholic Church and the date of Sri Aurobindo's birth?

Yes. And he has also said it himself. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary is the divinisation of Matter. And this is the aim of the last Avatar.

Appendix

15 August 1947¹

August 15th, 1947 is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But we can also make it by our life and acts as a free nation an important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity.

August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Also, the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of

¹ The message broadcast by All India Radio, Trichinopoly, on 14 August 1947, the eve of the Independence of India.

the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form — the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated: its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may

Questions and Answers

make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and

the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.

Sri Aurobindo, On Himself, SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 404–406

22 August 1956

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo call “the heaven of the liberated mind”?

The heaven of the liberated mind? It is a metaphorical phrase. When the mind is liberated, it rises to celestial heights. These higher regions of the mind Sri Aurobindo compares with the sky above the earth; they are celestial compared with the ordinary mind.

Is that all?

(Silence)

Somebody has asked me a question about trance — what in India is called Samadhi, that is to say, when one passes or enters into a state of which no conscious memory remains when one wakes up:

“Is the state of trance or Samadhi a sign of progress?”

In ancient times it was considered a very high condition. It was even thought to be the sign of a great realisation, and people who wanted to do yoga or sadhana always tried to enter into a state of this kind. All sorts of marvellous things have been said about this state — you may say all you like about it, since, precisely, you don’t remember anything! And those who have entered it are unable to say what happened to them. So, one can say anything one likes.

I could incidentally tell you that in all kinds of so-called spiritual literature I had always read marvellous things about this state of trance or Samadhi, and it so happened that I had never experienced it. So I did not know whether this was a sign

22 August 1956

of inferiority. And when I came here, one of my first questions to Sri Aurobindo was: "What do you think of Samadhi, that state of trance one does not remember? One enters into a condition which seems blissful, but when one comes out of it, one does not know at all what has happened." Then he looked at me, saw what I meant and told me, "It is unconsciousness." I asked him for an explanation, I said, "What?" He told me, "Yes, you enter into what is called Samadhi when you go out of your conscious being and enter a part of your being which is completely unconscious, or rather a domain where you have no corresponding consciousness — you go beyond the field of your consciousness and enter a region where you are no longer conscious. You are in the impersonal state, that is to say, a state in which you are unconscious; and that is why, naturally, you remember nothing, because you were not conscious of anything."¹ So this reassured me and I said, "Well, this has never happened to me." He replied, "Nor to me!" (*Laughter*)

And since then, when people speak to me about Samadhi, I tell them, "Well, try to develop your inner individuality and you will be able to enter these *very* regions in full consciousness and have the joy of communion with the highest regions, but without losing all consciousness and returning with a zero instead of an experience."

So that is my reply to the person who has asked if Samadhi or trance is a sign of progress. The sign of progress is when there is no longer any unconsciousness, when one can go up into the same regions without entering into trance.

But there is a confusion in the words.

¹ When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following commentary: "There are also some people who enter domains where they are conscious, but between this conscious state and their normal waking consciousness there is a gap: their personality does not exist between the waking state and this deeper state; so, during the passage they forget. They cannot bring the consciousness they had there back into the consciousness here, for there is a gap between the two. There is even an occult discipline for constructing intermediary fields in order to be able to recall things."

Questions and Answers

When you leave a *part* of your being — for example, when you enter quite consciously the vital world — your body can enter into a trance, but this is not samadhi. It is rather what might be called a lethargic or cataleptic state. When extreme, it is a cataleptic state because the part of the being which animates the body has gone out of it, so the body is half dead; that is, its life is so far diminished and its functions almost suspended: the heart slows down and can hardly be felt and the breathing is hardly perceptible. This is the real trance. But you, during all this time, you are fully conscious in the vital world. And even, with a certain discipline which, moreover, is neither easy nor without danger, you may so contrive that the minimum of force you leave in your body allows it to be *independently* conscious. With training — as I said, it is not easy — quite a methodical training, one can manage to make the body keep its autonomy of movement, even when one is almost totally exteriorised. And this is how in an almost complete state of trance, one can speak and relate what the exteriorised part of the being is seeing and doing.... For that, one must be fairly advanced on the path.

There are spontaneous and involuntary instances of a state which is not quite the same as this, but very similar: they are states of somnambulism, that is to say, when you are fast asleep and the vital has gone out of your body, the body automatically obeys the will and action of the part which has gone out, the vital part. Only, as this is not the effect of a willed action and a regulated, progressive education, this state is not desirable, for it may produce disorders in the being. But it is an illustration of what I have just said, of a body which while three-quarters asleep can obey the part of the being which has gone out and is itself fully awake and quite conscious. This is the real trance.

I have already told you several times, I think, that when one undergoes this occult discipline, one is able to leave one's physical body, go out in the vital and move about quite consciously,

22 August 1956

acting quite consciously in this vital world; then to leave one's vital being asleep and go out mentally, acting and living in the mental world quite consciously and with similar relations — for the mental world is in relation with the mental being, as the physical world is in relation with the physical being — and so on, progressively and by a regular discipline. I knew a woman who had been trained in this way, who had quite remarkable personal faculties, who was conscious in all her states of being, and she used to be able to go out twelve times from her body, that is to say, from twelve consecutive bodies, until she reached the summit of the individual consciousness, which could be called the threshold of the Formless. She remembered everything and recounted everything in detail. She was an Englishwoman; I even translated from English a book in which there was a description of all she saw and did in these domains.

It is obviously the sign of a great mastery of one's being, and the sign of having reached a high degree of conscious development. But it is almost the opposite of the other experience of going out of one's consciousness to enter a state in which one is no longer conscious; it is, so to say, the opposite.

(Silence)

That brings me to something which is both a recommendation and an advice.

We have read in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and also recently translated from *The Life Divine*, some passages in which Sri Aurobindo gives details, explanations and advice to those who do sadhana and try to have experiences that at times are too strong for their state of consciousness — which brings rather unfortunate results. On this subject I made a remark, and I have been asked to explain my remark. I said:

“One must always be greater than one's experience.”

Questions and Answers

What I meant is this:

Whatever may be the nature, the strength and wonder of an experience, you must not be dominated by it to such an extent that it governs your entire being and you lose your balance and your contact with a reasonable and calm attitude. That is to say, when you enter in some way into contact with a force or consciousness which surpasses yours, instead of being entirely dominated by this consciousness or force, you must always be able to remind yourself that it is only *one* experience among thousands and thousands of others, and that, consequently, its nature is not absolute, it is relative. No matter how beautiful it may be, you can and ought to have better ones: however exceptional it may be, there are others still more marvellous; and however high it may be, you can always rise still higher in future. So, instead of losing one's head one places the experience in the chain of development and keeps a healthy physical balance so as not to lose the sense of relativity with ordinary life. In this way, there is no risk.

The means?... One who knows how to do this will always find it very easy, but for one who doesn't know it is perhaps a little... a little troublesome.

There is a means.

It is never to lose the idea of the total self-giving to the Grace which is the expression of the Supreme. When one gives oneself, when one surrenders, entrusts oneself entirely to That which is above, beyond all creation, and when, instead of seeking any personal advantage from the experience, one makes an offering of it to the divine Grace and knows that it is from This that the experience comes and that it is to This that the result of the experience must be given back, then one is quite safe.

In other words: no ambition, no vanity, no pride. A sincere self-giving, a sincere humility, and one is sheltered from all danger. There you are, this is what I call being greater than one's experience.

Now, does anyone have a question?

22 August 1956

(*Silence*)

(*A swarm of insects appears.*) That brings us down from the heights! (*Laughing*) I think it would be very wise to put out the light and get rid of the insects.... You won't go to sleep, will you?

There is something I was asked some time ago to which I have not yet replied. It is this. I have written somewhere:

“The absolute of every being is its unique relation with the Divine and its unique manner of expressing the Divine in the manifestation.”

This is what is called here in India the truth of the being or the law of the being, the *dharma* of the being: the centre and the cause of the individuality.

Everyone carries his truth within himself, a truth which is unique, which is altogether his own and which he must express in his life. Now what is this truth? This is the question I have been asked:

“What is this truth of the being, and how is it expressed externally in physical life?”

It is expressed in this way: each individual being has a direct and unique relation with the Supreme, the Origin, That which is beyond all creation. It is this unique relation which must be expressed in one's life, through a unique mode of being in relation with the Divine. Therefore, each one is directly and exclusively in relation with the Divine — the relation one has with the Divine is unique and exclusive; so that you receive from the Divine, when you are in a receptive state, the *totality* of the relation it is *possible* for you to have, and this is neither a sharing nor a part nor a repetition, but exclusively and uniquely *the* relation which each one can have with the Divine. So, from

Questions and Answers

the psychological point of view, one is *all alone* in having this direct relation with the Divine.

One is all alone with the Supreme.²

The relation one has with Him will never have an equal, will never be exactly the same as another's. No two are the same and therefore *nothing* can be taken away from you to be given to another, *nothing* can be withdrawn from you to be given to another. And if this relation disappeared from the creation, it would really disappear — which is impossible.

And this means that if one lives in the truth of one's being, one is an indispensable part of the creation. Naturally, I don't mean if one lives what one *believes* one should be, I am saying if one lives the truth of one's being; if, by a development, one is able to enter into contact with the truth of one's being, one is immediately in a unique and exclusive relation with the Divine, which hasn't its equal.

There, now.

And naturally, because it is the truth of your being, that is what you should express in your life.

² This sentence was added by Mother on 13 May 1962.

29 August 1956

I suppose most of you come on Fridays to listen to the reading of *Wu Wei*. If you have listened, you will remember that something's said there about being "spontaneous", and that the true way of living the true life is to live spontaneously.

What Lao Tse calls spontaneous is this: instead of being moved by a personal will—mental, vital or physical—one ought to stop all outer effort and let oneself be guided and moved by what the Chinese call *Tao*, which they identify with the Godhead—or God or the Supreme Principle or the Origin of all things or the creative Truth, indeed all possible human notions of the Divine and the goal to be attained.

To be spontaneous means not to think out, organise, decide and make an effort to realise with the personal will.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One—you all know about it undoubtedly—is of the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*,¹ in 1914. It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge—and even the expression—from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

¹ It was in the review *Arya*, within a period of six years (1914-1920), that Sri Aurobindo published most of his major works: *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* (originally *The Psychology of Social Development*), *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Future Poetry*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (originally a number of series under other titles).

Questions and Answers

That is true mental spontaneity.

And if one carries this a little further, one should never think and plan beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should simply be able to silence one's mind, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and express as it receives it, in mental silence, what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not very easy, it asks for preparation.

And if one comes down to the sphere of action, it is still more difficult; for normally, if one wants to act with some kind of logic, one usually has to think out beforehand what one wants to do and plan it before doing it, otherwise one may be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses which would be very far from the inspiration spoken about in *Wu Wei*; it would simply be movements of the lower nature driving you to act. Therefore, unless one has reached the state of wisdom and detachment of the Chinese sage mentioned in this story, it is better not to be spontaneous in one's daily actions, for one would risk being the plaything of all the most disorderly impulses and influences.

But once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one's own mental formations. If one wants to rely on one's experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one has about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I already have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are to a certain extent independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought after or expected are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions — at times even dangerous illusions.

Therefore, when you follow a mental discipline, you must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have certain

29 August 1956

experiences, for in this way you can create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is *absolutely* indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire or excessive imagination or what I call “spiritual romanticism”, the taste for the miraculous — all this ought to be very carefully eliminated so as to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

Now, after this preliminary explanation, I am going to read to you what I had written and have been asked to comment upon. These aphorisms perhaps call for explanation. I wrote this, inspired perhaps by the reading I was just speaking to you about, but it was more than anything the expression of a personal experience:

“One must be spontaneous in order to be divine.”

This is what I have just explained to you. Then the question arises: how to be spontaneous?

“One must be perfectly simple in order to be spontaneous.”

And how to be perfectly simple?

“One must be absolutely sincere in order to be perfectly simple.”

And now, what does it mean to be absolutely sincere?

“To be absolutely sincere is not to have any division, any contradiction in one’s being.”

If you are made of pieces which are not only different but often quite contradictory, these pieces necessarily create a division in your being. For example, you have one part in yourself which

Questions and Answers

aspires for the divine life, to know the Divine, to unite with Him, to live Him integrally, and then you have another part which has attachments, desires — which it calls “needs” — and which not only seeks these things but is quite upset when it does not have them. There are other contradictions, but this one is the most flagrant. There are others, for instance, like wanting to surrender completely to the Divine, to give oneself up totally to His Will and His Guidance, and at the same time, when the experience comes — a common experience on the path when one sincerely tries to give oneself up to the Divine — the feeling that one is nothing, that one can do nothing, that one doesn't even exist outside the Divine; that is to say, if He were not there, one would not exist and could not do anything, one would not be anything at all.... This experience naturally comes as a help on the path of total self-giving, but there is a part of the being which, when the experience comes, rises up in a terrible revolt and says, “But, excuse me! I insist on existing, I insist on being something, I insist on doing things myself, I want to have a personality.” And naturally, the second one undoes all that the first had done.

These are not exceptional cases, this happens very frequently. I could give you innumerable examples of such contradictions in the being: when one part tries to take a step forward, the other one comes and demolishes everything. So you have to begin again all the time, and every time it is demolished. That is why you must do this work of sincerity which, when you perceive in your being a part that pulls the other way, makes you take it up carefully, educate it as one educates a child and put it in harmony with the central part. That is the work of sincerity and it is indispensable.

And naturally, when there is a unity, an agreement, a harmony among all the wills of the being, your being can become simple, candid and uniform in its action and tendencies. It is only when the whole being is grouped around a single central movement that you can be spontaneous. For if, within you, there

29 August 1956

is something which is turned towards the Divine and awaits the inspiration and impulse, and at the same time there is another part of the being which seeks its own ends and works to realise its own desires, you no longer know where you stand, and you can no longer be sure of what may happen, for one part can not only undo but totally contradict what the other wants to do.

And surely, to be in harmony with what is said in *Wu Wei*, after having seen very clearly what is necessary and what ought to be done, it is recommended not to put either violence or too much zest into the realisation of this programme, for an excess of zest is detrimental to the peace and tranquillity and calm necessary for the divine Consciousness to express itself through the individual. And it comes to this:

Balance is indispensable, the path that carefully avoids opposite extremes is indispensable, too much haste is dangerous, impatience prevents you from advancing; and at the same time, inertia puts a drag on your feet.

So for all things, the middle path as the Buddha called it, is the best.

(Silence)

There are two other questions here which are corollaries. The first one is this:

“What do you mean by these words: ‘When you are in difficulty, widen yourself?’”

I am speaking, of course, of difficulties on the path of yoga, incomprehension, limitations, things like obstacles, which prevent you from advancing. And when I say “widen yourself”, I mean widen your consciousness.

Difficulties always arise from the ego, that is, from your more or less egoistic personal reaction to circumstances, events and people around you, to the conditions of your life. They also

Questions and Answers

come from that feeling of being closed up in a sort of shell, which prevents your consciousness from uniting with higher and vaster realities.

One may very well *think* that one wants to be vast, wants to be universal, that all is the expression of the Divine, that one must have no egoism — one may think all sorts of things — but that is not necessarily a cure, for very often one knows what one ought to do, and yet one doesn't do it, for one reason or another.

But if, when you have to face anguish, suffering, revolt, pain or a feeling of helplessness — whatever it may be, all the things that come to you on the path and which precisely are your difficulties — if physically, that is to say, in your body-consciousness, you can have the feeling of widening yourself, one could say of unfolding yourself — you feel as it were all folded up, one fold on another like a piece of cloth which is folded and refolded and folded again — so if you have this feeling that what is holding and strangling you and making you suffer or paralysing your movement, is like a too closely, too tightly folded piece of cloth or like a parcel that is too well-tied, too well-packed, and that slowly, gradually, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, and you lie flat and make yourself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading yourself out as far as you can, opening yourself and stretching out in an attitude of complete passivity with what I could call “the face to the light”: not curling back upon your difficulty, doubling up on it, shutting it in, so to say, into yourself, but, on the contrary, unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light — the Light which comes from above — if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don't succeed in doing it — for it is sometimes difficult — if you can imagine yourself doing this *physically*, almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that more than three-quarters of the difficulty is gone. And then just

29 August 1956

a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.

This is much easier than struggling against a difficulty with one's thought, for if you begin to discuss with yourself, you will find that there are arguments for and against which are so convincing that it is quite impossible to get out of it without a higher light. Here, you do not struggle against the difficulty, you do not try to convince yourself; ah! you simply stretch out in the Light as though you lay stretched on the sands in the sun. And you let the Light do its work. That's all.

(Silence)

And here is the other question:

“What is the easiest way of forgetting oneself?”

Naturally that depends on each one; everyone has his special way of forgetting himself, which is the best for him. But obviously there is a fairly general method which may be applied in various forms: to occupy oneself with something else. Instead of being occupied with oneself, one may be busy with someone else or with others or some work or an interesting activity requiring concentration.

And it is still the same thing: instead of doubling up on oneself and brooding over oneself or coddling oneself as it were, like the most precious thing in the world, if one can unfold oneself and get busy with something else, something which is not quite one's own self, then that is the simplest and quickest way of forgetting oneself.

There are many others but this one is within everyone's reach. So there we are, my children.

Now, if you have nothing to say about this subject or any other, we can remain silent.

5 September 1956

“A principle of dark and dull inertia is at its [life’s] base; all are tied down by the body and its needs and desires to a trivial mind, petty desires and emotions, an insignificant repetition of small worthless functionings, needs, cares, occupations, pains, pleasures that lead to nothing beyond themselves and bear the stamp of an ignorance that knows not its own why and whither. This physical mind of inertia believes in no divinity other than its small earth-gods; it aspires perhaps to a greater comfort, order, pleasure, but asks for no uplifting and no spiritual deliverance. At the centre we meet a stronger Will of life with a greater gusto, but it is a blinded Daemon, a perverted spirit and exults in the very elements that make of life a striving turmoil and an unhappy imbroglio. It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of the mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to make life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture. Another Will-in-Life there is that is ready to follow the ameliorating ideal Mind and is allured by its offer to extract some harmony, beauty, light, nobler order out of life, but this is a smaller part of the vital nature and can be easily overpowered by its more violent or darker duller yoke-comrades; nor does it readily lend itself to a call higher than that of the

5 September 1956

Mind unless that call defeats itself, as Religion usually does, by lowering its demand to conditions more intelligible to our obscure vital nature. All these forces the spiritual seeker grows aware of in himself and finds all around him and has to struggle and combat incessantly to be rid of their grip and dislodge the long-entrenched mastery they have exercised over his own being as over the enviroing human existence. The difficulty is great; for their hold is so strong, so apparently invincible that it justifies the disdainful dictum which compares human nature to a dog's tail, — for, straighten it never so much by force of ethics, religion, reason or any other redemptive effort, it returns in the end always to the crooked curl of Nature. And so great is the vim, the clutch of that more agitated Life-Will, so immense the peril of its passions and errors, so subtly insistent or persistently invasive, so obstinate up to the very gates of Heaven the fury of its attack or the tedious obstruction of its obstacles that even the saint and the Yogin cannot be sure of their liberated purity or their trained self-mastery against its intrigue or its violence.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 160-61

(After a long silence) It seems to me that when you begin to see things in this way, when they appear to you as they are described here, you are already close, very close to the solution.

The worst of it is that generally the whole material reality seems to be the only reality, and everything which is not that seems altogether secondary. And the “right” of that material consciousness to rule, guide, organise life, to dominate all the rest, is justified to such an extent that if someone tries to challenge this sacrosanct authority, he is considered half-mad or extremely dangerous.... It seems to me one must still go a very long way to consider material life in the way Sri Aurobindo has described it here. And I am quite convinced that if one feels it

Questions and Answers

like that, sees it like that, as he has described it, one is very, very close to the remedy.

It is only *élite* natures, those who have already had a contact with a higher reality, with something of the divine Consciousness, who feel earthly existence in that way. And when one can become so fully conscious of all these weaknesses and stupidities of the outer consciousness, all these falsehoods of so-called material knowledge and so-called physical laws, the so-called necessities of the body, the “reality” of one’s needs; if one begins to see how very false, stupid, illusory, obscure, foolish all this is, one is truly very close to the solution.

That is the impression I had while reading this. In comparison with the ordinary atmosphere of people around me, I had the feeling that to see things in this way, one must have already climbed to a very high peak, and that one is at the gates of liberation. It is because I felt it so strongly that I wanted to tell you this.

If you can read this passage again and be convinced of its reality and its absolute truth, well, that is already a great step.

(Silence)

Hasn’t anyone any questions to ask?... I have some here (*Mother shows a packet of questions*), but they seem to belong almost to another world.

Somebody asked me some time ago this question:

“What will be the effect of the Supermind on the earth?”

Probably one of the first effects will be exactly to reveal things on earth in this way, as in what I have just read to you.

And then another question, which I thought I had already answered, for I told you immediately that before the effects of the supramental manifestation become visible and tangible, perceptible to everybody, perhaps thousands of years may go

5 September 1956

by; but still I suppose these ideas are disturbing for the human consciousness with its sense of its short duration and the kind of impatience this brings. So I have been asked:

“Will it take long for the Supermind which is involved in material Nature to emerge into the outer consciousness and bring visible results?”

