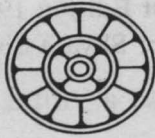




THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

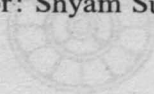


THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
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Editor: Shyam Sundar



THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

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Editor's Note

In her "Wednesday Classes" attended by the students, teachers and sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the Mother generally began by reading from one of her French translations of Sri Aurobindo's works. After the reading, the Mother commented on the text or answered questions.

On November 21, 1956 she began the reading of Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts and Glimpses*. The reading ended on April 3, 1957.

This volume is a compilation of the talks on *Thoughts and Glimpses*. The material has been taken from vols. 8 and 9 of the *Collected Works of the Mother* (Centenary Edition).

For quoted passages from *Thoughts and Glimpses* references are to the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Edition.

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I

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*, Cent. 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 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 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, Cent. 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 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 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 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 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 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 activi-

ties 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.

II

"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."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. 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 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 total and perfect consciousness, it means that it is a begin-

ning: 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 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 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 text¹) 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. You said at the beginning, "When one has gone beyond the mind"?...

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)

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!

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 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 on 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 being reasonable; quite the contrary. It is an excellent means of deceiving oneself and keeping one-

self 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.

III

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.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. 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

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 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 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:

"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,

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.

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.

IV

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."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. 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

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 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

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 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 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 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, some-

times 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

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 one could imagine. This vital world is constantly penetrating the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very

¹ Consisting of the four principles: physical, vital, mental and psychic.

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 nature as yourself, another human being, who consequently acts on you without this giving you a clear impres-

sion 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.

“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.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. 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 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, 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)

VI

"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."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. 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.

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?

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 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 ob-

serve; 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.

VII

"If Brahman were only an impersonal abstraction eternally contradicting the apparent fact of our concrete existence, cessation would be the right end of the matter; but love and delight and self-awareness have also to be reckoned.

"The universe is not merely a mathematical formula for working out the relation of certain mental abstractions called numbers and principles to arrive in the end at a zero or a void unit, neither is it merely a physical operation embodying a certain equation of forces. It is the delight of a Self-lover, the play of a Child, the endless self-multiplication of a Poet intoxicated with the rapture of His own power of endless creation.

"We may speak of the Supreme as if He were a mathematician working out a cosmic sum in numbers or a thinker resolving by experiment a problem in relations of principles and the balance of forces: but also we should speak of Him as if He were a lover, a musician of universal and particular harmonies, a child, a poet. The side of thought is not enough; the side of delight too must be entirely grasped: Ideas, Forces, Existences, Principles are hollow moulds unless they are filled with the breath of God's delight.

"These things are images, but all is an image. Abstractions give us the pure conception of God's truths; images give us their living reality.

"If Idea embracing Force begot the worlds, Delight of Being begot the Idea. Because the Infinite conceived an innumerable delight in itself, therefore worlds and universes came into existence.

"Consciousness of being and Delight of being are

the first parents. Also, they are the last transcendences. Unconsciousness is only an intermediate swoon of the conscious or its obscure sleep; pain and self-extinction are only delight of being running away from itself in order to find itself elsewhere or otherwise.

"Delight of being is not limited in Time; it is without end or beginning. God comes out from one form of things only to enter into another.

"What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden."

Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, Cent. Vol. 16,
pp. 380-81

Sweet Mother, can one go out of Time and Space?

If one goes out of the manifestation.

It is the fact of objectivisation, of manifestation which has created time and space. To go out of it one must return to the origin, that is, go out of the manifestation. Otherwise from the very first objectivisation time and space were created.

There is a feeling or a perception or an experience of eternity and infinity in which one has the impression of going out of time and space.... It is only an impression.

One must pass beyond all forms, even the most subtle forms of consciousness, far beyond the forms of thought, the forms of consciousness, to be able to have this impression of being outside space and time. This is what generally happens to people who enter into samadhi — the true samadhi — and when they come back to their normal consciousness, they don't remember anything, for, in fact, there was nothing they could remember. This is what Sri Aurobindo says here: If Brahman were only an impersonal abstraction, the one reasonable end would be annihilation. For it is obvious that if one goes out of time and space, all separate existence automatically ceases.

There, now. So one *can*, without much result!

Is that all? Have you tried to go out of time and space?

VIII

"God cannot cease from leaning down towards Nature, nor man from aspiring towards the Godhead. It is the eternal relation of the finite to the infinite. When they seem to turn from each other, it is to recoil for a more intimate meeting.