That depends on the state of consciousness from which one answers, for... For the human consciousness, obviously, I think it will take quite a long time. For another consciousness it will be relatively very fast, and for yet another consciousness, it is already accomplished. It is an accomplished fact. But in order to become aware of this, one must be able to enter into another state of consciousness than the ordinary physical consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken — I believe I have read it to you, I think it's in *The Synthesis of Yoga* — of the true mind, the true vital and the true physical or subtle physical, and he has said that they co-exist with the ordinary mind, vital and physical, and that in certain conditions one may enter into contact with them, and then one becomes aware of the difference between what really is and the appearances of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised somewhere in a domain of the subtle physical, it already exists there visible, concrete, and expresses itself in forms and activities. And when one is in tune with this domain, when one lives there, one has a very strong feeling that this world would only have to be condensed, so to say, for it to become visible to all. What would then be interesting would be to develop this inner perception which would put you into contact with the supramental truth which is already manifested, and is veiled for you only for want of appropriate organs to enter into relation with it.

It is possible that those who are conscious of their dreams may have dreams of a new kind which put them into contact

Questions and Answers

with that world, for it is accessible to the subtle physical of all those who have the corresponding organs in themselves. And there is necessarily a subtle influence of this physical on outer matter, if one is ready to receive impressions from it and admit them into one's consciousness. That's all.

Now, if nobody has any questions to ask, well, we shall remain silent.

Something to say, over there? (*Mother looks at a disciple.*)
Oh! he is burning to speak!

Mother, after having realised all that, one still goes back to the lower mind to find the solution.

After having understood, one falls back into the same old mistaken ways?... What a pity!

And every day.

Every day! Why, more's the pity! And so, what remedy do you propose?

That's what I am asking.

Oh! you are asking me! Why, to me it seems that when one has *seen* things in this way, well, if one has enough sensibility, one can no longer accept them as they are. One must truly be very insensitive if, realising to what an extent all this is degrading, one continues to accept it.

Yes, this is one more thing I have noticed and one that has always astonished me. It has always seemed to me quite normal, easy, almost elementary to eliminate from one's consciousness and nature things one considers to be unacceptable. The moment one knows, the moment one sees them as they are and doesn't want them any longer, it seems to me to be quite... indeed almost childishly simple. But I have noticed that in most cases — almost

5 September 1956

in all cases — when I tell somebody how things really are, when I give him a true picture of the condition he is in or of the nature of a movement, of what it represents, and when I express that forcefully, so that, according to me, he would immediately have the reaction which seems normal to me, and say: “Oh, if it is like that, I don’t want it any more!” and almost every time I find myself before something which breaks down and tells me, “Oh, you are not very encouraging!” I must confess that this leaves me quite helpless. So, to see is not enough? To know that certain things ought not to be there, that’s not sufficient? It should give you that kind of inner stimulus, a dynamic force which makes you reject the error in such a way that it can’t come back again!

But to fall back into an error which one *knows* to be an error, to make a mistake once again which one *knows* to be a mistake, this seems to me fantastic! It is a long time — well, at least relatively, by human reckoning — it is a long time I have been on earth, and I have yet not been able to understand that. It seems to me — it seems to me impossible. Wrong thoughts, wrong impulses, inner and outer falsehood, things which are ugly, base, so long as one does them or has them through ignorance — ignorance is there in the world — one understands, one is in the habit of doing them; it is ignorance, one does not know that it ought to be otherwise. But the moment the knowledge is there, the light is there, the moment one has seen the thing as it is, how can one do it again? That I do not understand!

Then what is one made of? One is made of shreds? One is made of goodness knows what, of jelly?... It can’t be explained. But is there no incentive, no will, nothing? Is there no inner dynamism?

We exploit the Grace!

Ayo, like a jellyfish!

But the Grace is there, It is always there, It only asks to be allowed to help — one doesn’t let It work.

Questions and Answers

And nothing but this feeling: “Oh, I can’t!” — that’s enough to prevent It from working.

How can you accept the idea that you can’t? You don’t know — that, yes, you may not know — but once you know, it’s finished!

Still...

12 September 1956

Sweet Mother, do we have a right to ask questions if we don't practise what you say?

You always have the right to do anything! (*Laughter*) You may ask all the questions you like. Practise? Fundamentally, it is up to each one to choose, isn't it? — whether he wants to practise or not, whether he considers it useful or not. That is something which cannot be imposed; it must be done freely. But one may always ask questions.

Well, I am going to ask a question: “Why don't people practise?” Do you know why they don't practise? (*Mother asks others in turn.*) And you? And you?... Bah! Do you know?

Perhaps because one is lazy!

That is one of the main reasons. And so one conceals one's laziness behind fine reasons, the first of which says, “I can't, I don't know” or else, “I have tried and not succeeded” or “I don't know where to begin!” Any reason whatever, isn't that true? The first that comes to you. Or else, one doesn't practise because one doesn't find it worthwhile to make the effort — that is part of the laziness also, it asks for too much effort! But one can't live without effort! If one were to refuse to make any effort, one would not even be able to stand on one's legs or walk or even eat.

I believe that one doesn't practise first of all because this doesn't have a sufficiently *concrete* reality to dominate other things in life, because the effort seems out of proportion to the result. But this kind of effort is only a beginning: once one gets into it, it is no longer the same thing.

(*Turning to the child*) So then, ask your question, even if you don't practise!

Questions and Answers

No, I have no question, Sweet Mother.

Oh, your question was only this! You wanted to say, "Is it honest to ask questions and then not do anything of what you are told?" Is that it?

Yes, Mother.

Yes.

(A disciple) We still have this atavism of needing to be forced in order to do something. From our childhood we have been forced to do things. Here it is just the opposite.

Forced? Oh, so one doesn't do anything when not forced to! But something done through compulsion has no value.

Is that all? Don't you have a question?... I have many but they are either too specific or too general! Or else, precisely, they are only interesting for those who are eager to practise.

What would you like to hear?... *(Silence)* Nothing, you see, you say nothing. All right, that is very good, I shall say nothing!

(A child) Something to awaken in us a will to progress.

(Meditation)

19 September 1956

Sweet Mother, I haven't understood this well: "Will, Power, Force are the native substance of the Life-Energy, and herein lies the justification for the refusal of Life to acknowledge the supremacy of Knowledge and Love alone, — for its push towards the satisfaction of something far more unreflecting, headstrong and dangerous that can yet venture too in its own bold and ardent way towards the Divine and Absolute. Love and Wisdom are not the only aspects of the Divine, there is also its aspect of Power."

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 163-64

What have you not understood?

Sri Aurobindo says that the vital part, the vital being is the greatest obstacle because it is unregenerate, and that there would be a possibility of transforming it if it surrendered entirely to Love and Knowledge; but as its predominant quality is force, energy, power, it does not like to submit to other parts of the being, and this justifies its refusal to submit itself, for those virtues in their essence are as high as the others. That is why it has neither the same power nor the same capacities, for it is not developed, it has not surrendered, and this is what causes the dilemma: it does not submit because it has this power, and this power cannot be utilised because it is not surrendered. So, how to get out of that? The vital, if it were surrendered, would be a very powerful help, extremely useful, it would make the whole process go much more rapidly. But because it feels its own power, it refuses to submit to the others; and because it does not submit, its power cannot be utilised. So, what is to be done? Sri Aurobindo states the problem — he is going to solve it afterwards; if we continue reading, after a while he will tell us

Questions and Answers

how to solve this problem — but he states it first so that we may fully understand the situation.

If the vital were a mediocre being without definite qualities, there would be no difficulty in its surrendering, but it would be altogether useless. But, on the contrary, the vital is a sort of stronghold of energy and power — of all powers. Yet generally this power is diverted; it is no longer at the service of the Divine, it is at the service of the vital itself for its own satisfaction. So, as long as it is like that, it cannot be used.

It should come to understand that this energy and power which it feels within itself cannot become useful unless it enters into perfect harmony with the divine plan of realisation on earth. If it understands that, it becomes quiet and allows itself to be enlisted, so to say, in the totality of the being, and then it takes on its full strength and full importance. But otherwise, it cannot be used. And usually, all its activities are activities which always complicate things and take away their simplicity, their purity, often their beauty, and their effectiveness, for its action is blind, ignorant and very egoistic.

Sweet Mother, is the divine plane the plane of the psychic being?

It is a higher plane than that of the psychic being. The psychic being is, so to say, the vehicle of the Divine, it contains the Divine, is the habitation of the Divine, but the Divine is higher than it. For the psychic being is only an aspect of the divine manifestation.

Is not the Supermind also the psychic being?

The Supermind is far higher than the psychic being also.

What Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind is the element or the divine Principle which is now going to come into play in the universe. He calls it the Supermind because it comes after

19 September 1956

the mind, that is to say, it is a new manifestation of the supreme divine Principle. And it is related to the psychic as the Divine was related to the psychic, that is to say, the psychic is the home, the temple, the vehicle, everything that must outwardly manifest the Divine. But it is divine only in its essence not in its integrality. It is a mode of outer manifestation of the Divine, outer compared with the Divine, that is, terrestrial.

Is that all? Nothing else?

How should we come out of the physical consciousness which keeps us preoccupied all the time and exclusively with physical circumstances?

There is a considerable number of ways.

There are intellectual ways, ways which may be called sentimental, artistic ways and spiritual ways. And generally, it is preferable for each one to take the way that is easiest for him, for if one wants to begin straight away with the most difficult, one comes to nothing at all. And here we always come back to the same thing, to what Sri Aurobindo describes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: it is the way of knowledge or the way of devotion or the way of works. But the way of works is precisely the one which keeps you in physical life and makes you find your liberation in it; and perhaps this is the most effective way of all but also the most difficult.

For most aspirants the way of meditation, concentration, withdrawal from physical life, rejection of physical activities is certainly easier than the way of action. But they leave the physical consciousness just as it is, without ever changing it, and unless one becomes like a sadhu or an ascetic who leaves behind all active life and remains in constant concentration or meditation, one achieves nothing at all. That is to say, an entire part of the being is never transformed. And for them the solution is not at all to transform it, it is simply to reject it, to get out of their body as quickly as possible. That is how yoga was

Questions and Answers

conceived of formerly, for, obviously, it is much easier. But this is not what we want.

What we want is the transformation of the physical consciousness, not its rejection.

And so, in this case, what Sri Aurobindo has recommended as the most direct and most total way is surrender to the Divine — a surrender made more and more integral, progressively, comprising the physical consciousness and physical activities. And if one succeeds in this, then the physical, instead of being an obstacle, becomes a help.

What does this sentence mean: “Look life in the face from the soul’s inner strength and become master of circumstances”?

That is precisely the opposite of the method which consists in rejecting the whole of the physical consciousness and all physical events. “Look life in the face”, this means: don’t turn your back on it! It means: face life as it is instead of running away from it and call to your aid the inner psychic force — this is what Sri Aurobindo says: “the soul’s inner strength”, the inner psychic force — and with the help of this psychic consciousness rise above circumstances and master them. That is to say, instead of submitting to all that comes and suffering all its consequences, one rises above circumstances and lets them pass like things that do not touch you and do not impair your consciousness. That is what it means.

It is said that to become conscious of divine Love all other love has to be abandoned. What is the best way of rejecting the other love which clings so obstinately (laughter) and does not easily leave us?

To go through it. Ah!

To go through, to see what is behind it, not to stop at the

19 September 1956

appearance, not to be satisfied with the outer form, to look for the principle which is behind this love, and not be content until one has found the *origin* of the feeling in oneself. Then the outer form will crumble of itself and you will be in contact with the divine Love which is behind all things.

That is the best way.

To want to get rid of the one in order to find the other is very difficult. It is almost impossible. For human nature is so limited, so full of contradictions and so exclusive in its movements that if one wants to reject love in its lower form, that is to say, human love as human beings experience it, if one makes an inner effort to reject it, one usually rejects the entire capacity of feeling love and becomes like a stone. And then sometimes one has to wait for years or centuries before there is a reawakening in oneself of the capacity to receive and manifest love.

Therefore, the best way when love comes, in whatever form it may be, is to try and pierce through its outer appearance and find the divine principle which is behind and which gives it existence. Naturally, it is full of snares and difficulties, but it is more effective. That is to say, instead of ceasing to love because one loves wrongly, one must cease to love wrongly and want to love well.

For instance, love between human beings, in all its forms, the love of parents for children, of children for parents, of brothers and sisters, of friends and lovers, is all tainted with ignorance, selfishness and all the other defects which are man's ordinary drawbacks; so instead of completely ceasing to love — which, besides, is very difficult as Sri Aurobindo says, which would simply dry up the heart and serve no end — one must learn how to love better: to love with devotion, with self-giving, self-abnegation, and to struggle, not against love itself, but against its distorted forms: against all forms of monopolising, of attachment, possessiveness, jealousy, and all the feelings which accompany these main movements. Not to want to possess, to dominate; and not to want to impose one's will, one's whims,

Questions and Answers

one's desires; not to want to take, to receive, but to give; not to insist on the other's response, but be content with one's own love; not to seek one's personal interest and joy and the fulfilment of one's personal desire, but to be satisfied with the giving of one's love and affection; and not to ask for any response. Simply to be happy to love, nothing more.

If you do that, you have taken a great stride forward and can, through this attitude, gradually advance farther in the feeling itself, and realise one day that love is not something personal, that love is a universal divine feeling which manifests through you more or less finely, but which in its essence is something divine.

The first step is to stop being selfish. For everyone it is the same thing, not only for those who want to do yoga but also in ordinary life: if one wants to know how to love, one must not love oneself first and above all selfishly; one must give oneself to the object of love without exacting anything in return. This discipline is elementary in order to surmount oneself and lead a life which is not altogether gross.

As for yoga we may add something else: it is as I said in the beginning, the will to pierce through this limited and human form of love and discover the principle of divine Love which is behind it. Then one is sure to get a result. This is better than drying up one's heart. It is perhaps a little more difficult but it is better in every way, for like this, instead of egoistically making others suffer, well, one may leave them quiet in their own movement and only make an effort to transform oneself without imposing one's will on others, which even in ordinary life is a step towards something higher and a little more harmonious.

26 September 1956

“All or most of the works of life are at present or seem to be actuated or vitiated by the soul of desire; even those that are ethical or religious, even those that wear the guise of altruism, philanthropy, self-sacrifice, self-denial are shot through and through with the threads of its making. This soul of desire is a separative soul of ego and all its instincts are for a separative self-affirmation; it pushes always, openly or under more or less shining masks, for its own growth, for possession, for enjoyment, for conquest and empire.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 164

Sweet Mother what is the “soul of desire”?

It is what makes you live, act, move.

Soul, the word for soul in French, “*âme*” comes from a word which means “to animate”. It is what gives life to the body. If you didn’t have it you would be inert matter, something like stones or plants, not altogether inert, but vegetative.

Some people say that without desires, that is, without this soul of desire, there would never have been any progress.... In ordinary life it is something very useful but when one decides to do yoga, to find the Divine, it becomes a little cumbersome.

(Silence)

Is that all?

When we come to you for the distribution,¹ at times we

¹ Until 1958 Mother used to distribute groundnuts and sweets every evening at the Playground (except on class days), making it possible for all disciples to go to her one by one in order to receive her spiritual help directly.

Questions and Answers

feel free and joyful, but at times we feel nothing, we are empty. What does this indicate?

When one is joyful, it means that one is open and receives the Force; when one feels nothing, it means that one is shut up.

But what makes you open or shuts you up? For each one it is different. It depends on a number of things. Haven't you noticed the difference in yourself, whether it depends on outside circumstances or on something within you? No?

Yes.

Yes. Ah, good!

There are many different reasons which make one feel at times more alive, more full of force and joy.... Usually, in ordinary life, there are people who, due to their very constitution, the way they are made, are in a certain harmony with Nature, as though they breathed with the same rhythm, and these people are usually always joyful, happy; they succeed in all they do, they avoid many troubles and catastrophes, indeed they are in harmony with the rhythm of life and Nature. And, moreover, there are days when one is in contact with the divine Consciousness which is at work, with the Grace, and then everything is tinged, coloured with this Presence, and things which usually seem to you dull and uninteresting become charming, pleasant, attractive, instructive—everything lives and vibrates, and is full of promise and force. So, when one opens to that, one feels stronger, freer, happier, full of energy, and *everything* has a meaning. One understands why things are as they are and one participates in the general movement.

There are other times when, for some reason or other, one is clouded or closed or down in a hole, and so one no longer feels anything and all things lose their taste, their interest, their value; one goes about like a walking block of wood.

26 September 1956

Now, if one is able to consciously unite with one's psychic being, one can *always* be in this state of receptivity, inner joy, energy, progress, communion with the divine Presence. And when one is in communion with That, one sees it everywhere, in everything, and all things take on their true meaning.

On what does that depend?... On an inner rhythm. Perhaps a grace. In any case on a receptivity to something that is beyond you.

Mother a well-developed soul, when it incarnates, does it have less difficulty in transforming this soul of desire?

That means?...

The great masters have less difficulties?

One can't say.

In principle it is like that, but in fact, the more the individuality is formed, the stronger is this false soul of desire. Those who have a well-formed, well-coordinated individuality, which has an existence of its own, with a minimum of dependence on the environment, have much more difficulty in coming into contact with the divine Presence than others, because they have a very coordinated, very organised separate existence, which is usually self-sufficient. One always finds it much more difficult to convert, we might say, a very living, fully realised personality than someone, for instance, who is full of goodwill but still open to all sorts of influences. When an individual is very strongly made and has the sense of his own personality, his own existence, it is much more difficult for him to think that he is nothing but an instrument of the divine Force, than for somebody who feels a little nebulous, like this (*gesture*) not very precise, who has no exact limits, no well-built individuality; he understands more easily that in himself he is nothing and that it is a force other than his own which makes him act. So you cannot say that a

Questions and Answers

well-developed soul has less difficulties. It depends on the case.

What you mean, I think, is that if you are in contact with your soul — the true one — it is relatively easy to get rid of the soul of desire. But that is a different situation. You must first have found your psychic being and identified yourself with it; and then, later, you may turn to the soul of desire and convince it of its stupidity.

(Long silence)

(To a child) Do you have anything to ask?

Not I, Mother. Somebody has asked a question: "In the present state of the sadhana, what is the utility of a personal contact with you? To what extent does a personal contact with you help us?"

What is meant by a personal contact? To see me, speak to me, what? Individually, collectively, how?

Individually.

Oh! *(laughing)* to have interviews?

You may answer that it depends on the use one makes of them.

It is very difficult to answer, for it is a purely personal question. It depends on the moment, depends on the state one is in, and above all, as I say, it depends on whether one knows how to use this contact properly.

Don't you see, if one is inwardly open, if one is receptive, one receives right down into the subtle physical all that is necessary for one's integral progress. And in the order of things, the outer contact should come only as a crowning and an aid so that the body — the material physical consciousness and the body — may be able to follow the movement of the inner being.

26 September 1956

But if you believe that this contact is going to replace the inner receptivity, you are mistaken, it is not much use. For example, people who are quite closed up, who receive nothing within, who have no opening to the forces and who imagine that because they are going to spend half an hour or an hour sitting in front of me and chatting, this is going to help them to transform themselves, they make a gross mistake. But if they are inwardly open, if they are in contact with the Force and make an effort to transform themselves, then, at a particular moment, perhaps a conversation or a material contact, a presence, may help them to make a more integral progress.

One may very easily live in close proximity, in one's daily life be apparently very near, and get nothing at all out of it, at least in the active consciousness. Perhaps there is a very slow and deep action which goes on... but it seems to me that it would go on in any case. And if, while by my side for some reason or other the thought is elsewhere, the desires elsewhere, the preoccupations elsewhere, it is absolutely useless, it leads to nothing.

The important point is to establish the inner contact; this is really the important point. Then in certain cases — perhaps not very often, it depends on each one — but in certain cases, the presence adds something, gives a more concrete, more precise realisation. But if there is nothing within, it is altogether useless. So one cannot make a general rule, it depends on each one, on the state he is in.

(Silence)

You see, the general mistake is to believe that one must begin from outside and reach within. It is not like that. One must begin within and reach outside afterwards, when one is ready within.

Mother, when we come to you, we try to be at our best possible, that is, to have very good thoughts; but often,

Questions and Answers

on the contrary, all the bad impulses, bad thoughts we had during the day come forward.

That is perhaps so that you can get rid of them.

If they come, one can offer them and ask to be rid of them.

That perhaps is the reason, it is because the Consciousness acts for purification. It is no use at all hiding things and pushing them behind, like this, and imagining they are not there because one has put a veil in front. It is much better to see oneself as one is — provided one is ready to give up this way of being. If you come allowing all the bad movements to rise to the surface, to show themselves; if you offer them, if you say, “Well, this is how I am”, and if at the same time you have the aspiration to be different, then this second of presence is extremely useful; you can, yes, in a few seconds receive the help you need to get rid of them; while if you come like a little saint and go away content, without having received anything, it is not very useful.