"In man nature of the world becomes again self-conscious so that it may take the greater leap towards its Enjoyer. This is the Enjoyer whom unknowingly it possesses, whom life and sensation possessing deny and denying seek. Nature of the world knows not God, only because it knows not itself; when it knows itself, it shall know unalloyed delight of being.

"Possession in oneness and not loss in oneness is the secret. God and Man, World and Beyond-world become one when they know each other. Their division is the cause of ignorance as ignorance is the cause of suffering."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 382

According to what Sri Aurobindo says here, the reality of the universe is what is called God or godhead, but essentially it is Delight. The universe is created in Delight and for Delight. But this Delight can exist only in the perfect oneness of the creation with its creator, and Sri Aurobindo describes this oneness as the Possessor — that is, the Creator — the Possessor being possessed by his creation, a sort of reciprocal possession which is the very essence of the Oneness and the source of all delight.

And it is because of division — because the Possessor no longer possesses and because the possessed no longer possesses the Possessor, division is created and the essential Delight is changed into ignorance, and this ignorance is the cause of all suffering. "Ignorance", not in the sense in which it is usually

understood, for that is what Sri Aurobindo calls Nescience: that ignorance is a consequence of the other. True ignorance is ignorance of the oneness, the union, the identity. And that is the cause of all suffering.

Ever since division began and creation lost its direct contact with the Creator, ignorance has reigned, and all suffering is its result.

All those who have had the inner experience have had this experience, that the moment one re-establishes the union with the divine source, all suffering disappears. But there has been a very persistent movement, about which I spoke to you last week, which put at the source of creation not this essential divine Delight but desire. This delight of creation, self-manifestation, self-expression — there is an entire line of seekers and sages who have considered it not as a delight but as a desire; the whole line of Buddhism is of this kind. And instead of seeing the solution in a Oneness which restores to us the essential Delight of the manifestation and the becoming, they consider that the goal and also the way are a total rejection of all desire to be and a return to annihilation.

This conception amounts to an essential misunderstanding. The methods recommended for self-liberation are methods of development which can be very useful, but this conception of a world that's essentially bad, for it is the result of desire, and from which one must escape at all costs and as quickly as possible, has been the greatest and most serious distortion of all spiritual life in the history of mankind.

It might have been useful, perhaps, at a particular time, for everything is useful in the world's history, but this utility has passed, it is outworn, and it is time for this conception to be superseded and for us to return to a more essential and higher Truth, to go back to the Delight of existence, the Joy of union and manifestation of the Divine.

This new orientation — I mean new in its terrestrial realisation — must replace all the former spiritual orientations and

open the way to the new realisation which will be a supramental realisation. That is why I told you last week that only Delight, the true divine Delight can bring about the Victory.

Naturally, there must be no confusion about what this Delight is, and that is why from the beginning Sri Aurobindo puts us on our guard, telling us that it is only when one has passed beyond enjoyings that one can enter into Bliss. Bliss is precisely that state which comes from the manifestation of this Delight. But it is quite the opposite of all that is usually called joy and pleasure, and these must be completely given up in order to have the other.

(*To a child*) Do you have a question ?

I have a question, but we haven't read that yet.

What is it ?

It is about God and Nature.

So ?

Why do God and Nature "run from each other when glimpsed" ?¹

In order to play. He says so: "They are at play." It is in play.

(A young disciple) *Mother, does Nature know it is a game? God knows it is a game, but does Nature know it ?*

I think Nature knows it too, it is only man who does not know !

¹ "God and Nature are like a boy and a girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured."

(Another child) *Sweet Mother, where can Nature hide?*

Where can she hide? She hides in the inconscience, my child. That is the greatest hiding-place, the inconscience. Besides, God also hides in the inconscience.

Perhaps, when one knows it is a game and plays it for fun, it is amusing. But when one doesn't know it is a game, it is not amusing. You see, it is only when one is on the other side, on the divine side, that one can see it like that; that is, as long as we are in the ignorance, well, inevitably we suffer from what should amuse and please us. Fundamentally, it comes to this: when one does something deliberately, knowing what one is doing, it is very interesting and may even be very amusing. But when it is something you don't do deliberately and don't understand, when it is something imposed on you and endured, it is not pleasant. So the solution, the one which is always given: you must learn, know, do it deliberately. But to tell you my true feeling, I think it would be much better to change the game.... When one is in that state, one can smile, understand and even be amused, but when one sees, when one is conscious of all those who, far from knowing that they are playing, take the game very seriously and find it rather unpleasant, well... I don't know, one would prefer it to change. That is a purely personal opinion.