Automatically the Consciousness acts like that, it is like the ray that brings light where there wasn't any. Only, what is needed is to be in a state where one *wants* to give up the thing, to get rid of it — not to cling to it and keep it. If one sincerely wants to pull it out of oneself, make it disappear, then it is very useful.

(Silence)

Indeed, I could ask a question myself: Why — I don't know if it is common, but still — why, when you come to me, do you want to have good thoughts and be at your best? For what reason?

To have bad movements before you is very ugly! (Laughter)

If you want to keep them, yes, it is very ugly, but if you want to get rid of them!... It is perhaps a chance to get rid of them. It is surely even an opportunity to get rid of them, because before

26 September 1956

me they appear exactly as they are; while far from me they are coloured with all sorts of brilliant and false lights, so that you take them for what they are not. If the movement is nasty and you see it in my atmosphere, it appears *exactly* as it is. Then that is the time to get rid of it.

(Silence)

To give the best one has is very fine and is much appreciated; but to give the worst one has is much more useful; and perhaps this offering is even more appreciated — on condition that it is given in order to get rid of it, not to take it back afterwards!

3 October 1956

I have a whole flood of questions here! But before beginning to answer them, I am going to explain something to you.

You must have noticed on several occasions that my way of talking to you is not always the same. I don't know if you are very sensitive to the difference, but for me it is quite considerable.... Sometimes, either because of something I have read or for quite another reason — following a question sometimes, but pretty rarely — it so happens that I have what is usually called an experience, but in fact it is simply entering into a certain state of consciousness and, once in that state of consciousness, describing it. In that case what is said passes through the mind, making use of it only as a “storehouse of words”, it could be said; the Force, the Consciousness which is expressing itself passes through the individual mind and attracts by a kind of affinity the words needed for its expression. That is the true teaching, something one rarely finds in books — it may be in books, but one must be in that state of consciousness oneself to be able to discover it. But with the spoken word, the vibration of the sound transmits something at least of the experience, which, for all those who are sensitive, can become contagious.

In the second case, the question asked or the subject chosen is conveyed by the mind to the higher Consciousness, then the mind receives a reply and transmits it again through the word. This is what usually happens in all teachings, provided that the person who teaches has the ability to pass on the question to the higher Consciousness, which is not always the case.

I must say the second method does not interest me very much, and that very often when the question or the subject dealt with does not give me the possibility of entering into an interesting state of consciousness, I would infinitely prefer to keep silent than to speak; it is a sort of duty to be fulfilled which

3 October 1956

makes me speak. I am just telling you beforehand, for it has often happened that I have cut short our conversation — if it could be called a conversation — and abruptly passed on to meditation; it was in cases like this. But still, someone has happened to ask me to explain this difference and so I am speaking to you about it this evening.

(Silence)

Apart from that, I have yet some other questions of a practical nature, and in connection with these questions I saw something I am going to tell you about — oh! it was not a vision with images, don't expect something very entertaining. No, it is not that.... I was asked — I am rewording it, this is not the exact text of the question:

What difference does the presence of the Supermind really make? In what way does it change the tenor of problems, and how should life be reconsidered following this manifestation?

I have been asked to give practical examples; I don't quite know what that may mean, but anyway, here is what I saw in a sort of mathematical mood — though the language of mathematics is rather foreign to me — but I may call this a mathematical vein, that is to say, a mathematical way of looking at the problem.

I think all of you have studied enough mathematics to know the complexity of the combinations which may be produced by taking certain select elements of a set as a basis. I shall give you an example to make myself clear, for I can't use the terms which are employed in teaching you. For instance, the letters of the alphabet. There is a certain number of letters in the alphabet; well, if you want to calculate or know the number of combinations possible by taking all these letters together — how they may be organised, in how many ways they can be organised —

Questions and Answers

you have learnt how very fantastic the figure becomes.... Good. But if you take the material world and go down to the most minute element — you know, don't you, that they have come to absolutely invisible things, innumerable things — if you take this element as the basis and the material world as the whole, and if you imagine a Consciousness or a Will playing with all these elements at making all the possible combinations without ever repeating a single one.... Obviously... In mathematics you are told that the number of elements is finite and that therefore the number of combinations is finite; but that is purely theoretical, for if you come down to practice and all these combinations had to follow each other, even if they went at so great a speed that the change would be almost imperceptible, it is quite obvious that the time needed to make all these combinations would be, apparently at least, infinite; that is to say, the number of combinations would be so immense that no limit could be assigned to it — at least no practical limit; the theory is not interesting for us, but practically it would be like that.

So suppose that what I tell you is true, in this sense that there really is a Consciousness and a Will manifesting these combinations, successively, indefinitely, without ever repeating a single one twice; we come to the conclusion that the universe is new at each moment of eternity. And if the universe is new at each moment of eternity, we have to acknowledge that absolutely nothing is impossible; not only that, but that what we call logic is not necessarily true, and that the logic, one could almost say the fantasy of the Creator, is unlimited.

Therefore, if for one reason or other — which might perhaps be difficult to express — if for some reason a combination were not followed by the one nearest to it but by another freely chosen by the Supreme Freedom, all our external certitudes and all our external logic would instantly break down.

For the problem is much more complicated than you think: it is not only on one plane, in one field, that is to say, what may be called a surface of things, that there is this practically infinite

3 October 1956

number of elements permitting of eternally new combinations, there is besides what may be called a depth, that is to say, other dimensions. And the Creation is the result not only of surface combinations but of combinations of depths below this surface — what in other terms are called “psychological factors”. But I am at the moment taking a purely mathematical stand, although I don’t speak the language of mathematics, but still it is a mathematical conception. And so here we come to the problem:

Every time a new element is introduced into the total set of possible combinations, it causes what may be called a tearing of its limits: the introduction of something which makes all past limits disappear and new possibilities come in and multiply infinitely the possibilities of old. So, you had a world which, according to the ancient knowledge, had twelve depths or twelve — how to put it? — successive dimensions; and into this world of twelve dimensions, suddenly new dimensions are precipitated; then all the old formulas are instantly transformed and the whole possibility of the old unfolding becomes... one can’t say increased but supplemented by an almost infinite number of new possibilities, and all this in such a way that all the previous logic becomes illogical in the presence of the new logic.

I am not speaking at all of what the human mind has made of the universe, for that is to reduce it to its own dimension; I am speaking of the fact just as it is, of a total set of combinations which are realised successively, in accordance with an order and a choice which, obviously, completely elude the human consciousness, but to which man has to some extent adapted himself and which, with a great effort of study such as humanity has pursued down the centuries, he has succeeded in formulating well enough to be able to hook himself on to something tangible.... It is obvious that modern scientific perception is much nearer to something corresponding to the universal reality than were the perceptions of the Stone Age, for instance — this without the shadow of a doubt. But even this is going to be suddenly completely overpassed, exceeded, and probably

Questions and Answers

turned quite topsy-turvy by the intrusion of something which was not in the universe which was studied.

Well, it is from this change, this sudden transformation of the universal element which quite certainly is going to bring about a kind of chaos in the perceptions, that a new knowledge will emerge. This, in the most general way, is the result of the new manifestation.¹

From an altogether restricted, external and limited point of view, I shall now speak to you of certain things which don't belong to my own experience but which I have heard about; for instance, that there is a greater number of what are called "child prodigies". I haven't met any, so I can't tell you what is truly prodigious about these children, but still, according to the stories that are related, there are obviously some kind of new types which seem astonishing to the ordinary human consciousness. It is examples of this kind, I believe, that we would like to know in order to understand what is happening.... But it is possible, in fact, that things are happening now which we are not used to watching. But it is a question of interpretation. The only thing I am sure of is what I have just told you, that the quality, the number and the nature of the possible combinations in the universe are suddenly going to change so considerably that it will probably be quite bewildering for all those who do research.

Now, we shall see.

(Silence)

¹ When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following comment about "the new element": "It is not a question of 'new things' in the sense that they did not exist before, but that they were not manifested in the universe. If they were not already there, involved, they could never have come! That is obvious. Nothing can exist which does not already exist from all eternity in the Supreme, but in the manifestation it is new. The element is not new but it is newly manifested, it has newly come out of the Non-manifest. New, what does that mean? It has no meaning, a 'new thing'! It is new *for us* in the Manifestation, that is all."

3 October 1956

I could perhaps add a practical word to what I have just told you; it is only an illustration of a detail, but it will be an indirect answer to other questions which were asked some time ago about the so-called laws of Nature, causes and effects, “inevitable” consequences in the material field, and more particularly from the point of view of health; for example, that if one doesn’t take certain precautions, if one doesn’t eat as one should, doesn’t follow certain rules, necessarily there are consequences.

It is true. But if this is seen in the light of what I have just said, that no two universal combinations are alike, how can laws be established and what is the absolute truth of these laws?... It does not exist.

For, if you are logical, of course with a little higher logic, since no two things, two combinations, two universal manifestations are ever the same, how can anything repeat itself? It can only be an appearance but is not a fact. And to fix rigid laws in this way — not that you cut yourself off from the apparent surface laws, for the mind makes many laws, and the surface very obligingly seems to comply with these laws, but it is only an appearance — but anyway this cuts you off from the creative Power of the Spirit, it cuts you off from the true Power of the Grace, for you can understand that if by your aspiration or your attitude you introduce a higher element, a new element — what we may now call a supramental element — into the existing combinations, you can suddenly change their nature, and all these so-called necessary and ineluctable laws become absurdities. That is to say that you yourself, with your conception, with your attitude and your acceptance of certain alleged principles, you yourself close the door upon the possibility of the miracle — they are not miracles when one knows how they happen, but obviously for the outer consciousness they seem miraculous. And it is you *yourself*, saying to yourself with a logic that seems quite reasonable, “Well, if I do this, that will necessarily happen, or if I don’t do that, necessarily this other thing will happen”, it is you yourself who close the door — it

Questions and Answers

is as though you were putting an iron curtain between yourself and the free action of the Grace.

How nice it would be to imagine that the Supreme Consciousness, essentially free, presiding at the universal Manifestation, could be full of fantasy in its choice and make things follow one another not according to a logic accessible to human thought but in accordance with another kind of logic, that of the unforeseen!

Then there would no longer be any limits to the possibilities, to the unexpected, the marvellous; and one could hope for the most splendid, the most delightful things from this sovereignly free Will, playing eternally with all the elements and creating unceasingly a new world which logically would have absolutely nothing to do with the preceding one.

Don't you think it would be charming? We have had enough of the world as it is! Why not let it become at least what we think it ought to be?

And I am telling you all this in order that each one of you may put as few barriers as you can in the way of the possibilities to come. That's my conclusion.

I don't know if I have made myself understood, but indeed a day will come, I suppose, when you will know what I meant. That's all, then.

Some time later, during a "Friday Class", Mother spoke once again on the subject of child prodigies.

Recently, in one of the Wednesday classes, we talked about child prodigies. Some say that the number of child prodigies is increasing considerably, and some — even among Americans — say it is the influence and work of Sri Aurobindo, and others say it is a result of atom bombs! But the fact is that there is a fairly large number of child prodigies. I did not want to speak about it in much detail, for I did not have any proofs in hand, that is, I did not have any good examples to give. It happens that since

3 October 1956

then someone has brought me a French book written by a child of eight.² Naturally there are people who dispute the possibility, but I shall explain to you later how such a thing is possible.

The book is remarkable for a child of eight. This does not mean that if the age of the child were not known the book would be considered wonderful; but there are, here and there, some sentences in it which are quite astonishing. I have noted down these sentences and am going to read them out to you. (*Mother skims through her book.*)

A little phrase like this: "If we truly love one another, we can hide nothing from each other".... Obviously this is fine.

And then something else written to a boy with freckles — you know what freckles are, don't you? She writes to him: "You are beautiful, yes indeed, your freckles are so pretty; one would say that an angel had sown grains of wheat all over your face so as to attract the birds of the sky there." Surely this is very poetic.

And finally, something really fine which opens the door to the explanation I am going to give you: "I am only an ear, a mouth; the ear hears a storm of words which I cannot explain to you, which an immense voice hurls within me, and my mouth repeats them and nothing of what I say can compare with the streaming of light which is within me."

Obviously this is very beautiful.

It seems that here and there in her poems — she has written many — one can find reminiscences of Maeterlinck, for instance; so people have concluded that it was not she who had written them, for at the age of eight one doesn't read Maeterlinck, that it must have been someone else. But in fact there is no need at all to suppose a hoax, and the publisher indeed declares that he is sure of what he is about, that he knows the child very intimately — in fact he was in a way her adoptive father, for her father was dead — and can guarantee that there is no deception. But it is

² Minou Drouet, born in 1947, author of *Arbre mon ami*.

Questions and Answers

not at all necessary to suppose a deception in order to explain this phenomenon.

Authors, writers, who were inspired and serious in their creative work, that is to say, who were concentrated in a kind of consecration of their being to their literary work, form within themselves a sort of mental entity extremely well-constituted and coordinated, having its own life, *independent of the body*, so that when they die, when the body returns to the earth, this mental formation continues to exist altogether autonomously and independently, and as it has been fashioned for expression it always seeks a means of expression somewhere. And if there happens to be a child who has been formed in particularly favourable circumstances — for instance, the mother of this little girl is herself a poetess and a writer; perhaps the mother herself had an aspiration, a wish that her child would be a remarkable, exceptional being — anyway, if the child who is conceived is formed in particularly favourable circumstances, an entity of this kind may enter into the child at the time of birth and try to use him to express itself; and in that case, this gives a maturity to the child's mind, which is quite extraordinary, exceptional and which enables him to do things of the kind we have just read.

We could say, without fear of sounding quite absurd, that if what she has written surprisingly resembles certain things in Maeterlinck or has the characteristics of his writings, even with certain almost identical turns of phrase, we could very well imagine that a mental formation of Maeterlinck has incarnated in this child and is using this young instrument to express itself.

There are similar examples, for instance, among musicians. There are pianists who have individualised their hands and made them so wonderfully conscious that these hands are not decomposed — not the physical hands: the hands of the subtle physical and vital — they are not decomposed, do not dissolve at the time of death. They remain as instruments to play the piano and always try to incarnate in the hands of someone playing the piano. I have known some cases of people who, as they were

3 October 1956

about to play, felt as though other hands entered into theirs and started playing really marvellously, in a way they could not have done themselves.

These things are not as exceptional as one might believe, they happen quite often.

I saw the same thing in someone who used to play the violin and another who played the cello — two different cases — and who were not very wonderful performers themselves. One of them was just beginning his studies and the other was a good performer, but nothing marvellous. But all of a sudden, the moment they played the compositions of certain musicians, something of that musician entered into their hands and made their performance absolutely wonderful.

There was even a person — a woman — who used to play the cello, and the moment she played Beethoven, the expression of her face completely changed into Beethoven's and what she played was sublime, which she could not have played unless something of Beethoven's mind had entered into her.

Mother, isn't this exceptional faculty harmful for the persons who play?

Why do you suppose it would do them harm? It does them good!
It is always good to make a progress or to exceed oneself.

But for the child?

I don't understand. For the child?

Yes. She is already fully mature at the age of eight.

But it is something wonderful to be at the age of eight the expression of something which surpasses the intelligence! In what way do you suppose it could harm her? I don't quite understand your question.

Questions and Answers

When one grows up, one becomes less plastic.

No. You mean that what often happens is that a child prodigy is no longer a prodigy at all when he grows up. But, precisely, those who have studied these cases say that what is exceptional about the things happening now is that child prodigies become, as they put it, prodigious men, that is, the exceptional faculty remains in them and becomes more firmly established as they grow up.

But I don't see how it can be bad, it can only be good. In what way can it be bad? It is as if you said, "If one has a beautiful soul, that is bad!"

When something of a higher nature enters into you, it is a grace, isn't it?

10 October 1956

Some days ago, during the Translation Class¹ I found a passage in *The Life Divine* which, I thought, might interest you this evening. Sri Aurobindo is speaking of the movement of Nature and he explains how from matter which seems inert came life, then how from life mind emerged and also how from mind will emerge the supermind or the spiritual life; and he gives a kind of brief survey of the time it takes. I am going to read this passage to you and shall tell you later what connection it has with our present situation:

“The first obscure material movement of the evolutionary Force is marked by an aeonic graduality; the movement of life-progress proceeds slowly but still with a quicker step, it is concentrated into the figure of millenniums; mind can still further compress the tardy leisureliness of Time and make long paces of the centuries; but when the conscious spirit intervenes, a supremely concentrated pace of evolutionary swiftness becomes possible.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 932

I am reading this to you because I have been asked about the action of the Supermind, and I had compared this manifestation of the Supermind to that of the mind which, according to all modern scientific discoveries, took nearly a million years to evolve from the animal brain, the ape-brain, to the first human brain. And I told you that, consequently, one should not expect this to take place in a few months or a few years, that it would

¹ Until 1958, three times a week, in another class, Mother used to translate into French certain books of Sri Aurobindo: *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, the last six chapters of *The Life Divine* and the first part of *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

Questions and Answers

obviously take much longer. Some people, it seems, thought that I was announcing that the superman would not come before another million years! I want to correct this impression.

Sri Aurobindo has said that as the development rises in the scale of consciousness, the movement becomes more and more rapid, and that when the Spirit or the Supermind intervenes, it can go much faster. Therefore we may hope that in a few centuries, the first supramental race will appear.

But even that is rather disconcerting for some people, for they think it contradicts what Sri Aurobindo has always promised: that the time has come for the supramental transformation to be possible.... But we must not confuse a supramental transformation with the appearing of a new race.

What Sri Aurobindo promised and what naturally interests us, we who are here now, is that the time has come when some beings among the *élite* of humanity, who fulfil the conditions necessary for spiritualisation, will be able to transform their bodies with the help of the supramental Force, Consciousness and Light, so as no longer to be animal-men but become supermen.

This promise Sri Aurobindo has made and he based it on the knowledge he had that the supramental Force was on the point of manifesting on the earth. In fact it had descended in him long ago, he knew it and knew what its effects were.

And now that it has manifested universally, I could say, generally, the certainty of the possibility of transformation is of course still greater. There is no longer any doubt that those who will fulfil or who now fulfil the conditions are on the way to this transformation.

The conditions Sri Aurobindo gives in detail in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and in still greater detail in his last articles on the Supramental Manifestation.² So now it is only a question of realisation.

² See *The Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 1–74.

10 October 1956

Now, if someone wants to ask me a question on the subject....

The method of these realisations, formerly, used to be an integral surrender to you. Now it is still the same thing; so, in these new conditions, should not this surrender be still more rigorous than before?

What I read today³ seems to be the most essential condition for starting, because it is the most universal.

(*After a silence*) Everyone must follow his path in accordance with his own nature, and there is always a preference for one way rather than another. As we read in one of our recent classes, for one who follows the path of action, it is much more difficult to feel that the human personality does not exist and that only the divine Force works. For one who follows the path of knowledge it is relatively very easy, it is something one discovers

³ "It is then by a transformation of life in its very principle, not by an external manipulation of its phenomena, that the integral Yoga proposes to change it from a troubled and ignorant into a luminous and harmonious movement of Nature. There are three conditions which are indispensable for the achievement of this central inner revolution and a new formation; none of them is altogether sufficient in itself, but by their united threefold power the uplifting can be done, the conversion made and completely made. For, first, life as it is is a movement of desire and it has built in us as its centre a desire-soul which refers to itself all the motions of life and puts in them its own troubled hue and pain of an ignorant, half-lit, baffled endeavour: for a divine living, desire must be abolished and replaced by a purer and firmer motive-power, the tormented soul of desire dissolved and in its stead there must emerge the calm, strength, happiness of a true vital being now concealed within us. Next, life as it is is driven or led partly by the impulse of the life-force, partly by a mind which is mostly a servant and abettor of the ignorant life-impulse, but in part also its uneasy and not too luminous or competent guide and mentor; for a divine life the mind and the life-impulse must cease to be anything but instruments and the inmost psychic being must take their place as the leader on the path and the indicator of a divine guidance. Last, life as it is is turned towards the satisfaction of the separative ego; ego must disappear and be replaced by the true spiritual person, the central being, and life itself must be turned towards the fulfilment of the Divine in terrestrial existence; it must feel a Divine Force awaking within it and become an obedient instrumentation of its purpose."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 166

Questions and Answers

almost immediately. For one who follows the path of love it is elementary, since it is by giving himself that he progresses. But for one who follows the path of action it is much more difficult, and consequently for him the first step is to do what is said here in the passage of *The Synthesis of Yoga* which we have just read: to create in himself this complete detachment from the fruit of action, to act because this is what must be done, to do it in the best possible way, and not to be anxious about the consequences, to leave the consequences to a Will higher than his own.

One can't make a general rule for the order of importance of the paths, it is an exclusively personal affair. And there is a time when one understands very well, it is apparent, that no two paths are alike, no two paths can be alike, and that every man follows his own path and that this is the truth of his being. One can, if one looks from a sufficient height, see a difference in the speed of advance, but it does not always conform to the external signs; and one could say a little humorously, that it is not always the wisest who goes fastest!

(Silence)

It seems to me no longer possible to make general rules. Indeed, the Grace is upon all. And what is necessary to let it act? It is very difficult to say.

If one can see it, feel it, experience its action, so to say, be conscious of its presence and movement, then one has the joy of the movement, the progress, the realisation; but this does not mean that if one doesn't feel this joy, the action of the Grace is not there, the realisation not there.

And after all, all the ways of being of the Divine, all the forms of being in the manifestation are necessary to express the Divine. It is this manifestation as a whole, in its totality, which progresses towards a growing, infinite, eternal perfection. It is not each separate element, individually, it is all together, as a

10 October 1956

collective and total expression of the divine Truth. All this is moving forward constantly, eternally, towards a greater perfection. The universe of tomorrow will necessarily be more divine, if one may say so, than the universe of yesterday; and that of yesterday was more divine than the one preceding it. And so, it could be said that the Divine, in his expression of Himself, is in perpetual progress towards a more and more perfect, a more and more divine manifestation.

And in that case, each element has only to manifest, as perfectly as possible, its own law, what it should be in the whole, in order to do the utmost of what ought to be done. It is thus a conscious, an enlightened, one could almost say a disinterested, discovery of this truth of each being, which for it is the first and most important necessity.

17 October 1956

Is delight the highest state? And if so, could it be said that when one loses delight, one's consciousness is lowered?

Sri Aurobindo has said that the universe is built upon the delight of existence and that delight, being its origin is necessarily also its goal, so this would mean in fact that delight is the highest state.

But I don't need to tell you that this is not delight as it is understood in the ordinary human consciousness.... Indeed, that delight is beyond the states which are generally considered as the highest from the yogic point of view, as for instance, the state of perfect serenity, of perfect equality of soul, of absolute detachment, of identity with the infinite and eternal Divine, which necessarily raises you above all contingencies. Parallel to this state there can be another which is the state of perfect, integral, universal love, which is the very essence of compassion and the most perfect expression of the Grace which wipes out the consequences of all error and all ignorance. These two states have always been considered as the summit of consciousness; they are what could be called the frontier, the extreme limit of what the individual consciousness can attain in its union with the Divine.

But there is something which lies beyond; it is precisely a state of perfect delight which is not static: delight in a progressive manifestation, a perfect unfolding of the supreme Consciousness.

The first of the two states I spoke about leads almost always to a withdrawal from action, an almost static condition, and very easily would it lead to Nirvana — in fact, it has always been the way prescribed for all those in search of Nirvana. But this state of delight I am speaking about, which is essentially divine

17 October 1956

because it is free, totally free from all possibility of oppositions and opposites, does not break away from action; on the contrary, it leads to an integral action, perfect in its essence and completely liberated from all ignorance and all bondage to ignorance.

One can experience, on the path — when one has made some progress, when there is a greater understanding, a more total opening, a more intimate union with the divine Consciousness, one can experience this Delight as something that passes by and colours life and gives it its true meaning, but as long as one is in the human consciousness, this Delight is very easily deformed and changes into something which no longer resembles it at all. Therefore, one could hardly say that if one loses the delight, one's consciousness is lowered, for... the Delight I am speaking about is something which cannot ever be lost. If one has reached beyond the two states I spoke about a while ago, that is to say, the state of perfect detachment and close union, and the state of perfect love and compassion, if one has gone beyond these two states and found the divine Delight, it is practically impossible to come down from there. But in practical life, that is, on the path of yoga, if you are touched, even in passing, by this divine Delight, it is obvious that, should it leave you, you are bound to feel that you have come down from a peak into a rather dark valley.

But Delight without detachment would be a very dangerous gift which could very easily be perverted. So, to seek Delight before having acquired detachment does not seem to be very wise. One must first be above all possible opposites: indeed, above pain and pleasure, suffering and happiness, enthusiasm and depression. If one is above all that, then one may safely aspire for Delight.

But as long as this detachment is not realised, one can easily confuse Delight with an exalted state of ordinary human happiness, and this would not at all be the true thing nor even a perversion of the thing, for the nature of the two is so different, almost opposite, that you cannot pass from one to the other.

Questions and Answers

So, if one wants to be safe on the path, it seems to me that to seek for peace, for perfect calm, perfect equality, for a widening of the consciousness, a vaster understanding and liberation from all desire, all preference, all attachment, is certainly an indispensable preliminary condition.

It is the guarantee of both inner and outer equipoise.

And then on this equilibrium, on this foundation which must be *very solid*, one may build whatever one wants. But to begin with, the foundation must be there, unshakable.

(*Silence*)

Someone has asked me what I meant by these words:

“One must be calm.”

It is obvious that when I tell someone, “Be calm”, I mean many different things according to the person. But the first indispensable calm is mental quietude, for generally that is the one that’s most lacking. When I tell someone, “Be calm”, I mean: Try not to have restless, excited, agitated thoughts; try to quieten your mind and to stop turning around in all your imaginations and observations and mental constructions.

One could justifiably add a question: You tell us “Be calm”, but what should we do to be calm?... The answer is always more or less the same: you must first of all feel the need for it and want it, and then aspire, and then try! For trying, there are innumerable methods which have been prescribed and attempted by many. These methods are generally long, arduous, difficult; and many people get discouraged before reaching the goal, for, the more they try, the more do their thoughts start whirling around and becoming restless in their heads.

For each one the method is different, but *first* one must feel the need, for whatever reason it may be — whether because one is tired or because one is overstrained or because one truly wants

17 October 1956

to rise beyond the state one lives in — one must first understand, feel the need of this quietude, this peace in the mind. And then, afterwards, one may try out successively all the methods, known ones and new, to attain the result.

Now, one quickly realises that there is another quietude which is necessary, and even very urgently needed — this is vital quietude, that is to say, the absence of desire. Only, the vital when not sufficiently developed, as soon as it is told to keep quiet, either goes to sleep or goes on strike; it says, “Ah! no. Nothing doing! I won’t go any farther. If you don’t give me the sustenance I need, excitement, enthusiasm, desire, even passion, I prefer not to move and I won’t do anything any longer.” So there the problem becomes a little more delicate and perhaps even more difficult still; for surely, to fall from excitement into inertia is very far from being a progress! One must never mistake inertia or a somnolent passivity for calm.

Quietude is a very positive state; there is a positive peace which is not the opposite of conflict — an active peace, contagious, powerful, which controls and calms, which puts everything in order, organises. It is of this I am speaking; when I tell someone, “Be calm”, I don’t mean to say “Go and sleep, be inert and passive, and don’t do anything”, far from it!... True quietude is a very great force, a very great strength. In fact one can say, looking at the problem from the other side, that all those who are really strong, powerful, are always very calm. It is only the weak who are agitated; as soon as one becomes truly strong, one is peaceful, calm, quiet, and one has the power of endurance to face the adverse waves which come rushing from outside in the hope of disturbing one. This true quietude is always a sign of force. Calmness belongs to the strong.

And this is true even in the physical field. I don’t know if you have observed animals like lions, tigers, elephants, but it is a fact that when they are not in action, they are always so perfectly still. A lion sitting and looking at you always seems to be telling you, “Oh, how fidgety you are!” It looks at you

Questions and Answers

with such a peaceful air of wisdom! And all its power, energy, physical strength are there, gathered, collected, concentrated and — without a shadow of agitation — ready for action when the order is given.

I have seen people, many people, who could not sit still for half an hour without fidgeting. They had to move a foot or a leg, or an arm or their head; they had to stir restlessly all the time, for they did not have the power or the strength to remain quiet.

This capacity to remain still when one wants to, to gather all one's energies and spend them as one wishes, completely if one wants, or to apportion them as one wants in action, with a perfect calm even in action — that is always the sign of strength. It may be physical strength or vital strength or mental strength. But if you are in the least agitated, you may be sure there is a weakness somewhere; and if your restlessness is integral, it is an integral weakness.

So, if I tell someone “Be calm”, I may be telling him all kinds of things, it depends upon each person. But obviously, most often it is, “Make your mind quiet, don't be restless all the time in your head, don't stir up lots of ideas, calm yourself.”

For most people an experience exists only when they can explain it to themselves. The experience in itself — contact with a certain force, a widening of consciousness, communion with an aspect of the Divine, no matter what experience, an opening of the being, the breaking down of an obstacle, crossing over a stage, opening new doors — all these experiences, if people cannot explain them to themselves in so many words and materialise them in precise thoughts, it is as though these did not exist! And it is just this need for expression, this need for translation, which causes the greater part of the experience to lose its power of action on the individual consciousness. How is it that you have a decisive, definitive experience, that, for instance, you have opened the door of your psychic being, you have been in communion with it, you know what this means, and then — it

17 October 1956

does not stay? It is because it does not have a sufficiently tangible power unless you can express it to yourself. The experience begins for you only when you are able to describe it. Well, when you are able to describe it, the greater part of its intensity and its capacity of action for the inner and outer transformation has already evaporated. There it may be said that expression, explanation is always a coming down. The experience itself is on a much higher plane.

24 October 1956

I have something here, I don't know if it will take us very far, but still it will make a good change. All these last few weeks the subject was always progress: how to progress, what hindered progress, how to use the supramental Force, etc. This is going on, I have a whole packet still! But we may change the subject for once.

Someone has asked me a question about death: what happens after death and how one takes a new body.

Needless to say, it is a subject which could fill volumes, no two cases are alike: practically *everything* is possible in the life after death as everything is possible on earth when one is in a physical body, and all statements when generalised become dogmatic. But still one may look at the problem in some detail, and sometimes one makes interesting discoveries.

The question is like this:

“When an especially developed soul leaves the body, does it take with it the subtle physical sheath? When it reincarnates, how does it introduce this into the new body?”

Even to answer this, as I have told you, it would be necessary to write volumes or to speak for hours. For, to tell the truth, no two cases are alike — there are similarities, classifications can be made, but they are purely arbitrary. What I wanted to do was to read to you the following, for it is quite amusing — oh, I don't want to be... not serious! Let us say it is quite interesting:

“These questions are asked with reference to an old Indian tradition, the occult knowledge of the sage-king

24 October 1956

Pravanahana who is mentioned in the Upanishads (Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka):

“It is said that after death, the soul of one who has done good deeds takes the path of the ancestors, ‘pitriyana’, it becomes smoke, night, etc., attains to the world of the fathers and finally to the lunar paradise. The Brahmasutra deduces from this that the soul takes with it all the elements, even those of the subtle physical, which will be needed in the next incarnation.”

So a question:

“Is this correct? Is the subtle physical sufficiently conscious in that case?”

We shall keep aside the questions; I am continuing:

“Then the Upanishads add: after having exhausted the store of good deeds, the soul leaves the lunar paradise, reaches the sky, then the air, then the clouds, taking on the nature of each of these things, precipitates on the earth as rain, enters the seeds, penetrates the body of the father in the form of food, and finally builds up the body of the child.”

This is really a rather complicated process, isn't it? (*Laughter*)
But I found it very amusing. And now the question (*laughing*):

“Is it necessary to follow this uncertain and hazardous process? Does not the soul directly animate the body with all the mental, vital and subtle physical elements organised around it and necessary for the next life? Does it take up the elements of the subtle physical world? If so, how do they harmonise with the hereditary

Questions and Answers

characteristics? Above all, must it pass through the body of the father?"

There we are!

The only thing I can say is that it is possible things sometimes happen like that. Quite probably — at least I hope so — the person who described this may have observed a phenomenon of this kind; I hope it is not a mere mental construction of his occult imagination.... It raises a few practical problems! But still, of course, there is nothing impossible. Only, it is difficult to imagine the soul entering the rain, which enters the seed, which makes the plant sprout up, and then entering the father's stomach in the form of food, more or less cooked (!) and finally proceeding to the conception of the child. I don't say it is impossible, but it is very, very, *very* complicated!

I may say that I have been present at innumerable incarnations of evolved souls in beings either preparing to be born or already born. As I said, the cases are quite different; it depends more on psychological conditions than on material ones, but it also depends on material conditions. It depends on the state of development of the soul which wants to reincarnate — we take the word "soul" here in the sense of the psychic being, what we call the psychic being — it depends on its state of development, on the milieu in which it is going to incarnate, on the mission it has to fulfil — that makes many different conditions.... It depends very largely on the state of consciousness of the parents. For it goes without saying that there is a stupendous difference between conceiving a child deliberately, with a conscious aspiration, a call to the invisible world and a spiritual ardour, and conceiving a child by accident and without intending to have it, and sometimes even without wanting it at all. I don't say that in the latter case there cannot also be an incarnation, but it usually takes place later, not at the conception.

For the formation of the child it makes a great difference.

If the incarnation takes place at the conception, the whole

24 October 1956

formation of the child to be born is directed and governed by the consciousness which is going to incarnate: the choice of the elements, the attraction of the substance — a choice of the forces and even the substance of the matter which is assimilated. There is already a selection. And this naturally creates altogether special conditions for the formation of the body, which may already be fairly developed, evolved, harmonised before its birth. I must say that this is quite, quite exceptional; but still it does happen.

More frequently there are cases in which, just at the moment of its birth, that is to say, of its first gesture of independence, when the child begins to develop its lungs by crying as much as it can, at that moment, very often, this sort of call from life makes the descent easier and more effective.

Sometimes days and at times months pass, and the preparation is slow and the entry takes place very gradually, in quite a subtle and almost imperceptible way.

Sometimes it comes much later, when the child itself becomes a little conscious and feels a very subtle but very real relation with something from above, far above, which is like an influence pressing upon it; and then it can begin to feel the need of being in contact with this something which it does not know, does not understand, but which it can only feel; and this aspiration draws the psychic and makes it descend into the child.

I am giving you here a few fairly common instances; there are many others; this may happen in innumerable different ways. What I have described to you are the most frequent cases I have seen.

So, the soul which wants to incarnate stays at times in a domain of the higher mind, quite close to the earth, having chosen its future home; or else it can descend further, into the vital, and from there have a more direct action; or again it can enter the subtle physical and very closely govern the development of its future body.

Now the other question — the one about departure.

Questions and Answers

That too depends on the degree of development, the conditions of death — and above all on the unification of the being and its attitude at the time of leaving the body. The question here was about fully developed beings, that is, fully developed psychic beings — and I don't know if it means a psychic being which has profited by its presence in a physical body to do yoga, for then the conditions are quite different. But in a more general way, I have often told you that, with regard to the external envelope of the being, everything depends on its attitude at the moment of death, and that attitude necessarily depends on its inner development and its unification.

If we take the best instance, of someone who has unified his being completely around the divine Presence within him, who is now only *one* will, *one* consciousness, this person will have grouped around his central psychic being a fully developed and organised mind, an absolutely surrendered and collaborating vital and an obedient, docile and supple physical being. This physical being, as it is fully developed, will have a subtle body — what Sri Aurobindo calls the “true physical” — which will infinitely surpass the limits of its body and have enough suppleness, plasticity, balance to be able to adhere to the inner parts of the being and follow the movement of the soul in its... I don't want to say in its ascent, but in its peregrinations outside the body. What the soul will do, where it will go — it all depends on what it has decided before leaving the body. And this capacity to keep around itself the being that has been fully organised and unified in its physical life, will allow it to really choose what it wants to do. And this also represents a very different field of possibilities, from passing consciously from one body into another, directly — there are instances in which one of these fully conscious and fully developed beings has slowly prepared another being capable of receiving and assimilating it, and in order not to stop its material work when it leaves one body, it goes and joins another psychic being, merges with it, combines with it in another physical body; that is an extreme case, extremely

24 October 1956

rare also, but one which forms part of an altogether traditional occult knowledge — to the instance at the other extreme, where the soul having finished its bodily experience, wants to assimilate it in repose and prepare for another physical existence later, sometimes much later. And so this is what happens, among many other possibilities: it leaves in each domain — in the subtle physical, in the vital, in the mental domain — the corresponding beings; it leaves them with a sort of link between them, but each one keeps its independent existence, and it itself goes into the zone, the reality, the world of the psychic proper, and enters into a blissful repose for assimilation, until it has assimilated (*laughing*), as described in this paper, all its good deeds, digested all its good deeds, and is ready to begin a new experience. And then, if its work has been well done and the parts or sheaths of its being which it has left in their different domains have acted as they should there, when it descends again, it will put on one after another all these parts which lived with it in a former life, and with this wealth of knowledge and experience it will prepare to enter a new body.... This may be after hundreds or thousands of years, for in those domains all that is organised is no longer necessarily subject to the decomposition which here we call “death”. As soon as a vital being is fully harmonised, it becomes immortal. What dissolves it and breaks it up are all the disorders within it and all the tendencies towards destruction and decomposition; but if it is fully harmonised and organised and, so to say, divinised, it becomes immortal. It is the same thing for the mind. And even in the subtle physical, beings who are fully developed and have been impregnated with spiritual forces do not necessarily dissolve after death. They may continue to act or may take a beneficial rest in certain elements of Nature like water — generally it is in some liquid, in water or the sap of trees — or it may be, as described here (*laughing*), in the clouds. But they may also remain active and continue to act on the more material elements of physical Nature.

I have given you here a certain number of examples; I tell

Questions and Answers

you, I could talk to you for hours and there would always be new examples to give! But this covers the subject broadly and opens the door to imagination.

There we are.

31 October 1956

Mother, someone has asked me to request you to explain one of your sentences. You have said somewhere that one must become divine before one can bear the pressure of Divine Love. It is in the "Diary".

Oh! you are repeating it a little freely!
Well, what does he want to know?

He is asking whether man must first become divine before Love can spread over the earth.

I don't think this is what is meant. Surely what you mean is that Divine Love cannot manifest until man becomes divine. Is that what you mean?

That is what we understand.

Oh! that's how you understand it!... But I don't think this is what is meant.

First of all, we are going to take the historical fact, if there is one. That is to say, through the action of the forces of separation, Consciousness became inconscience and matter was created such as it is, on a basis of inconscience so total that no contact seemed possible between the Origin and what was created. And this total inconscience made a direct descent necessary, without passing through the intermediate regions, a direct descent of the divine Consciousness in its form of Love. And it is this descent of Divine Love into matter, penetrating it and adding a new element to its composition, which has made possible the ascent, slow for us, but an uninterrupted ascent, from inconscience to consciousness and from darkness to light. Therefore, one cannot say that Love

Questions and Answers

can manifest only when the creation becomes divine, for it is *on the contrary* because of its manifestation that creation can become divine once again.

What I said there has nothing to do with this.

I was speaking not of the world in general but of human consciousness in particular; and certainly, I was alluding to the fact that this Divine Love which animates all things, penetrates all, upbears all and leads all towards progress and an ascent to the Divine, is not felt, not perceived by the human consciousness, and that even to the extent the human being does perceive it, he finds it difficult to bear — not only to contain it, but be able to tolerate it, I might say, for its power in its purity, its intensity in its purity, are of too strong a kind to be endured by human nature. It is only when it is diluted, deformed, attenuated and obscured, so to say, that it becomes acceptable to human nature. It is only when it moves away from its true nature and essential quality that man accepts it, and even (*smiling*) approves of it and glorifies it. This means that it must already be quite warped in order to be accepted by the human consciousness. And to accept it, bear it and receive it in its plenitude and purity, the human consciousness must become divine.

This was what I meant, not anything else. I was stating that a human being, unless he raises himself to the divine heights, is incapable of receiving, appreciating and knowing what divine Love is. Love must cease to be divine to be accepted by man.

But that is a phenomenon of the outer, superficial consciousness; it doesn't prevent Love in its form of Grace from being at work everywhere and always, and from doing its work in an unknown but constant way, to put it thus; and I think, in fact, that it never works so well as when it is not known... for even the so-called human understanding is already a deformation.

That is the meaning of the sentence, and nothing else. I was not speaking of a cosmic phenomenon.

Mother, you said, on one of these Wednesdays: "The

31 October 1956

experience begins for you only when you can describe it. Well, when you are able to describe it, the greater part of its intensity and its capacity for action for the inner and outer transformation has already evaporated.”

Talk of 17 October 1956

So?...

So what should be done with the experience? If there is an experience without the power to express it, what happens?

There too, what I meant was that the experience precedes and transcends by far the formulation you give it in your mind. The experience comes before, often long before the capacity to formulate it. The experience has a fullness, a force, a power of *direct* action on the nature, which is immediate, instantaneous. Let us take as an example that in certain circumstances or by an exceptional grace you are suddenly put into contact with a supramental light, power or consciousness. It is like an abrupt opening in your closed shell, like a rent in that opaque envelope which separates you from the Truth, and the contact is established. Immediately this force, this consciousness, this light acts, even on your physical cells; it acts in the mind, in the vital, in the body, changes the vibrations, organises the substance and begins its work of transformation. You are under the impact of this sudden contact and action; for you it is a sort of indescribable, inexpressible state which takes hold of you, you haven't any clear, precise, definite idea of it, it is... "something that happens". It may give you the impression of being wonderful or tremendous, but it is inexpressible and incomprehensible for you. That is the experience in its essence and its true power.