I know very well: the moment one crosses over to the other side... instead of being underneath and enduring, when one is above and not only observes but acts oneself, it is so total a reversal that it is difficult to recall the state one was in when carrying all the weight of this inconscience, this ignorance on one's back, when one was enduring things without knowing why or how or where one was going or why it was like that. One forgets all that. And then one can say: it is an "eternal game in an eternal garden". But for it to be an amusing game, everybody should be able to play the game knowing the rules of the game; as long as one does not know the rules of the game, it is

not pleasant. So the solution you are given is: "But learn the rules of the game!"... That is not within everybody's reach.

I have the impression, a very powerful impression, that a practical joker came and spoilt the game and made it into something dramatic, and this practical joker is obviously the cause of the division and the ignorance which is the result of this division, and of the suffering which is the result of ignorance. Indeed, in spite of all the spiritual traditions, it is difficult to conceive that this state of division, ignorance and suffering was foreseen at the beginning of creation. In spite of everything, one doesn't like to think that it could have been foreseen. Indeed, I refuse to believe it. I call it an accident — a rather terrible accident, but still, you see, it is especially terrible to the human consciousness; for the universal consciousness, it may only be quite a reparable accident. And after all, when it has been set right, we shall even be able to recall it and say, "Ah! it has given us something we wouldn't have had otherwise." But we must first wait for it to be put right.

Anyway, I don't know if there are people who say that it was foreseen and willed, but I tell you it was neither foreseen nor willed, and this is precisely why when it happened, quite unexpectedly, immediately something else sprang forth from the Source, which probably would not have manifested if this accident had not taken place. If Delight had remained Delight, conceived as Delight, and everything had come about in Delight and Union instead of in division, there would never have been any need for the divine Consciousness to plunge into the inconscience as Love. So, when one sees this from very far and from high above, one says, "After all, something has perhaps been gained from it." But one must see it from a great distance and a great height to be able to say that. Or rather, when it is left far behind, when one has gone beyond this state, entered into Union and Delight, when division and inconscience and suffering have disappeared, then one may very wisely say, "Ah, yes, we have gained an experience we would never have had other-

wise." But the experience must be behind, we must not be right in the midst of it. For, even for someone who — this is something I know — even for someone who has come out of this state, who lives in the consciousness of Oneness, for whom ignorance is something external, no longer something intimate and painful, even for that person it is impossible to look on the suffering of all those who have not come out of it with a smile of indifference. That seems impossible to me. Therefore, it is really necessary that things in the world should change and the acute state of sickness should disappear, so that we can say, "Ah ! yes, we have benefited by it." It is true that something has been gained, but it is a very costly gain.

That is why, I believe, because of that, so many initiates and sages have been attracted by the solution of the void, of Nirvana, for this is obviously a very radical way of escaping from the consequences of an ignorant manifestation.

Only, the solution of changing this manifestation into a true, truly divine reality is a far superior solution. And this is what we want to attempt now, with a certitude of succeeding one day or another, for, in spite of everything, despite everything, what is true is eternally true, and what is true in essence must necessarily become true in the realisation, one day or another. Sri Aurobindo told us that we had taken the first step on the path and that the time had come to accomplish the work, therefore one has only to set out. That's all.

So, your question ? (*To the child who asked about the game of hide-and-peek*) Was this what you wanted to know ?

Actually what you were asking was: Why this image ?

Yes.

One could reverse the thing. Instead of saying that the universe is like this, that is, the Divine and man are like this, look like this, one should say that this is perhaps an outer, superficial expression of what the essential relation between the Divine and

man is at the present moment.

In fact, this would amount to saying that when one plays one is much more divine than when one is serious ! (*Laughing*) But it's not always good to say this. Perhaps there is more divinity in the spontaneous play of children than in the erudition of the scholar or the asceticism of the saint. That's what I have always thought. Only (*smiling*) it is a divinity which is quite unconscious of itself.