Gradually, as the action is prolonged and the outer being begins to assimilate this action, there awakens a capacity of observation, first in the mental consciousness, and a kind of

Questions and Answers

objectivisation occurs: something in the mind looks on, observes and translates in its own way. This is what you call understanding, and this is what gives you the impression (*smiling*) that you are having an experience. But that is already considerably diminished in comparison with the experience itself, it is a transcription adapted to your mental, vital and physical dimension, that is, something that is shrunken, hardened — and it gives you at the same time the impression that it is growing clearer; that is to say, it has become as limited as your understanding.

That is a phenomenon which always occurs even in the best cases. I am not speaking of those instances where this power of experience is absorbed by the unconsciousness of your being and expressed by a more and more unconscious movement; I am speaking of the case in which your mind is clear, your aspiration clear, and where you have already advanced quite considerably on the path.... And even when your mind begins to be transformed, when it is used to receiving this Light, when it can be penetrated by it, is sufficiently receptive to absorb it, the moment it wants to express it in a way understandable to the human consciousness — I don't mean the ordinary consciousness but even the enlightened human consciousness — the moment it wants to formulate, to make it precise and understandable, it reduces, diminishes, limits — it attenuates, weakens, blurs the experience, even granting that it is pure enough not to falsify it. For if, anywhere in the being, in the mind or the vital, there is some insincerity which is tolerated, well, then the experience is completely falsified and deformed. But I am speaking of the best instances, where the being is sincere, under control, and where it functions most favourably: the formulation in words which are understandable by the human mind is *necessarily*, inevitably, a restriction, a diminution of the power of action of the experience. When you can tell yourself clearly and consciously: "This and that and the other happened", when you can describe the phenomenon comprehensibly, it has already lost some of its power of action, its intensity, its truth and force. But this does

31 October 1956

not mean that the intensity, the power of action and the force were not there — they were there, and probably in the best cases the utmost effect of the experience is produced before you begin to give it a comprehensible form.

I am speaking here of the best cases. I am not speaking of the innumerable cases of those who begin to have an experience and whose mind becomes curious, wakes up and says, “Oh! what is happening?” Then everything vanishes. Or maybe one catches the deformed tail of something which has lost all its force and all its reality.... The first thing to do is to teach your mind *not to stir*: “Above all, don’t move! Above all, don’t move, let the thing develop fully without wanting to know what is happening; don’t be stupid, keep quiet, be still, and wait. Your turn will always come too soon, never too late.” It should be possible to live an experience for hours and for days together without feeling the need to formulate it to yourself. When one does that, one gets the full benefit from it. Then it works, it churns the nature, it transforms the cells — it begins its real work of transformation. But as soon as you begin to look and to understand and to formulate, it is already something that belongs to the past.

There we are.

7 November 1956

“The Shakti, the power of the Infinite and the Eternal descends within us, works, breaks up our present psychological formations, shatters every wall, widens, liberates... she frees the consciousness from confinement in the body; it can go out in trance or sleep or even waking and enter into worlds or other regions of this world and act there or carry back its experience. It spreads out, feeling the body only as a small part of itself, and begins to contain what before contained it; it achieves the cosmic consciousness and extends itself to be commensurate with the universe. It begins to know inwardly and directly and not merely by external observation and contact the forces at play in the world, feels their movement, distinguishes their functioning and can operate immediately upon them as the scientist operates upon physical forces, accept their action and results in our mind, life, body or reject them or modify, change, reshape, create immense new powers and movements in place of the old small functionings of the nature. We begin to perceive the working of the forces of universal Mind and to know how our thoughts are created by that working....”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 172-73

Sweet Mother, how are our thoughts created by the forces of the universal Mind?

Because the forces of the universal Mind enter into our heads. We are bathed in forces, we are not aware of it. We are not something enclosed in a bag and independent from the rest: all forces, all vibrations, all movements enter into us and pass

through us. And so we have a certain mental force held in, that is to say, ready to be used by the formative or creative mental power. These are, as it were, free forces. As soon as a thought coming from outside or a force or movement enters our consciousness, we give it a concrete form, a logical appearance and all kinds of precise details; but in fact all this belongs to a domain one is rarely conscious of.

But this is not a special instance which occurs only from time to time: it is something constant. If a current of force is passing, with a particular thought formation, one sees it passing from one into another, and in each one it forms a kind of centre of light or force which keeps the imprint — more or less pure, more or less clear, more or less mixed — of the initial current; and the result is what we call “our” thought.

But our thought is something which hardly exists. It can be “our” thought only if, instead of being like a public place as we generally are in our normal state — we are like a public place and all the forces pass there, come and go, enter, depart, jostle each other and even quarrel — if instead of being like that, we are a concentrated consciousness, turned upwards in an aspiration, and open beyond the limits of the human mind to something higher; then, being open like this brings down that higher something across all the layers of reality, and this something may enter into contact with our conscious brain and take a form there which is no longer the creation of a universal force or a personal mind stronger than ours, but the *direct* expression and creation of a light which is above us, and which may be a light of the highest kind if our aspiration and opening allow it. That is the only case in which one can say that the thought is our own. Otherwise, all the rest is simply a passing notation: we note down, we invest a force with words, a force that’s altogether universal and collective, which enters, goes out, moves and passes freely from one person to another.

But how is the thought formed in the universal Mind?

Questions and Answers

In the universal Mind?

You say that it comes from outside, don't you?

Ideas have a higher origin than the mind. There is a region of the mind, higher than the ordinary mind, in which there are ideas, typical ideas, really prototypes; and these ideas descend and are clothed in mental substance. So, in accordance with — how to put it? — the quality of the receiver, they either keep all their own qualities and original nature or become distorted, coloured, transformed in the individual consciousness. But the idea goes far beyond the mind; the idea has an origin much higher than the mind. So, the functioning is the same from both the universal and the individual point of view; the individual movement is only representative of the universal one. The *scale* is different, but the phenomenon is the same. Of course, these are no longer “thoughts” as we conceive thoughts; they are universal principles — but it's the same thing — universal principles on which the universes are built.

The universe, after all, is only one person, only one individuality in the midst of the eternal Creation. Each universe is a person who takes form, lives, dissolves, and another takes shape — it is the same thing. For us, the person is the human individual; and from the universal point of view the person is the universal individual; it is one universe in the midst of all the universes.

14 November 1956

Mother finishes reading Part One of *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

Now we have finished. Do you have something to ask about this subject, in conclusion? What are your reflections? Your comments?

(*Silence*)

All right. What effect has this had on you? Has it helped you, did you have the impression that it put you on the way, that it gave you the *key* of the discovery?

Didn't you think anything? Didn't you feel anything, experience anything? You did not... did you listen?

(*Long silence*)

Now the last question; if you do not answer, we won't talk about it any more: Did this make you want to do yoga or not?

(*Mother looks around.*) A nod of the head but, all the same, that's something.

Yes or no? A little, much, not at all?... So (*turning to a child*) it is your turn to speak. Has it made you want to do yoga or not?

There were chapters — when I read and understood it well, then I felt a great aspiration. But at other times...

Why? Because you did not follow or because there was no response?

Questions and Answers

I think sometimes because I did not follow and sometimes because I did not concentrate properly.

Has anyone else anything to say?

Mother, when you read, it gives a great encouragement to do yoga, but when one tries to visualise the effort that must be put in, one doesn't have much confidence in oneself.

When I read it is all right and then it burns out!... Then I must read to you about that very often in order to re-light the spark!

Very well, next time we shall take *Thoughts and Glimpses*.

Is that all? Has anyone a question to ask on the subject?

Mother, how can one conquer the desire to appear good in the eyes of others?

Oh, Lord!... To appear good in others' eyes, to have public approval? Is that it?

First, the best way is to ask oneself why one values others' approval. For what particular reason, because there are many reasons.... If you have a career and your career depends on the good opinion others have of you, then that's a utilitarian reason. If you have a little, or much, vanity and like compliments, that's another reason. If you attach great value to others' opinion of you because you feel they are wiser or more enlightened or have more knowledge, that's yet another reason. There are many others still, but these are the three chief reasons: utility, vanity — usually this is the strongest — and progress.

Naturally, when it is a reason of progress, the attitude is not quite the same, for instead of trying to make a good impression, one must first endeavour to know the impression one is actually making, in all humility, in order to profit by the lesson this gives. That is quite rare, and in fact, if one isn't too naïve, one

14 November 1956

usually attaches importance only to the opinion of those who have more experience, more knowledge and more wisdom than oneself. And so that leads us straight to one of the best methods of cure. It is precisely to come to understand that the opinion of those who are as ignorant and blind as ourselves cannot have a very great value for us from the point of view of the deeper reality and the will to progress, and so one stops attaching much importance to that.

Finally, if one is sincere one desires no other approval except that of one's teacher or one's guru or of the Divine Himself. And that's the first step towards a total cure of this little weakness of wishing to make a good impression on people. Now, if the movement comes from a motive of utility, the one I spoke of first, the question does not arise here, for here we do not depend upon the opinion others have of us, either for living or for our development. So there remains the most frequent instance, the one most difficult to cure: that kind of small, very foolish vanity which makes you like to be complimented and dislike being criticised. So the best way is to look at yourself, to see how very ridiculous you are, how petty, paltry, stupid and all that, to laugh a little at yourself and resolve to do without the compliments of others.

That is all I have to offer.

It is obvious that if it is a matter of yoga, of yogic discipline, an indispensable preliminary condition is to free oneself from this little stupidity of wanting to be appreciated by others. That is not the first step on the path, it is one of the first steps in the preparation for being able to enter on the path. For so long as one needs to be appreciated and complimented, one is a slavish being and a deplorable weakling.

Indeed, it is better not to care at all about what others think of you, whether it is good or bad. But in any case, before reaching this stage, it would be less ridiculous to try to find out the impression you make on others simply by taking them as a mirror in which you see your reflection more exactly than in

Questions and Answers

your own consciousness which is always over-indulgent to all your weakness, blindness, passions, ignorance. There is always quite a charming and pleasant mental explanation to give you a good impression of yourself. But to conclude, when you have the chance of getting information that's a little more trustworthy and reliable about the condition you are in, it is better not to ask the opinion of others, but only to refer all to the vision of the guru. If you really want to progress, this is the surest path.

There we are. Is that all?

Mother, I had a question. The control of one's own movements and the control of the vast life around oneself— are these interdependent or independent?

Self-control and the control of what surrounds you?... That depends on your standpoint. The police superintendent, for instance, has a certain control over the circumstances around him, but he doesn't usually have much self-control! (*Laughter*)

What exactly do you want to know?

To understand the meaning of "control over the vast life around it."¹

Oh! it is a phrase from the book!

It is quite obvious that one must first begin by self-control, otherwise one has no effect on the surroundings except to increase the confusion.

To give an example, Vivekananda had no control over his own anger, but he had great control over the life around him.

¹ "It is thus by an integralisation of our divided being that the Divine Shakti in the Yoga will proceed to its object; for liberation, perfection, mastery are dependent on this integralisation, since the little wave on the surface cannot control its own movement, much less have any true control over the vast life around it."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 172

14 November 1956

This is the first time I've heard that. He had no control over his anger? Who told you that story?

It is in his biography.

Did he say it himself? Is it authentic, this story?

(Another disciple) Yes, sometimes he used to get carried away.

But he knew it himself?

Yes, he knew it.

Anyway, he did not have a “great control” over his surroundings: he had a great influence, which is something very different. One can't control outer matter if one does not control inner matter, for they are the same thing. But he had an influence, which is quite different. It is not a mastery, it is an influence. That is, he could awaken certain movements in others, but he could not control them, it was they who had to control themselves with the awakening, it was not — I say “he”, it can be anyone you see, it is a general rule.

Besides, it is childishly simple, for mastery means the knowledge of handling certain vibrations; if you know how to handle these vibrations you have the mastery. The best field of experimentation is yourself: first you have the control in yourself and once you have it in yourself you can transmit the vibration to others, to the extent you are capable of identifying yourself with them and of thus creating this vibration in them. And if you cannot handle a vibration in yourself, you don't even know the procedure; you don't even know what to do, so how can you manipulate it in others? You may encourage them by words, by an influence over them, to do what is needed to learn self-control, but you cannot control them directly.

Questions and Answers

To control something, a movement, is simply to replace by one's presence, without words or explanations, the bad vibration by the true one. This is what constitutes the power of mastery. It does not lie in speaking, in explaining; with words and explanations and even a certain emanation of force, you may have an influence on someone, but you do not control his movement. The control of the movement is the capacity to oppose the vibration of this movement by a stronger, truer vibration which can stop the other one... I could give you an example, you know, a very easy one. Two people are arguing in front of you; not only are they arguing, but they are on the point of coming to blows; so you explain to them that this is not the thing to do, you give them good reasons for stopping and they come to a stop. You will have had an influence on them. But if you simply stand before them and look at them and send out a vibration of peace, calm, quietude, without saying a word, without any explanation, the other vibration will no longer be able to last, it will fall away of itself. That is mastery.

The same thing applies to the cure of ignorance. If you need words to explain something, that is not true knowledge. If I have to say all that I do say for you to understand me, that is not mastery, it is simply that I am able to exercise an influence on your intelligence and help you to understand and awaken in you the desire to know and discipline yourselves, etc. But if by looking at you, without saying anything I am not able to make the light enter into you, the light which will make you understand, I won't have mastered the movement or the state of ignorance. Do you understand this?

So I can tell you with certainty that at least in this matter, if it is historically correct that Vivekananda had movements of anger which he could not control, that is, that he was carried away either in word or action, well, in this matter he was incapable of controlling those around him. He could only awaken similar vibrations in them, and so probably justify their weakness as regards this. He could say to them in so many words "Above

14 November 1956

all, don't fly into a temper", but that is no use at all. It is the eternal "Do what I say, not what I do." But that has no effect.

(Silence)

Mother, the problem comes up in our class.

Oh! oh! you get into a temper with your students? *(Laughter)*

To control and discipline them, what should one do if one has no self-control?

Then one can't! *(Laughter)*

But the way you describe it, this control will take a whole lifetime!

Oh! what a pity! *(Laughter)*

But how can you hope... Let us see, you have an indisciplined, disobedient, insolent pupil; well, that represents a certain vibration in the atmosphere which, besides, is unfortunately very contagious; but if you yourself do not have within you the opposite vibration, the vibration of discipline, order, humility, of a quietude and peace which nothing can disturb, how do you expect to have any influence? You are going to tell him that this should not be done? — Either that will make things worse or he will make fun of you!

Usually...

And if by chance you don't have any control yourself and become angry, then it's finished! You lose for ever all possibility of exercising any authority over your students.

Teachers who are not perfectly calm, who do not have an endurance that never fails, and a quietude which nothing can

Questions and Answers

disturb, who have no self-respect — those who are like that will get nowhere. One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must be a great yogi to be a good teacher. One must have a perfect attitude to be able to exact a perfect attitude from the students. You cannot ask anyone to do what you don't do yourself. That is a rule. So look at the difference between what is and what ought to be, and you will be able to estimate the extent of your failure in class.

That is all I can offer you.

And I may add, since there's the occasion for it: we ask many students here when they grow up and know something, to teach others. There are some, I believe, who understand why; but there are also others who think it is because it is good to serve in some way or other and that teachers are needed and we are happy to have them. But I tell you — for it is a fact — that I have never asked anyone educated here to give lessons without seeing that this would be for him the best way of disciplining himself, of learning better what he is to teach and of reaching an inner perfection he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this opportunity of disciplining himself, which is *exceptionally* severe. Those who succeed as teachers here — I don't mean an outer, artificial and superficial success, but becoming truly good teachers — this means that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, controlling their movements, capable of a clear-sightedness, an understanding of others and a never-failing patience.

If you go through that discipline and succeed, well, you have not wasted your time here.

And I ask all those who accept to give lessons, to accept it in that spirit. It is all very well to be kind and do some service and be useful; that is good of course, a very good thing; but it is only one aspect and perhaps the least important aspect of the problem. The most important one is that it is a Grace given to you so that you can achieve self-control, an understanding of

14 November 1956

the subject and of others which you could never have acquired but for this opportunity.

And if you have not benefited from this all these years you have been teaching others, it means that you have at the very least wasted half your time.

(Silence)

Is that all? Convinced? You are going to set to work!

(Another disciple) Mother, what you have said concerns each teacher, his inner attitude.

Yes.

But concerning the outer organisation of the school, how do you want it to be done? — because at the moment there are many disputes among the teachers.

Disputes! Not too many, I hope!

Discussions. (Laughter)

How do I want it?

I can tell you things in general, you see, but the details of the organisation... What is your problem?

So far what you have said about the University² consists of general ideas, but what about the details?

Yes...

² The Ashram School was originally named Sri Aurobindo International University Centre; later the name was changed to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

Questions and Answers

There are many differences of opinion; so what is the true way you want us to follow?

But excuse me, first you must tell me from what point of view. “Organisation” is very vague, isn’t it? If it is about the courses of study, that’s quite a formidable subject which can’t be settled just like that. If it is the method of teaching, that is something quite personal — personal in both cases. The general plan is easy, that is, it has been given quite clearly; but unless you give me an instance about which, let us say, there is some discussion and different opinions...

For example, let us take one point, Mother. You have said that the student must be given full freedom. Now, some interpret this as meaning that there should be no fixed classes, for the student should be left free to do what he likes, to come to the class or not as he likes, etc. So in this case, there should not be fixed hours for each class. And in this case the organisation becomes very complicated — how to arrange the classes?

Quite impossible! But when did I say that the student must be left free to come or not?...

Excuse me, you must not confuse things. I have said and I repeat that if a student feels quite alien to a subject, for example, if a student feels he has an ability for literature and poetry and has a distaste or at least an indifference for mathematics, if he tells me, “I prefer not to follow the mathematics course”, I can’t tell him, “No, it is absolutely necessary to go to it.” But if a student has decided to follow a class, it is an absolutely *elementary* discipline that he follows it, goes to it regularly and behaves himself properly there; otherwise he is *altogether unworthy* of going to school. I have never encouraged anyone to roam about during class-hours and to come one day and be absent the next, never, for, to begin with, if he can’t submit to this quite elementary

14 November 1956

discipline, he will never acquire the least control over himself, he will always be the slave of all his impulses and all his fancies.

If you don't want to study a certain branch of knowledge, that is all right, no one can compel you to do it; but if you decide to do something — anything in life, if you decide to do a thing — you must do it *honestly*, with discipline, regularity and method. And without whims. I have never approved of anyone being the plaything of his own impulses and fancies, never, and you will never be able to have that from me, for then one is no longer a human being, one is an animal. So, here is one of the questions quite settled, without any discussion.

Now, another problem?

That will be for next time! (Laughter)

Good. Let us keep it for another time. We shall stop here.

21 November 1956

Mother distributes the booklet *Thoughts and Glimpses*, then glances through one of the copies:

Five paragraphs dealing with five modes of being or five states of being, and the same thing recurs in all the different domains:

“When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 377

This is about the mental being in man, that is, his mental activities; and Sri Aurobindo contrasts knowings with Knowledge.

Actually I should be the one to ask you if you know what Sri Aurobindo means by “knowings”, and why he contrasts them with Knowledge. For if I explain all this to you without your making any effort, it is (*laughing*) spoon-feeding you, giving you a meal all cooked without your taking the trouble to cook it! And the result will be that sooner or later, in half an hour or in a day’s time, you will have completely forgotten what I told you and it will have had no effect on you. I should like someone to tell me what he understands by “knowings”. (*To a child*) Tell me, come along.

It is the knowledge acquired through outer studies.

It is obviously that. It is everything that can be learnt through the study of outer phenomena and in all fields of mental activity, all that can be learnt by material observation and technical studies in different subjects, scientific, artistic, philosophical, literary; in fact all that the human mind has produced through the external

21 November 1956

study of life and things: all that can be found in books, all that can be found through the direct study of Nature and all that can be found by reasoning, deduction, analysis and all the speculative activities of the human mind.

And Sri Aurobindo puts reason at the summit of man's mental activity; he tells us that in the development of the mind, reason is the surest guide, the master, so to speak, who prevents you from deviating from the path or taking the wrong one, from straying away and losing your common sense. He makes reason the arbiter of man's mental activity, which guides and controls; and so long as you have to deal with mental activities, even the most speculative, it is reason which must guide you and prevent you from going astray from the right path and entering more or less fantastic and unhealthy imaginations.

But if you want to attain true knowledge, that is, spiritual knowledge, which can be obtained only through identification, you must go beyond this reason and enter a domain higher than the mind, where one is in direct contact with the Light either of the Overmind or the Supermind. And Sri Aurobindo says this, that so long as you are in the mental field, reason helps you, it is your helper, your guide; but if you want to have true knowledge by identity, reason becomes a limitation and a bar. That is not to say that you should lose it! But it must be subordinated to your movement of ascent. Sri Aurobindo does not tell you to become unreasonable, he says you must pass beyond reason into a higher Truth and Light.

And what is interesting in the structure of this section is that the reflection Sri Aurobindo makes about the mental being, the intellectual activity of man, he also makes for the vital activity, the power of action and realisation. He takes mental activity as the basis of human life, for it belongs to man in his own right, exclusively; and in the process of life, that is, of human existence, human realisation, thought normally comes first. Man, because he is a thinking being, first gets an idea, then he invests this idea with a force, a vital power, a power for action, and changes

Questions and Answers

it, transforms it into will. This will is then concentrated on the object to be realised, and with the vital force and effort added to the thought, the conception, it becomes the lever of action.