As for me, I must confess to you that I feel much more essentially myself when I am joyful and when I play — in my own way — than when I am very grave and very serious — much more. Grave and serious — that always gives me the impression that I am dragging the weight of all this creation, so heavy and so obscure, whereas when I play — when I play, when I can laugh, can enjoy myself — it gives me the feeling of a fine powder of delight falling from above and tinting this creation, this world with a very special colour and bringing it much closer to what it should essentially be.

Mother, when and why are you grave ?

Oh ! well, you have seen me sometimes, haven't you ? Perhaps when I come down a rung, I don't know — when someone is drowning or in difficulty, then one must come down from the bank into the water to pull him out. Perhaps that is the reason. When the creation is in a special difficulty, one comes down a little, one pulls, so one becomes serious. But when all is going well, one can laugh and enjoy oneself.

In fact, it could be said that all preaching, all exhortations, even all prayers and invocations come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the lower hemisphere, that is to say, one is still down below. It may be the summit, may be the frontier, it may be just the edge of this lower hemisphere, but one is still in the lower hemisphere. And as soon as one passes to the other side, all this seems, to say the least, useless and almost childish in the bad

sense of the word — ignorant, still ignorant. And it is very interesting to be still in this state where one is at times on one side, at times just on the border of the other. Well, this border of the other, which for the human consciousness is an almost inaccessible summit, for one who can live consciously and freely in the higher hemisphere, is in spite of everything a descent.

Later I would like us to take up and read here the last chapters of *The Life Divine*. I think you are becoming old enough, mature enough, to be able to follow it. And then there are all kinds of things you will be able to understand and subjects we shall be able to take up, based on this text, which will help us to go one step further, a serious step towards realisation. He describes so precisely and marvellously the difference between these two states of consciousness, how all that seems to man almost the ultimate of perfection, at least of realisation, how all that still belongs to the lower hemisphere, including all the relations with the gods as men have known them and still know them — how all these things are still far below — and what is the true state, the one which he describes as the supramental state, when one passes beyond.

And in fact, as long as one has not consciously passed beyond, there is a whole world of things one cannot understand.

So I would like us now to open the way and pass beyond, all together, a little.

There we are.

IX

"Man seeks at first blindly and does not even know that he is seeking his divine self; for he starts from the obscurity of material Nature and even when he begins to see, he is long blinded by the light that is increasing in him. God too answers obscurely to his search; He seeks and enjoys man's blindness like the hands of a little child that grope after its mother."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 382

Sweet Mother, how is it that one seeks something and yet does not know that one is seeking ?

There are so many things you think, feel, want, even do, without knowing it. Are you fully conscious of yourself and of all that goes on in you ? — Not at all ! If, for example, suddenly, without your expecting it, at a certain moment I ask you: "What are you thinking about ?" your reply, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, will be: "I don't know." And if in the same way I ask another question like this: "What do you want ?" you will also say: "I don't know." And "What do you feel ?" — "I don't know." It is only to those who are used to observing themselves, watching how they live, who are concentrated upon this need to know what is going on in them, that one can ask a precise question like this, and only they can immediately reply. In some instances in life, yes, one is absorbed in what one feels, thinks, wants, and then one can say, "Yes, I want that, I am thinking of that, I experience that", but these are only moments of existence, not the whole time.

Haven't you noticed that ? No ?

Well, to find out what one truly is, to find out why one is on earth, what is the purpose of physical existence, of this presence on earth, of this formation, this existence... the vast majo-

rity of people live without asking themselves this even once ! Only a small *élite* ask themselves this question with interest, and fewer still start working to get the answer. For, unless one is fortunate enough to come across someone who knows it, it is not such an easy thing to find. Suppose, for instance, that there had never come to your hands a book of Sri Aurobindo's or of any of the writers or philosophers or sages who have dedicated their lives to this quest; if you were in the ordinary world, as millions of people are in the ordinary world, who have never heard of anything, except at times — and not always nowadays, even quite rarely — of some gods and a certain form of religion which is more a habit than a faith and, which, besides, rarely tells you why you are on earth.... Then, one doesn't even think of thinking about it. One lives from day to day the events of each day. When one is very young, one thinks of playing, eating, and a little later of learning, and after that one thinks of all the circumstances of life. But to put this problem to oneself, to confront this problem and ask oneself: "But after all, *why* am I here ?" How many do that ? There are people to whom this idea comes only when they are facing a catastrophe. When they see someone whom they love die or when they find themselves in particularly painful and difficult circumstances, they turn back upon themselves, if they are sufficiently intelligent, and ask themselves: "But really, what is this tragedy we are living, and what's the use of it and what is its purpose ?"