But here Sri Aurobindo uses a word which is not “will”, he speaks of “willings”:

“When we have passed beyond willings, then we shall have Power. Effort was the helper, Effort is the bar.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 377

And he contrasts these “willings” — that is, all these superficial wills, often opposite and contradictory and without any lasting basis because they are founded on what he calls a “knowing” and not on knowledge — with the true will. These willings are necessarily fragmentary, passing, and often in opposition to one another, and this is what gives to the individual life and even to the collective its nature of incoherence, inconsistency and confusion.... The word “will” is normally reserved to indicate what comes from the deeper being or the higher reality and what expresses in action the true knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has contrasted with knowings. So, when this will which expresses the true knowledge manifests in action, it manifests through the intervention of a deep and *direct* power which no longer requires any effort. And that is why Sri Aurobindo says here that the true power for action cannot come until one has gone beyond the stage of willings, that is, until the motive of action is the result not of a mere mental activity but of true knowledge.

True knowledge acting in the outer being gives true power.

This seems to be an explanation, the real explanation of that very familiar saying which is not understood in its essence but expresses a truth: “Where there’s a will, there’s a way”, to will is to have the power. It is quite obvious that this does not refer to “willings”, that is, to the more or less incoherent expression of desires but to the true will expressing a true knowledge; for this

21 November 1956

true will carries in itself the force of truth which gives power — an invincible power. And so, when one expresses “willings”, to be able to apply them in life and make them effective, some effort must come in — it is through personal effort that one progresses, and it is through effort that one imposes one’s willings upon life to make it yield to their demands — but when they are no longer willings, when it is the true will expressing the true knowledge, effort is no longer required, for the power is omnipotent.

Now, I should like you to ask me questions on what I have just told you.

So? Nothing?

Mother, what is the first step to take to have knowledge?

The first step?... To get rid of the illusion of the absolute value of “knowings”, that is, of human knowledge and mental activity. First, to come out of the illusion that they really have a concrete and absolute value.

And you will notice that this is perhaps the most difficult thing to do; it is the most difficult step, for, when you study general subjects like science, the different branches of science or philosophy and all such activities, when you study them a little seriously and deeply, you very easily come to the sense of the relativity of this knowledge. But when you come down a step again, just to the next level of mental activity and look at the different problems of life — for example, what should be done in this or that case, the conditions for realising something, a skill one wants to learn, or even the different necessities of life, the conditions of living, of health — you will find that generally a rational being, or somebody about to become one, forms a set of ideas for himself, which are really knowings: such a thing will produce such an effect, or in order to obtain this thing, that other must be done, etc. And you have a whole mental construction in yourself, made of observations, studies, experiments; and the more you advance in age, the greater becomes the number of

Questions and Answers

experiments and results of study and observation. You make for yourself a sort of mental structure in which you live. And unless you are powerfully intelligent, with an opening to the higher worlds, you have an innate, spontaneous, unshakable conviction of the absolute worth of your observations, and even without your having to think, it acts automatically in your being: by a sort of habit this thing inevitably brings that particular result. So for you, when this has happened quite often, the habit of associating the two movements naturally gives rise within you to the feeling of the absolute value of your ideas or your knowings about yourself and your life. And there it is *infinitely* more difficult to come to an understanding of the relativity — the uncertainty bordering on illusion — of that knowledge. You find this out only if, with a will for spiritual discipline and progress, you look at these things with a deep critical sense and see the kind of bondage into which you have put yourself, which acts without any need of intervention from you, automatically, with the support of the subconscious and that kind of automatism of reflexes which makes causes and effects follow each other in a habitual order without your being in the least aware of it.

Well, if you want to attain knowledge, the first thing, the first indispensable step is not to believe in the validity of those things. And if you observe yourself, you will realise that this belief in the validity of these observations and deductions is almost absolute in you. It expresses itself through all sorts of ideas which reasonably enough appear evident to you, yet are exactly the limitations which prevent you from reaching knowledge by identity. For instance, if a man plunges into the water without knowing how to swim, he will be drowned; if there is a fairly powerful wind, it will upset things; when it rains, you get wet, etc. — you see, there are instances like this at every second, it is like that. And this seems so obvious to you that when you are told, “Well, but no, this is a relative knowledge, it is like that but it could be different”, the one who tells you this seems to you *a priori* half-mad. And you say, “But still, these things

21 November 1956

are concrete! These are things we can see, touch, feel, these are proofs our senses give to us every minute, and if we do not take our stand on them, we are sure to go astray and enter the irrational.”

So, if you remember what Sri Aurobindo has said, you will understand that the first condition for having knowledge is to go beyond reason. That is why he says, “Reason was the helper” — yes, during the whole childhood of humanity and the whole period of growth of the individual being — but if you want to go beyond the human being, the ordinary human state, well, you must go beyond reason; and these things which seem to you *so* obvious that they are indisputable, you should be able to understand, to feel from within yourself that they are *absolutely* relative and that what seems completely similar, identical in everyone’s experiences, these very things, if seen from above with a higher consciousness, become absolutely subjective and relative and are only individual formations adapted to the individual need and consciousness, and that instead of having an absolute reality, they have only an altogether relative reality which completely disappears as soon as you rise to a higher level.

So now, if you look at the state of your thought in this light, you will see that it is not so easy to take even this first step.

Examples can be given, but they are superficial examples, very fragmentary in themselves, and have only an altogether relative value, as for instance this, which I have many a time given you, about medical knowledge in the world: if you have studied enough or lived long enough, that is, a fairly good number of years, you will find that with the same authority, the same certitude, the same conviction, at one time certain things are not only considered bad, but on the basis of an absolute knowledge, an unquestionable observation, they are reputed to have a certain effect, and at another time these very unquestionable observations lead to diametrically opposite results. Very often I give an example which I happened to observe, especially as regards the value of certain foods and their effects on the

Questions and Answers

body, like certain fruits or vegetables: at a particular time in medical history — not so long ago, about fifty or sixty years ago — when you had a certain illness, the doctor gave you a list of things recommending to you with absolute seriousness not to touch any of these lest you become even more ill — I could give you the list, but it is not interesting. Well, about these very same things, fifty or sixty years later, not the same doctor perhaps but another one will tell you with the same seriousness, the same unquestionable certitude and authority that these are the very things you must eat if you want to be cured! So if you have observed things pretty well and have a slightly critical mind, you can tell yourself, “Oh! it must depend on people or perhaps on the period.” And I shall tell you, as the doctor-friend I knew in France forty or fifty years ago used to tell all his patients, “Take a remedy while it is in fashion, for then it will cure you.” There.

Well, there is a kind of finely sensitive state, in which one understands this extraordinary relativity of things, a state in which it becomes so acute that to affirm something, to say “This is like that” or “Such a thing has that particular result”, spontaneously seems to you a stupidity.... But before reaching that point, one may reflect a little and say, “After all, we shall believe in a particular thing so long as it is in fashion.”

Is that all?

Mother, this question arises because in our studies at school we feel at times a great distaste and ask ourselves, “What’s the use of all this?” So with what attitude should we study?

I have always said that studies have the same effect on the brain as gymnastics on the muscles. For example, mental gymnastics are very necessary to make one’s mental activity supple, to strengthen and enrich it and give it a subtlety of understanding it would not have if you didn’t do these gymnastics. Of

21 November 1956

late — indeed for quite a long time already — I have noticed, for instance, that if I am unfortunate enough to read to you something with philosophical terms or to speak to you from a slightly philosophical point of view, you cannot follow. And that is simply because you have not done any philosophical gymnastics. It is not that you are not intelligent, it is not that you don't have the capacity to understand: it is because you haven't done the proper gymnastics. I could tell you the same thing in another way: you have not learnt the language. But the same words are used, only with a slightly different relation between them, with different turns of phrase, with a different mental attitude to things. Well, this difference of attitude you cannot have unless you have done the corresponding gymnastics. And it is very easy for you to understand this example, for you all know very well that you could never do your athletic exercises if you were not trained. Even if you have special abilities, even if you are gifted, if you do not practise and train yourself, you cannot do them. Consider all your agility exercises, if you were asked to do them on the first day, you could not, it would be quite impossible, and you know it very well. If someone were to tell you spontaneously, "Ah! now do this" — say, a certain kind of jump, what used to be called the flying somersault — you would say, "This person is truly unreasonable, it is impossible!" Well, this is the same thing; if I take certain books and read them to you, you cannot follow because you have completely neglected philosophical mental gymnastics. It is exactly the same thing if someone who has not done mathematics is asked to follow a mathematical reasoning — he won't be able to.... And so, this means that if you want to express fully, totally, the deeper reality of your being, you will express it in a much richer, more integral, more varied, more productive way if all the parts of your being are fully developed like this by appropriate gymnastics.

I believe I have already explained this to you once. If it were a question of leading what till today was considered the true spiritual life, that is, of giving up altogether all physical

Questions and Answers

activities in order to unite with the supreme divine Reality and remain in this union, of leaving life and all outer expression and going away into Nirvana, into an identity which not only will no longer be expressed in the world, but which takes you *out* of the world completely, then it is obvious that all these gymnastics, whether physical, vital, sensory or mental, are absolutely useless, and that those people considered all this simply a waste of time and quite futile. But *for us* who want to realise almost the very opposite, that is, who, after having identified ourselves with the supreme Reality, want to make It descend into life and transform the world, if we offer to this Reality instruments which are refined, rich, developed, fully conscious, the work of transformation will be more effective.

And that is why instead of telling you when you are a little mite, to do (*laughing*) what those little children are asked to do, to sit still and enter or pretend to enter into meditation, instead of telling you that you must be in constant contemplation and totally indifferent to all things in the world, that you must have only one thought, to prepare yourself to receive the divine Grace, instead of that you are told, “No, try to become developed and conscious beings who know things and have healthy, strong, agile bodies capable of doing exceptional things, an adequate will and a rich, supple, agile mind; these will be useful for the future realisation.”

That is why, moreover, people who are used to judging from appearances and without knowing what they are talking about, say that in the Ashram there is no spiritual life, that we lead an altogether material life. That’s how it is! But it is so much the worse for them, it is not any the worse for us; indeed it is all the same to us.

There we are. No more questions? Nobody has anything to say?

28 November 1956

“When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar.

“When we have passed beyond willings, then we shall have Power. Effort was the helper; Effort is the bar.

“When we have passed beyond enjoyings, then we shall have Bliss. Desire was the helper; Desire is the bar.

“When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real Persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar.

“When we have passed beyond humanity, then we shall be the Man. The Animal was the helper; the Animal is the bar.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 377

It is the same principle expressed in all the activities or aspects of the being.... It is obvious that in order to come out of the state of the original inconscience desire was indispensable, for without desire there would have been no awakening to activity. But once you are *born* into consciousness, this very desire which helped you to come out of the inconscience prevents you from liberating yourself from the bonds of matter and rising to a higher consciousness.

It is the same thing for the ego, the self. In order to pass on to a higher plane, one must first exist; and to exist one must become a conscious, separate individual, and to become a conscious separate individual, the ego is indispensable, otherwise one remains mingled with all that lies around us. But once the individuality is formed, if one wants to rise to a higher level and live a spiritual life, if one wants even to become simply

Questions and Answers

a higher type of man, the limitations of the ego are the worst obstacles, and the ego must be surpassed in order to enter the true consciousness.

And indeed, for the ordinary elementary life of man, all the qualities belonging to the animal nature, especially those of the body, were indispensable, otherwise man would not have existed. But when man has become a conscious, mental being, everything that binds him to his animal origin necessarily becomes a hindrance to progress and to the liberation of the being.

So, for everyone — except for those who are born free, and this is obviously very rare — for everyone this state of reason, of effort, desire, individualisation and solid physical balance in accordance with the ordinary mode of living is indispensable to begin with, until the time one becomes a conscious being, when one must give up all these things in order to become a spiritual being.

Now, has anybody a question to ask on the subject?

Sweet Mother, when can one say that one is conscious?

That is always a relative question. One is never altogether unconscious and one is never completely conscious. It is a progressive state.

But a time comes when instead of doing things automatically, impelled by a consciousness and force of which one is quite unaware — a time comes when one can observe what goes on in oneself, study one's movements, find their causes, and at the same time begin to exercise a control first over what goes on within us, then on the influence cast on us from outside which makes us act, in the beginning altogether unconsciously and almost involuntarily, but gradually more and more consciously; and the will can wake up and react. Then at that moment, the moment there is a conscious will capable of reacting, one may say, "I have become conscious." This does not mean that it is a

28 November 1956

total and perfect consciousness, it means that it is a beginning: for example, when one is able to observe all the reactions in one's being and to have a certain control over them, to let those one approves of have play, and to control, stop, annul those one doesn't approve of.

Besides, you must become aware within of something like a goal or a purpose or an ideal you want to realise; something other than the mere instinct which impels you to live without your knowing why or how. At that time you may say you are conscious, but it doesn't mean you are perfectly conscious. And moreover, this perfection is so progressive that I believe nobody can say he is perfectly conscious; he is on the way to becoming perfectly conscious, but he isn't yet.

Sweet Mother, what kind of a state is it in which one has passed beyond all enjoyings?

Well, it is a desireless state in which one lives — as Sri Aurobindo explains later — in an Ananda which has no cause, which does not depend on any circumstances, inner or outer, which is a permanent state, independent of the circumstances of life, causeless. One is in Ananda because one is in Ananda. And in fact it is simply because one has become aware of the divine Reality.

But one cannot feel the Ananda unless one has become desireless. If one has desires, all one feels is just pleasures and enjoyments, but that is not Ananda. Ananda has an altogether different nature and can only manifest in the being when the desires are abolished. So long as one is a being of desire, one cannot feel the Ananda; even were a force of Ananda to descend, it would immediately be falsified by the presence of desires.

(Silence)

(Mother unfolds a sheet of paper.) Here I have a question

Questions and Answers

referring to what we said last time about effort, personal effort.
The question is this:

“In the inner life, why are there periods when one can no longer make a conscious effort, and if one enforces it, parts of the nature revolt or else everything in the being seems to become petrified; effort becomes the mechanical repetition of past movements. What should be done at such times?”

This has been very well observed.

What is not mentioned here is the nature of the effort, for it is a certain kind of effort which leads to the result described here, which is either a revolt or a sort of — yes, petrification, truly, something that becomes absolutely insensible and no longer responds at all to this effort. This happens when the effort is almost exclusively mental and quite arbitrary, in the sense that it does not at all take into account the state of the rest of the being; it has its own idea, its own will, and without any consideration for the rest of the being, it imposes this will on the being as a whole. This is what usually brings about the revolt or the petrification. And the only thing to do is to make the mind quiet. And this is the time to make a movement of self-giving, full of peace, quietude, confidence. If one makes this movement of self-giving, of complete surrender to the divine Will, all the tension arising from the effort, an effort which could be called premature or unconsidered — all the tension arising from this effort gives way. There is a relaxation in the being. And the progress one could not make by this purely mental effort usually comes about almost automatically, by the very fact that one has relaxed in confidence and self-giving to the divine Will.

And then, this is what follows:

“At other times, one has the impression of making no effort, but of feeling only the presence of a consciousness

28 November 1956

due to which in many circumstances of daily life a means of progress is found. One wonders then what effort is and what its value? What we call effort — isn't it too mental a movement?"

That is exactly what I have just explained, which shows that the observation is quite correct.

It is an arbitrary decision of the mind, and being arbitrary and not in conformity with the truth of things, it naturally brings about these wrong reactions. This does not imply that no effort must ever be made but the effort also must be spontaneous. So too I told you once that for meditation to be effective, it must be a spontaneous meditation which takes hold of you rather than one you make an effort to have; well, effort, that kind of tension of the will in the being, must also be something spontaneous, and not the result of a more or less inopportune mental decision.

(Silence)

Any other question? No? No one has anything to say?

Mother, when one wants to go beyond the mind, if one lets go the mind acting (incorrect text)¹ and the influence from above does not come immediately, then during that time what should one do? One becomes like an idiot.
(Laughter)

What do you mean exactly? I don't understand.

If one lets go the mind acting...

If one lets the mind act? Why? I don't understand your question.

¹ The text, incorrectly spoken here by a child, and also the text of the following ten lines, has been slightly modified to give the approximate equivalent of the French. (Translator's note)

Questions and Answers

You said at the beginning, “When one has gone beyond the mind”?...

In order to go beyond the mind...

Oh! to go beyond the mind, let the mind act?... Yes, that is the theory: to go beyond desire, one must let the desires be realised, and to...

(A child) *He said “let go the mind acting”, Sweet Mother.*

Let go? Oh! but one can’t “let go the mind acting”, that’s not English.

To stop the action of the mind.

Ah, now we have it! that’s how you should have put it. So? To stop the action of the mind, is that it? The way to do it?

I am asking...

Naturally! But that is already difficult enough. So what are you asking?

When one stops the reasoning, if something new from above doesn’t come immediately, then during that period sometimes...

One acts like an idiot! (*Laughter*) Then it is better not to stop the reason before going beyond that state!

I mean, in the conditions of life as it is, is it possible to be...

To be unreasonable? Unfortunately that happens very often!

28 November 1956

Is it possible to disregard reason?... It is possible only when you have passed beyond mental activity. It is possible only when you have achieved a surrender, a total giving of yourself. It is possible only when you no longer have any desires. So long as you have desires, have an ego and a will of your own, you cannot give up reason, because, as I said just a moment ago, you would become quite unbalanced and perhaps insane. Therefore reason must be the master until one has gone beyond the state in which it is useful. And as I said, as long as there is an ego and as long as there are desires, and so long as there are impulses and so long as there are passions and preferences, and so long as there are attractions and repulsions, etc., as long as all these things are there, reason is *altogether* useful.

I shall also add that there is another quite indispensable condition in order not to have recourse to reason any more; that is to open no door, no part of the being to the suggestions of the adverse forces. For if you are not completely liberated from the habit of responding to adverse suggestions, if you give up your reason, you also give up reason itself, that is, common sense. And you begin to act in an incoherent way which may finally become quite unbalanced. Well, to be free from suggestions and adverse influences, you must be exclusively under the influence of the Divine.

Now you see the problem; it is a little difficult. This means that unless you are in the presence of a completely illumined and transformed being, it is always better to advise people to act according to their reason. It is perhaps a limitation — it is in fact a great limitation — but it is also a control and it prevents you from becoming one of those half-idiots who are far too numerous in the world.

Reason is a very respectable person. Like all respectable people it has its limitations and prejudices, but that does not prevent it from being very useful. And it keeps you from making a fool of yourself. You would do many things if you did not have reason, things which would lead you straight to your ruin

Questions and Answers

and could have extremely unfortunate consequences, for your best means of discernment until you have attained higher levels is reason. When one no longer listens to reason, one can be led into all sorts of absurdities. Naturally, it is neither the ideal nor the summit, it is only a kind of control and a guide for leading a good life, it keeps you from extravagances, excesses, inordinate passions and above all from those impulsive actions which may lead you to the abyss. There you are.

One must be very sure of oneself, quite free from the ego and perfectly surrendered to the divine Will to be able to do safely without reason.

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between true and false reasons!

Ah! no, you are playing with words. That word, as you use it here, has altogether another meaning, altogether; they are two very different things. Reason is a faculty of discernment. You are speaking of the reasons you give yourself for doing one thing or another — these are excuses the mind gives itself; but the meaning of the word “reason” is quite different there, it is not the same word at all, though it is pronounced and written in the same way. You can look it up in your dictionary, it will give you two completely different definitions of the word “reason”. The reasons one gives oneself — that is, the excuses or explanations one gives oneself — are always tinged with egoism and a need to delude oneself that one is indeed a reasonable being. Ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred this is the way to convince oneself that one is very good, what one does is very good, what one feels is very good, what one thinks is very good; it is to give oneself the impression that one is truly quite satisfactory. So, whatever you do, if you begin to reflect a little, you will tell yourself, “But certainly, I did that because it was like that, that’s the real reason; I felt like that, but it was because of this, that’s an excellent reason” — and so on. But that has nothing to do with

28 November 1956

being reasonable; quite the contrary. It is an excellent means of deceiving oneself and keeping oneself from progressing. It is justifying oneself in one's own eyes.

Moreover, these are always reasons which whitewash you and blacken others; it is a means of keeping your conscience very comfortable, isn't it? What happens to you is the fault of circumstances, if you have made a mistake it is the fault of others, if you have a bad reaction it is others who are responsible, etc.; you emerge white as snow from the judgment of your mind.

Is that all?

5 December 1956

Now we are going to read what should be done to realise what was expressed in the five preceding paragraphs:

“Transform reason into ordered intuition; let all thyself be light. This is thy goal.

“Transform effort into an even and sovereign overflowing of the soul-strength; let all thyself be conscious force. This is thy goal.

“Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy; let all thyself be bliss. This is thy goal.

“Transform the divided individual into the world-personality; let all thyself be the divine. This is thy goal.

“Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna. This is thy goal.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 377

This is what ought to be done.

I believe there is no need for any explanations, it is quite clear... Unless you have some questions? Yes? (*To a child*) Very well, ask your question.

Here it is written: “Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy”?

Yes, this means that it has no cause.

Usually one feels pleasure or joy or enjoyment due to this thing or due to that — from the most material things to things psychological or even mental. For example, to take a mental thing, you read a sentence which gives you a great joy, for it brings you a light, a new understanding; so that joy is a joy which has an object, it is because you read that sentence that

5 December 1956

you feel this joy, if you had not read the sentence, you would not have felt the joy. In the same way, when you hear beautiful music or when you see a beautiful picture or a beautiful landscape, that brings you joy; without those things you would not have felt that joy; it is these which brought you the joy. It is a joy which has an object, which has a cause.

What Sri Aurobindo says is that this enjoying, this joy, this pleasure, on whatever level it be, high or low, must be replaced by an inner bliss which is communicated to the whole being and is continuous, “even”, that is, something that needs no reason, no cause for its existence. The cause is the contact with the divine Bliss which is everywhere and in all things. So once you are in relation with this universal and eternal Bliss, you no longer need an outer object, an outer cause to have joy; it is objectless, and being objectless it can be continuous, “even”. Whatever the outer circumstances, whatever you may be doing, you are in the same state of joy, for this joy does not depend upon outer things, it depends upon your inner condition. You have found the source of joy in yourself, that is, the divine Presence, communion with the Divine; and having found this source of joy in yourself, you need nothing else, nothing whatsoever to have this joy. And as it has no cause, it does not cease; it is a constant state.

(*To the child*) Do you understand? Not very well? Yes — ah!

Does anyone else have a question on what I have just read?

The last paragraph, Sweet Mother: “Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna.”

Oh! that is an image.

The animal — that’s all the instincts of the physical being, the needs of the physical being and all the habits, all the impulses, all the movements of the physical being, the need for food, the

Questions and Answers

need for sleep, the need for activity, indeed all that constitutes the animal part of the being. And then Sri Aurobindo gives the image of Krishna, whom he describes as the Driver of the herds, which is only an image; this means that it is the divine Consciousness which takes possession of all the activities of the physical being and directs and guides all those activities, all its needs, which controls and governs all the movements of the physical animal in man. Sri Aurobindo uses what could be called Indian mythology, taking Krishna as the symbol of the Divine and the herds as the symbol of the animal instincts and animal needs of man. So instead of being one of the animals of the herd, you become the one who leads the herds and governs all their movements instead of allowing them to dominate him.... One is bound; in ordinary life one is bound to all these activities of the physical life and all the needs it represents — the need for food, sleep, activity, rest, etc. — well, instead of being an animal, that is, one subjected to these things and obliged to submit to them, one becomes the Driver of the herd whom Sri Aurobindo calls Krishna, that is, the Divine who takes possession of all the movements of the being and guides and leads them in accordance with the divine Truth.

Sweet Mother, when one has a world-personality, does one still need the individual personality?

Need?... I don't understand.

What is its use?

But it is the individual personality which is transformed into the world-personality. Instead of having the sense of the individual as he ordinarily is — this altogether limited individual who is one little person amidst so many millions and millions of others, a little separate person — instead of feeling like that, this separate

5 December 1956

isolated individual, this little person amidst all the others, becomes aware of the world-individuality, the world-personality, and naturally becomes divine. It is a transformation. It is one thing being transformed into the other.

And Sri Aurobindo does not mean that one loses one's body, he does not speak of the body; he speaks of the vital consciousness, the psychological consciousness, the sense of the separate individual. Just think, you, child, you are one person amidst so many others, aren't you? Well, instead of being like that, you feel you are the world-personality; this sense of division and separation goes away, this limitation disappears. But you remain in your body, you are not compelled necessarily to lose your body; the body is something else.

And it is precisely the body that he is speaking about in the last paragraph: "Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds." When one becomes a divine consciousness, a divine personality, then one can become the master of all the bodily activities, because one is superior to them; one is not bound to these activities, not subject to them, one dominates them, one has a greater consciousness than that of the individual, of the little separate individual; one can make just a little more progress and instead of being subject to all these animal needs of the being, one dominates them. But these are not two consciousnesses, one superimposed on the other, it is one consciousness being transformed into another.

(Looking at the child) I am afraid she doesn't understand at all! She is looking at me completely bewildered!

You are wondering how in a body like this, you can be different from what you are? Well, you can! *(Laughing)* It is something that can happen!

(Silence)

(Mother looks at some written questions.) Here is the exact complement of your question. I am asked:

Questions and Answers

“What are the characteristic features of a world-personality?”

The most characteristic feature is precisely this change of consciousness. Instead of feeling like a little, isolated person, separated from others, one feels one is a universal person, containing all others and intimately united and identified with all others.

And I am asked:

“How does this person speak and act?”

Speak!... The question is not very well put, for if you ask how he speaks, well, he speaks as everybody does, with his voice, his tongue, his mouth and with words! If you were to ask what is the nature of what he says... obviously, if he expresses the state of consciousness in which he lives, he expresses a universal state of consciousness, and seeing things in a different way from ordinary men, he will express them differently, in accordance with what he sees and feels. As for acting... if all the parts of his being are in harmony, his action will obviously express his state of consciousness.

Now, there are people who have very decisive experiences in one part of their being, but these are not necessarily translated, or at least not immediately, in the other parts of their being. It is possible that through sadhana or concentration or through Grace, somebody has attained the consciousness of a world-personality, but that he still continues to act physically in quite an ordinary, nondescript way, because he has not taken care to unify his whole being, and though one part of his being is universally conscious, as soon as he begins to eat, to sleep, walk, act, he does this like all human animals. That may happen. So, it is again a purely personal question, it depends on each one, on his stage of development.

But if it is someone who has taken care to unify his being,

5 December 1956

to identify all its parts with the central truth, then naturally he will act with a total absence of egoism, with an understanding of others, an understanding which comes to him from his identification with others — and so he will act like a sage. But that depends on the care he has taken to unify his whole being around the central consciousness.

For example, to take the most positively material things like food and sleep: it is quite possible that, if he has not taken care to infuse, as it were, his new consciousness into his body, his need for food and sleep will remain almost the same and that he won't have much control over them. On the other hand, if he has taken care to unify his being and has infused his consciousness into the elements constituting his body, well, his sleep will be a conscious sleep and of a universal kind; he will be able to know at will what goes on here or anywhere, in this person or that other, in this corner of the world or any other; and his consciousness, being universal, will naturally put him in contact with all the things he wants to know. Instead of having a sleep that's unconscious and useless, except from a purely material point of view, he will have a productive and altogether conscious sleep.

For food it will be the same thing. Instead of being a slave to his needs, usually in almost entire ignorance of what he needs, well, he will be perfectly conscious, at once of the needs of his body and the means of governing them. He will be able to control his needs and rule them, transform them according to the necessity of what he wants to do.

But this requires a great self-mastery and the realisation of what Sri Aurobindo says in this last paragraph, that is, instead of remaining below, subject to the laws of Nature, dominated by these laws and compelled to submit to them, failing which one is completely unbalanced, one becomes the master, one looks at these things from above, knows the truth of these things and imposes it upon the body which should normally accept it without any difficulty.

Questions and Answers

Anything else on the same subject?

Mother, what does “ordered intuition” mean? (“Transform reason into ordered intuition.”)

Ordered intuition.... For at the beginning, when one enters into contact with the realm of intuition, it is a sort of spasmodic contact; that is, from time to time, for more or less explicable or conscious reasons, one suddenly has an intuition or is possessed by the spirit of intuition; but it is not methodical, not a phenomenon which occurs at will, organised and obeying a central will. But Sri Aurobindo says that if the entire reason is transformed — he speaks of transformation, you know — if the reason is transformed into the very essence, the substance of intuition, then the whole inner movement of the inner mind becomes a movement of intuition, organised as the reason is organised, that is, it becomes active at will, answers all needs and comes into the being in accordance with a methodical system. It is not something which appears and disappears one doesn't know how or why; it is the result of the transformation of the reason, which is the higher part of the human mind, into a light higher than the mental light, a light of intuition. So it becomes ordered, organised, instead of being spasmodic and uncoordinated.

12 December 1956

Straight away we are leaping into the greatest difficulty! I believe this one paragraph alone will be enough for this evening:

“What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 378

Do you know why this seems paradoxical to you? It is simply because Sri Aurobindo has not put in the guide marks of the thought, hasn't led you step by step from one thought to another. It is nothing else. It is almost elementary in its simplicity.

And I am simply going to ask you a question — but in fact I expect no answer — to tell you something very simple: When does something seem impossible to you? — It is when you try to do it. If you had never tried to do it, it would never have seemed impossible to you.

And how is it that you tried to do it? — Because it was somewhere in your consciousness. If it had not been in your consciousness, you would not have tried to do it; and the moment it is in your consciousness, it is quite obvious that it is something you will realise. That alone which is not in your consciousness you cannot realise. It's as simple as that!

Only, instead of telling you the thing in this way, Sri Aurobindo puts it in a way that stimulates your thought. That is the virtue of paradoxes, they compel you to think.

Then, Sweet Mother, what does “impossible” mean?

There is nothing impossible in the world except what is outside

Questions and Answers

your consciousness. And as your consciousness can grow, as what is not in your consciousness today may be in your consciousness after some time, for the consciousness can become wider, so in the eternity of time nothing is impossible.

At the present moment — I have explained this to you once — at the present moment, at a given moment, in certain circumstances, there are impossibilities. But from the eternal point of view in the infinity of time, nothing, nothing is impossible. And the proof is that everything will be. All things, not only those which are conceivable at present, but all those which at present are inconceivable, all things are not only possible, but will be realised. For what we call the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the Absolute — we give him many names, but in fact He is eternal, infinite, absolute — contains in himself not only all that is, but also all that will be, eternally, infinitely; and therefore nothing is impossible. Only, for the consciousness of the temporal and objective being, all things are not possible at the same time; it is necessary to conceive of space and time to make them possible. But outside the manifestation, *everything* is, simultaneously, eternally, potentially, in its possibility. And it is this All, inconceivable, for He is not manifest, who manifests in order to become conceivable.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo tells us. This temporal universe, that is, a universe which is unfolding, a universe which does not exist all at the same time at the same place outside time and space, a universe which becomes temporal and spatial, which is successive — for That which is beyond the manifestation it is truly an absurdity, don't you think so, and a paradox; it is its very contradiction. For the temporal consciousness, it is That which is unthinkable and incomprehensible, and for That, which is incomprehensible to the temporal consciousness, this temporal consciousness is incomprehensible!... We cannot conceive of something which is not in time and space, for we ourselves are in time and space; we attempt an approximation to attain some small understanding of a "Something" which is

12 December 1956

not expressible and is simultaneously everything, eternally and beyond time. We may try, yes, and we use all sorts of words, but we are not able to understand it unless we go outside time and space. Well, to reverse the problem, for That which is beyond time and space, time and space are something paradoxical and incomprehensible: they don't exist, they are not there. And Sri Aurobindo says: "Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being", that is, He changed his non-existence into existence — if you like to put it humorously, in order to know what it is! For so long as He had not become time and space, He could not know it!

But if we go back to the beginning, then it becomes extremely practical, concrete and very encouraging.... For we say this: in order to have the idea of the impossible, that something is "impossible", you must attempt it. For example, if at this moment you feel that what I am telling you is impossible to understand (*laughing*), this means that you are trying to understand it; and if you try to understand it, this means it is within your consciousness, otherwise you could not try to understand it — just as I am in your consciousness, just as my words are in your consciousness, just as what Sri Aurobindo has written is also in your consciousness, otherwise you would have no contact with it. But for the moment it is impossible to understand, for want of a few small cells in the brain, nothing else, it is very simple. And as these cells develop through attention, concentration and effort, when you have listened attentively and made an effort to understand, well, after a few hours or a few days or a few months, new convolutions will be formed in your brain, and all this will become quite natural. You will wonder how there could have been a time when you did not understand: "It is so simple!" But so long as these convolutions are not there, you may make an effort, you may even give yourself a headache, but you will not understand.

It is very encouraging because, fundamentally, the only thing

Questions and Answers

necessary is to want it and to have the necessary patience. What is incomprehensible for you today will be quite clear in a short time. And note that it is not necessary that you should give yourself a headache every day and at every minute by trying to understand! One very simple thing is enough: to listen as well as you can, to have a sort of will or aspiration or, you might even say, desire to understand, and then that's all. You make a little opening in your consciousness to let the thing enter; and your aspiration makes this opening, like a tiny notch inside, a little hole somewhere in what is shut up, and then you let the thing enter. It will work. And it will build up in your brain the elements necessary to express itself. You no longer need to think about it. You try to understand something else, you work, study, reflect, think about all sorts of things; and then after a few months — or perhaps a year, perhaps less, perhaps more — you open the book once again and read the same sentence, and it seems as clear as crystal to you! Simply because what was necessary for understanding has been built up in your brain.

So, never come to me saying, “I am no good at this subject, I shall never understand philosophy” or “I shall never be able to do mathematics” or... It is ignorance, it is sheer ignorance. There is nothing you cannot understand if you give your brain the time to widen and perfect itself. And you can pass from one mental construction to another: this corresponds to studies; from one subject to another: and each subject of study means a language; from one language to another, and build up one thing after another within you, and contain all that and many more things yet, very harmoniously, if you do this with care and take your time over it. For each one of these branches of knowledge corresponds to an inner formation, and you can multiply these formations *indefinitely* if you give the necessary time and care.

I do not believe at all in limits which cannot be crossed.

But I see very clearly people's mental formations and also a sort of laziness in face of the necessary effort. And this laziness and these limits are like diseases. But they are curable

12 December 1956

diseases — unless you have a really defective cerebral structure and lack something; if something was “forgotten” when you were formed, then it is more difficult. It is much more difficult, but it is not impossible. There are people like that, really incomplete, who are like an ill-made object — logically it would be better if they didn’t continue to exist; but still (*laughing*) it is not the custom, it is not the ordinary human way of thinking. But if you are a normal person, well, provided you take the trouble and know the method, your capacity for growth is almost unlimited.

There is the idea that everyone belongs to a certain type, that, for example, the pine will never become the oak and the palm never become wheat. This is obvious. But that is something else: it means that the truth of your being is not the truth of your neighbour’s. But in the truth of your being, according to your own formation, your progress is almost unlimited. It is limited only by your own conviction that it is limited and by your ignorance of the true process, otherwise...

There is nothing one cannot do, if one knows how to do it.

(*Silence*)

I have a question here which is more childish. Someone has asked:

“Why are some people intelligent and others not? Why can some people do certain things while others can’t?”

It is as though you asked why everybody was not the same! Then it would mean that there would only be one single thing, one single thing indefinitely repeated which would constitute the whole universe.... I don’t know, but it seems to me that it wouldn’t be worth the trouble having a universe for that, it would be enough to have just one thing!

But the moment one admits the principle of multiplicity and

Questions and Answers

that no two things are alike in the universe, how can you ask why they are not the same! It is just because they are not, because no two things are alike.

Behind that there is something else which one is not conscious of, but which is very simple and very childish. It is this: “Since there is an infinite diversity, since some people are of one kind and others of a lesser kind, well” — here of course one doesn’t say this to oneself but it is there, hidden in the depths of the being, in the depths of the ego — “why am *I* not of the best kind?” There we are. In fact it amounts to complaining that perhaps one is not of the best kind! If you look attentively at questions like this: “Why do some have much and others little?” “Why are some wise and not others? Why are some intelligent and not others?” etc., behind that there is “Why don’t I have all that can be had and why am I not all that one can be?...” Naturally, one doesn’t say this to oneself, because one would feel ridiculous, but it is there.

There then. Now has anyone anything to add to what we have just said?... Have you all understood quite well? Everything I have said? Nobody wants to say...

(A teacher) *Our daily routine seems a little “impossible” to us.*

Well, wait a century or two and it will become possible! (*Laughter*)

You are told that today’s impossibility is the possibility of tomorrow — but these are very great tomorrows!

(*Silence*)

I have another question about what I told you the other day, when we discussed the distinction between will and willings. I told you that willings — what Sri Aurobindo calls willings — are movements arising not from a higher consciousness coming

down into the being and expressing itself in action, but from impulses or influences from outside. We reserved the word will to express what in the individual consciousness is the expression of an order or impulse coming from the truth of the being, from the truth of the individual — his true being, his true self, you understand. That we call will. And all the impulses, actions, movements arising in the being which are not that, we said were willings. And I told you in fact that without knowing it or at times even knowing it, you are moved by influences coming from outside which enter in without your even being aware of them and arouse in you what you call the will that a certain thing may happen or another may not, etc.

So I am asked:

*“What is the nature of these influences from outside?
Could you give us an explanation of their working?”*

Naturally these influences are of very diverse kinds. They may be studied from a psychological point of view or from an almost mechanical standpoint, the one usually translating the other, that is, the mechanical phenomenon occurs as a sort of result of the psychological one.

In very few people, and even in the very best at very rare moments in life, does the will of the being express that deep inner, higher truth.

(After a silence Mother continues:) The individual consciousness extends far beyond the body; we have seen that even the subtle physical which is yet material compared with the vital being and in certain conditions almost visible, extends at times considerably beyond the visible limits of the physical body. This subtle physical is constituted of active vibrations which enter into contact or mingle with the vibrations of the subtle physical of others, and this reciprocal contact gives rise to influences — naturally the most powerful vibrations get the better of the others. For example, as I have already told

Questions and Answers

you several times, if you have a thought, this thought clothes itself in subtle vibrations and becomes an entity which travels and moves about in the earth-atmosphere in order to realise itself as best it can, and because it is one among millions, naturally there is a multiple and involved interaction as a result of which things don't take place in such a simple and schematic fashion.

What you call yourself, the individual being enclosed within the limits of your present consciousness, is constantly penetrated by vibrations of this kind, coming from outside and very often presenting themselves in the form of suggestions, in the sense that, apart from a few exceptions, the action takes place first in the mental field, then becomes vital, then physical. I want to make it clear that it is not a question of the pure mind here, but of the physical mind; for in the physical consciousness itself there is a mental activity, a vital activity and a purely material activity, and all that takes place in your physical consciousness, in your body consciousness and bodily activity, penetrates first in the form of vibrations of a mental nature, and so in the form of suggestions. Most of the time these suggestions enter you without your being in the least conscious of them; they go in, awaken some sort of response in you, then spring up in your consciousness as though they were your own thought, your own will, your own impulse; but it is only because you are unconscious of the process of their penetration.

These suggestions are very numerous, manifold, varied, with natures which are very, very different from each other, but they may be classified into three principal orders. First — and they are hardly perceptible to the ordinary consciousness; they become perceptible only to those who have already reflected much, observed much, deeply studied their own being — they are what could be called collective suggestions.

When a being is born upon earth, he is inevitably born in a certain country and a certain environment. Due to his physical parents he is born in a set of social, cultural, national,

12 December 1956

sometimes religious circumstances, a set of habits of thinking, of understanding, of feeling, conceiving, all sorts of constructions which are at first mental, then become vital habits and finally material modes of being. To put things more clearly, you are born in a certain society or religion, in a particular country, and this society has a collective conception of its own and this nation has a collective conception of its own, this religion has a collective “construction” of its own which is usually very fixed. You are born into it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts on your formation — that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without even being aware of it and this forms the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious basis will act on you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to free yourself from it, you must first of all become aware of it; and the first step is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (*laughing*) and it all happened without your participating in the least in it. Therefore, it does not even occur to you that there could be something to know there, and still less something you must get rid of. And it is quite remarkable that when for some reason or other you do become aware of the hold of this collective suggestion, you realise at the same time that a very assiduous and prolonged labour is necessary in order to get rid of it. But the problem does not end there.

You live surrounded by people. These people themselves have desires, stray wishes, impulses which are expressed through them and have all kinds of causes, but take in their consciousness an individual form. For example, to put it in very practical

Questions and Answers

terms: you have a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, friends, comrades; each one has his own way of feeling, willing, and all those with whom you are in relation expect something from you, even as you expect something from them. That something they do not always express to you, but it is more or less conscious in their being, and it makes formations. These formations, according to each one's capacity of thought and the strength of his vitality, are more or less powerful, but they have their own little strength which is usually much the same as yours; and so what those around you want, desire, hope or expect from you enters in this way in the form of suggestions very rarely expressed, but which you absorb without resistance and which suddenly awaken within you a similar desire, a similar will, a similar impulse.... This happens from morning to night, and again from night to morning, for these things don't stop while you are sleeping, but on the contrary are very often intensified because your consciousness is no longer awake, watching and protecting you to some extent.

And this is quite common, so common that it is quite natural and so natural that you need special circumstances and most unusual occasions to become aware of it. Naturally, it goes without saying that your own responses, your own impulses, your own wishes have a similar influence on others, and that all this becomes a marvellous mixture in which might is always right!

If that were the end of the problem, one could yet come out of the mess; but there is a complication. This terrestrial world, this human world is constantly invaded by the forces of the neighbouring world, that is, of the vital world, the subtler region beyond the fourfold earth-atmosphere;¹ and this vital world which is not under the influence of the psychic forces or the psychic consciousness is essentially a world of ill-will, of disorder, disequilibrium, indeed of all the most anti-divine things

¹ Consisting of the four principles: physical, vital, mental and psychic.

one could imagine. This vital world is constantly penetrating the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very often quite imperceptible except to a few rare individuals. There are entities, beings, wills, various kinds of individualities in that world, who have all kinds of intentions and make use of every opportunity either to amuse themselves if they are small beings or to do harm and create disorder if they are beings with a greater capacity. And the latter have a very considerable power of penetration and suggestion, and wherever there is the least opening, the least affinity, they rush in, for it is a game which delights them.

Besides, they are very thirsty or hungry for certain human vital vibrations which for them are a rare dish they love to feed upon; and so their game lies in exciting pernicious movements in man so that man may emanate these forces and they be able to feed on them just as they please. All movements of anger, violence, passion, desire, all these things which make you abruptly throw off certain energies from yourself, project them from yourself, are exactly what these entities of the vital world like best, for, as I said, they enjoy them like a sumptuous dish. Now, their tactics are simple: they send you a little suggestion, a little impulse, a small vibration which enters deep into you and through contagion or sympathy awakens in you the vibration necessary to make you throw off the force they want to absorb.

There it is a little easier to recognise the influence, for, if you are the least bit attentive, you become aware of something that has suddenly awakened within you. For example, those who are in the habit of losing their temper, if they have attempted ever so little to control their anger, they will find something coming from outside or rising from below which actually takes hold of their consciousness and arouses anger in them. I don't mean that everybody is capable of this discernment; I am speaking of those who have tried to understand their being and control it. These adverse suggestions are easier to distinguish than, for instance, your response to the will or desire of a being who is of the same

Questions and Answers

nature as yourself, another human being, who consequently acts on you without this giving you a clear impression of something coming from outside: the vibrations are too alike, too similar in their nature, and you have to be much more attentive and have a much sharper discernment to realise that these movements which seem to come out from you are not really yours but come from outside. But with the adverse forces, if you are in the least sincere and observe yourself attentively, you become aware that it is something in the being which is responding to an influence, an impulse, a suggestion, even something at times very concrete, which enters and produces similar vibrations in the being.

There, now. That is the problem.

The remedy?... It is always the same: goodwill, sincerity, insight, patience — oh! an untiring patience and a perseverance which assures you that what you have not succeeded in doing today, you will succeed in doing another time, and makes you go on trying until you do succeed.

And this brings us back to Sri Aurobindo's sentence: if this control seems to you quite impossible today, well, that means that not only will it be possible, but that it will be realised later.

19 December 1956

“Impossibility is only a sum of greater unrealised possibilities. It veils an advanced state and a yet unaccomplished journey.

“If thou wouldst have humanity advance, buffet all preconceived ideas. Thought thus smitten awakes and becomes creative. Otherwise it rests in a mechanical repetition and mistakes that for its right activity.

“To rotate on its own axis is not the one movement for the human soul. There is also its wheeling round the Sun of an inexhaustible illumination.

“Be conscious first of thyself within, then think and act. All living thought is a world in preparation; all real act is a thought manifested. The material world exists, because an Idea began to play in divine self-consciousness.

“Thought is not essential to existence nor its cause, but it is an instrument for becoming; I become what I see in myself. All that thought suggests to me, I can do; all that thought reveals in me, I can become. This should be man’s unshakable faith in himself, because God dwells in him.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 378

What is the meaning of “thought awakes and becomes creative”?

No, Sri Aurobindo says at the beginning of the sentence: “Thought *thus smitten* awakes...” What he says is that in order to progress one must break up old constructions, buffet, demolish all preconceived ideas. Preconceived ideas are the habitual mental constructions in which one lives, and which

Questions and Answers

are fixed, which become rigid fortresses and cannot progress because they are fixed. Nothing that is fixed can progress. So the advice is to break down, that is, destroy all preconceived ideas, all fixed mental constructions. And this is the true way to give birth to new ideas or to thought — active thought — thought which is creative.

And a little further on Sri Aurobindo says that you must first be conscious of yourself, *then* think, and *then* act. The vision of the inner truth of the being must precede all action; first the vision of the truth, then this truth formulating itself into thought, then the thought creating the action. That is the normal process.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo gives as the process of creation. In the Unmanifest a thought began to play, that is to say, it awoke and became active; and because thought became active, the world was created.

And in conclusion Sri Aurobindo declares that thought is not essential to existence, it is not the cause of existence, but is just the process, the instrument of becoming, for thought is a principle of precise formulation which has the power of creating forms. And as an illustration Sri Aurobindo says that all that one thinks one is, one can, by the very fact of that thinking, become. This knowledge of the fact that *all* that one thinks one can be, is a very important key for the development of the being, and not only from the point of view of the possibilities of the being, but also from that of the control and choice of what one will be, of what one wants to be.

This makes us understand the necessity of not admitting into ourselves any thought which destroys aspiration or the creation of the truth of our being. It reveals the considerable importance of not allowing what one doesn't want to be or doesn't want to do to formulate itself into thought within the being. Because to think these things is already a beginning of their realisation. From every point of view it is bad to concentrate on what one doesn't want, on what one has to reject, what one refuses to be,

19 December 1956

for the very fact that the thought is there gives to things one wants to reject a sort of right of existence within oneself. This explains the considerable importance of not letting destructive suggestions, thoughts of ill-will, hatred, destruction enter; for merely to think of them is already to give them a power of realisation. Sri Aurobindo says that thought is not the cause of existence but an intermediary, the instrument which gives form to life, to creation, and the control of this instrument is of foremost importance if one wants disorder and all that is anti-divine to disappear from creation.

One must not admit bad thoughts into oneself under the pretext that they are merely thoughts. They are tools of execution. And one should not allow them to exist in oneself if one doesn't want them to do their work of destruction.

(Silence)

No one has any questions? I have brought one. In fact I have brought two. (*Mother unfolds a paper and reads:*)

“Is it possible for a human being to be perfectly sincere?”

And this question continues:

“Is there a mental sincerity, a vital sincerity, a physical sincerity? What is the difference between these sincerities?”

Naturally, the principle of sincerity is the same everywhere, but its working is different according to the states of being. As for the first question, one could simply answer: No, not if man remains what he is. But he has the possibility of transforming himself sufficiently to become perfectly sincere.

To begin with, it must be said that sincerity is progressive,

Questions and Answers

and as the being progresses and develops, as the universe unfolds in the becoming, sincerity too must go on perfecting itself endlessly. Every halt in that development necessarily changes the sincerity of yesterday into the insincerity of tomorrow.

To be perfectly sincere it is indispensable not to have any preference, any desire, any attraction, any dislike, any sympathy or antipathy, any attachment, any repulsion. One must have a total, integral vision of things, in which everything is in its place and one has the same attitude towards all things: the attitude of true vision. This programme is obviously very difficult for a human being to realise. Unless he has decided to divinise himself, it seems almost impossible that he could be free from all these contraries within him. And yet, so long as one carries them in himself, one cannot be perfectly sincere. Automatically the mental, the vital and even the physical working is falsified. I am emphasising the physical, for even the working of the senses is warped: one does not see, hear, taste, feel things as they are in reality as long as one has a preference. So long as there are things which please you and others which don't, so long as you are attracted by certain things, and repulsed by others, you cannot see things in their reality; you see them through your reaction, your preference or your repulsion. The senses are instruments which get out of order, in the same way as sensations, feelings and thoughts. Therefore, to be sure of what you see, what you feel, what you experience and think, you must have a complete detachment; and this is obviously not an easy task. But until then your perception cannot be wholly true, and so it is not sincere.

Naturally, this is the maximum. There are crass insincerities which everybody understands and which, I believe, it is not necessary to dwell upon, as for example, saying one thing and thinking another, pretending that you are doing one thing and doing another, expressing a wish which is not your real wish. I am not even speaking of the absolutely glaring lie which consists in saying something different from the fact, but even

that diplomatic way of acting which consists in doing things with the idea of obtaining a certain result, in saying something and expecting it to have a certain effect; every combination of this kind which naturally makes you contradict yourself, is a kind of insincerity gross enough for everybody to easily recognise.

But there are others more subtle which are difficult to discern. For instance, so long as you have sympathies and antipathies, quite naturally and as it were spontaneously you will have a favourable perception of what is sympathetic to you and an unfavourable perception of what — or whom — you dislike. And there too the lack of sincerity will be flagrant. However, you may deceive yourself and not perceive that you are being insincere. Then in that case, you have, as it were, the collaboration of mental insincerity. For it is true that there are insincerities of slightly different types according to the state of being or the parts of the being. Only, the origin of these insincerities is always a similar movement arising from desire and the seeking of personal ends — from egoism, from the combination of all the limitations arising from egoism and all the deformations arising from desire.

In fact, as long as the ego is there, one cannot say that a being is perfectly sincere, even though he is striving to become sincere. One must pass beyond the ego, give oneself up totally to the divine Will, surrender without reserve and without calculation... then one can be perfectly sincere, but not before.

That does not mean that one should not make an effort to be more sincere than one is, saying to oneself, “All right, I shall wait for my ego to disappear in order to be sincere”, because one may reverse the terms and say that if you do not try sincerely your ego will never disappear. Therefore, sincerity is the basis of all true realisation, it is the means, the path — and it is also the goal. Without it you are sure to make innumerable blunders and you have constantly to redress the harm you have done to yourself and to others.

Questions and Answers

There is, besides, a marvellous joy in being sincere. Every act of sincerity carries in itself its own reward: the feeling of purification, of soaring upwards, of liberation one gets when one has rejected even one tiny particle of falsehood.

Sincerity is the safeguard, the protection, the guide, and finally the transforming power.

26 December 1956

“Not to go on for ever repeating what man has already done is our work, but to arrive at new realisations and undreamed-of masteries. Time and soul and world are given us for our field, vision and hope and creative imagination stand for our prompters, will and thought and labour are our all-effective instruments.

“What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

“In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 378-79

We have only accomplished “weakness and effort and a defeated victory”?

Until now all the victories which have been won have reactions that are finally defeats. There is never anything definitive and complete. Every time one has the feeling of having gained a victory, one finds out that this victory was incomplete, partial, fugitive. This is a fact one can always observe if one looks carefully at oneself. Not that things are necessarily what they were before, no, something has changed, but everything has not changed and not changed completely.

Questions and Answers

This is very apparent, very noticeable in physical conquests over the body. Through a very assiduous labour one succeeds in overcoming a weakness, a limitation, a bad habit, and one believes this is a definitive victory; but after some time or at times immediately one realises that nothing is completely done, nothing is definitive, that what one thought to have accomplished has to be done again. For only a total change of consciousness and the intervention of a new force, a reversal of consciousness can make the victory complete.

In the old Chaldean tradition, very often the young novices were given an image when they were invested with the white robe; they were told: "Do not try to remove the stains one by one, the whole robe must be purified." Do not try to correct your faults one by one, to overcome your weaknesses one by one, it does not take you very far. The entire consciousness must be changed, a reversal of consciousness must be achieved, a springing up out of the state in which one is towards a higher state from which one dominates all the weaknesses one wants to heal, and from which one has a full vision of the work to be accomplished.

I believe Sri Aurobindo has said this: things are such that it may be said that nothing is done until everything is done. One step ahead is not enough, a total conversion is necessary.

How many times have I heard people who were making an effort say, "I try, but what's the use of my trying? Every time I think I have gained something, I find that I must begin all over again." This happens because they are trying to go forward while standing still, they are trying to progress without changing their consciousness. It is the entire point of view which must be shifted, the whole consciousness must get out of the rut in which it lies so as to rise up and see things from above. It is only thus that victories will not be changed into defeats.

Anything else? No, nothing more?

Mother, how to change one's consciousness?

26 December 1956

Naturally, there are many ways, but each person must do it by the means accessible to him; and the indication of the way usually comes spontaneously, through something like an unexpected experience. And for each one, it appears a little differently.

For instance, one may have the perception of the ordinary consciousness which is extended on the surface, horizontally, and works on a plane which is simultaneously the surface of things and has a contact with the superficial outer side of things, people, circumstances; and then, suddenly, for some reason or other — as I say for each one it is different — there is a shifting upwards, and instead of seeing things horizontally, of being at the same level as they are, you suddenly dominate them and see them from above, in their totality, instead of seeing a small number of things immediately next to yourself; it is as though something were drawing you above and making you see as from a mountain-top or an aeroplane. And instead of seeing each detail and seeing it on its own level, you see the whole as one unity, and from far above.

There are many ways of having this experience, but it usually comes to you as if by chance, one fine day.

Or else, one may have an experience which is almost its very opposite but which comes to the same thing. Suddenly one plunges into a depth, one moves away from the thing one perceived, it seems distant, superficial, unimportant; one enters an inner silence or an inner calm or an inward vision of things, a profound feeling, a more intimate perception of circumstances and things, in which all values change. And one becomes aware of a sort of unity, a deep identity which is one in spite of the diverse appearances.

Or else, suddenly also, the sense of limitation disappears and one enters the perception of a kind of indefinite duration beginningless and endless, of something which has always been and always will be.

These experiences come to you suddenly in a flash, for a second, a moment in your life, you don't know why or how.... There

Questions and Answers

are other ways, other experiences — they are innumerable, they vary according to people; but with this, with one minute, one second of such an existence, one catches the tail of the thing. So one must remember that, try to relive it, go to the depths of the experience, recall it, aspire, concentrate. This is the starting-point, the end of the guiding thread, the clue. For all those who are destined to find their inner being, the truth of their being, there is always at least one moment in life when they were no longer the same, perhaps just like a lightning-flash — but that is enough. It indicates the road one should take, it is the door that opens on this path. And so you must pass through the door, and with perseverance and an unflinching steadfastness seek to renew the state which will lead you to something more real and more total.

Many ways have always been given, but a way you have been taught, a way you have read about in books or heard from a teacher, does not have the effective value of a spontaneous experience which has come without any apparent reason, and which is simply the blossoming of the soul's awakening, one second of contact with your psychic being which shows you the best way for you, the one most within your reach, which you will then have to follow with perseverance to reach the goal — one second which shows you how to start, the beginning.... Some have this in dreams at night; some have it at any odd time: something one sees which awakens in one this new consciousness, something one hears, a beautiful landscape, beautiful music, or else simply a few words one reads, or else the intensity of concentration in some effort — anything at all, there are a thousand reasons and thousands of ways of having it. But, I repeat, all those who are destined to realise have had this at least once in their life. It may be very fleeting, it may have come when they were very young, but always at least once in one's life one has the experience of what true consciousness is. Well, that is the best indication of the path to be followed.

One may seek within oneself, one may remember, may

26 December 1956

observe; one must notice what is going on, one must pay attention, that's all. Sometimes, when one sees a generous act, hears of something exceptional, when one witnesses heroism or generosity or greatness of soul, meets someone who shows a special talent or acts in an exceptional and beautiful way, there is a kind of enthusiasm or admiration or gratitude which suddenly awakens in the being and opens the door to a state, a new state of consciousness, a light, a warmth, a joy one did not know before. That too is a way of catching the guiding thread. There are a thousand ways, one has only to be awake and to watch.

First of all, you must feel the necessity for this change of consciousness, accept the idea that it is this, the path which must lead to the goal; and once you admit the principle, you must be watchful. And you will find, you do find it. And once you have found it, you must start walking without any hesitation.

Indeed, the starting-point is to observe oneself, not to live in a perpetual nonchalance, a perpetual apathy; one must be attentive.

Is that all?

(Silence)

Here is a question I have been asked — it seems many people are asking themselves the same thing! I am going to read to you what is written, then I shall speak to you afterwards. It looks so convincing, this question!

“How should we understand ‘not to have preferences’? Shouldn’t we prefer order to disorder, cleanliness to dirt, etc? Not to have preferences — does it mean treating everybody in the same way?”

Now, here is my answer: this is playing on words! What you call preference, I call choice. You must be in a perpetual state

Questions and Answers

of choice; at every minute of your life you must make a choice between what drags you down and what draws you up, between what makes you progress and what makes you go backwards; but I do not call this having preferences, I call this making a choice — making a choice, choosing. At every minute one has to choose, this is indispensable, and infinitely more so than choosing once for all between cleanliness and dirt, whether moral or physical. The choice: at every second the choice is before you, and you may take a step downward or a step upward, take a step backward or a step forward; and this state of choice must be constant, perpetual, you must never fall asleep. But this is not what I call having preferences. Preferences — this means precisely not choosing. There is something for which you feel sympathy or antipathy, repulsion or attraction, and blindly, without any reason, you become attached to this thing; or else, when you have a problem to solve, you prefer the solution of this problem or this difficulty to be of one particular kind or another. But that is not at all choosing — don't you see, what the truest thing is doesn't come into question, it is a matter of having a preference. For me the meaning of the word is very clear: a preference is something blind, an impulse, an attachment, an unconscious movement which is usually terribly obstinate.

You are placed in certain circumstances; one thing or another may happen, and you yourself have an aspiration, you ask to be guided, but within you there is something which prefers the answer to be of a certain kind, the indication to be a particular one, or the event to come about in one way rather than another; but all this is not a question of choice, it is a preference. And when the answer to your aspiration or prayer is not in accord with your desire, this preference makes you feel unhappy, you find it difficult to accept the answer, you must fight to accept it; whereas if you had no preferences, whatever the answer to your aspiration, when it comes, you cling to it joyfully, spontaneously with a sincere *élan*. Otherwise you are compelled to make an effort to accept what comes, the decision which comes in answer

to your aspiration; you wish, desire, prefer things to be like this and not like that. But that, indeed, is not a choice. The choice is there at every minute; every minute you are faced with a choice: the choice to climb up or go down, the choice to progress or go backwards. But this choice does not imply that you prefer things to be like this or like that; it is a fact of every moment, an *attitude* you take.

Choice means a decision and an action. Preference is a desire. A choice is made and *ought* to be made, and if it is truly a choice, it is made without care for the consequences, without expecting any result. You choose; you choose according to your inner truth, your highest consciousness; whatever happens does not touch you, you have made your choice, the true choice, and what comes about is not your concern. While, on the contrary, if you have preferences, you will choose through preference in one way or another, your preference will distort your choice: it will be calculation, bargaining, you will act with the idea that a particular thing must happen because this is what you prefer and not because that is the truth, the right thing to do. Preference is attached to the result, acts with a view to the result, wishes things to be in a particular way and acts to bring about its wish; and so this opens the door to all kinds of things. Choice is independent of the result. And certainly, at every minute you can choose, you are faced with the necessity of choosing at every second. And you do not choose really well, in all sincerity, unless it is the truth of the choice which interests you, and not the result of your choice. If you choose with the result in view, that falsifies your choice.

So I say it is playing on words, it is mixing up two different things; and so you ask questions which seem insoluble, for it is a mixture. There is a confusion in the question.

As for treating everybody in the same way, it is a worse confusion still! It is the kind of confusion one makes when one says that the Divine must treat everybody in the same way. So it would not be worth the trouble to have diversity in the world,

Questions and Answers

not worth the trouble of not having two identical individuals; for this contradicts the very principle of diversity.

You may — or you ought to if you can't — aspire to have the same deep attitude of understanding, unity, love, perfect compassion for all that is in the universe; but this very attitude will be applied to each case in a different way, according to the truth of that case and its necessity. What could be called the motive or rather the origin of the action is the same, but the action may even be totally and diametrically opposite in accordance with the case and the deeper truth of each case. But for that, precisely, one must have the highest attitude, the most profound, the most essentially true, that which is free from all outer contingencies. Then one can see at every minute not only the essential truth but also the truth of the action; and in each case it is different. And yet, what we may call “feeling” — though this is an inadequate word — or the state of consciousness in which one acts, is essentially the same.

But this cannot be understood unless one enters the essential depth of things and sees them from the highest summits. And then it is like a centre of light and consciousness high enough or deep enough to be able to see all things at the same time, not only in their essence but in their manifestation; and although the centre of consciousness is one, the action will be as diverse as the manifestation is diverse: it is the realisation of the divine Truth in its manifestation. Otherwise it would be doing away with all the diversity of the world and bringing it back to the essential unmanifest Oneness, for it is only in the non-manifestation that the One is manifested as the One. But as soon as one enters the manifestation, the One manifests as the multiplicity, and multiplicity implies a multitude of actions and ways.

So, to sum up: the choice must be made without care for the consequences, and the action must be performed in accordance with the truth of the multiplicity in the manifestation.

There we are.

Note on the Text

These conversations of 1956 were spoken by the Mother in French and appear here in English translation. All of them were tape-recorded. Passages from some of the talks were published in the French original with an English translation in issues of the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* from 1956 to 1963. Between March 1970 and August 1974 a new translation of all the talks was serialised in the monthly journal *Mother India*. This translation was brought out as a book in 1973 under the title *Questions and Answers 1956*. The same book, with minor revisions of the translation, was published in 1978 as Volume 8 of the *Collected Works of the Mother* (first edition). The present volume has the same text as the first edition, apart from some minor revisions of the translation. References for the passages from Sri Aurobindo's works are to the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL) edition. This book is Volume 8 of the *Collected Works of the Mother* (second edition).