And only at that moment does one begin the search to know.

And it is only when one has found, you see, found what he says, found that one has a divine Self and that consequently one must seek to know this divine Self.... This comes much later, and yet, in spite of everything, from the very moment of birth in a physical body, there is in the being, in its depths, this psychic presence which pushes the whole being towards this fulfilment. But who knows it and recognises it, this psychic being ? That too comes only in special circumstances, and unfortunately, most of the time these have to be painful circumstances, other-

wise one goes on living unthinkingly. And in the depths of one's being is this psychic being which seeks, seeks, seeks to awaken the consciousness and re-establish the union. One knows nothing about it.

When you were ten years old, did you know this? No, you didn't. Well, still in the depths of your being your psychic being already wanted it and was seeking for it. It was probably your psychic which brought you here.

There are so many things which happen and you don't even ask yourself why. You take them... it is like that because it is like that. It would be very interesting to know how many of you, till I spoke to you about it, had asked yourselves how it happened that you were here?

Naturally, most of the time, the reply is perhaps very simple: "My parents are here, so I am here." However, you were not born here. Nobody was born here. Not even you, were you? You were born in Bangalore. No one was born here.... And yet, you are all here. You have not asked yourselves why — it was like that because it was like that! And so, between even asking oneself and giving an external reply satisfactory enough to be accepted as final, and then telling oneself, "Perhaps it is an indication of a destiny, of the purpose of my life..." What a long way one must travel to come to that!

And for everybody there are more or less external reasons, which, besides, are not worth much and explain everything in the dullest possible way, but there is a deeper reason which as yet you do not know. And are there many of you who would be very much interested in knowing why they are here? How many of you have asked yourselves this question: "What is the true reason for my being here?"

Have you asked yourself the question?

I asked you once, Sweet Mother.

Oh! that's true. And you?... And you?

I don't remember.

You don't remember. And you ?

Not before, Mother.

Not before. Now it begins to come ! and you ?

No.

No... And I could ask many others still. I know very well. Only those who have come after having had some experience of life and came because they wanted to come, and had a conscious reason for coming, they can of course tell me, "I came because of that", and that would be at least a partial explanation. The truest, deepest reason may still elude them, that is, what they specially have to realise in the Work. That already requires having passed through many stages on the path.

Essentially, it is only when one has become aware of one's soul, has been identified with one's psychic being that one can see in a single flash the picture of one's individual development through the ages. Then indeed one begins to know... but not before. Then, indeed, I assure you it becomes very interesting. It changes one's position in life.

There is such a great difference between feeling vaguely, having a hesitant impression of something, of a force, a movement, an impulse, an attraction, of something which drives you in life — but it is still so vague, so uncertain, it is hazy — there is such a difference between this and having a clear vision, an exact perception, a total understanding of the meaning of one's life. And only then does one begin to see things as they are, not before. Only then can one follow the thread of one's destiny and clearly see the goal and the way to reach it. But that happens only through successive inner awakenings, like doors opening suddenly on new horizons — truly, a new birth into a truer,

deeper, more lasting consciousness.

Until then you live in a cloud, gropingly, under the weight of a destiny which at times crushes you, gives you the feeling of having been made in a certain way and being unable to do anything about it. You are under the burden of an existence which weighs you down, makes you crawl on the ground instead of rising above and seeing all the threads, the guiding threads, the threads which bind different things into a single movement of progression towards a realisation that grows clear.

One must spring up out of this half-consciousness which is usually considered quite natural — this is your "normal" way of being and you do not even draw back from it sufficiently to be able to see and wonder at this incertitude, this lack of precision; while, on the contrary, to know that one is seeking and to seek consciously, deliberately, *steadfastly* and methodically, this indeed is the exceptional, almost "abnormal" condition. And yet only in this way does one begin to truly live.

"The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the Divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.

"But that immersion is not in the nature of an annihilation. Extinction is not the fulfilment of all this search and passion, suffering and rapture. The game would never have been begun if that were to be its ending.

"Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

"What then was the commencement of the whole matter? Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being and plunged into numberless trillions of forms so that it might find itself innumerable.

"And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations.

"And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the whole honeycomb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe.

"Love is the key-note, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes."

How can one "learn of pure delight" ?

First of all, to begin with, one must through an attentive observation grow aware that desires and the satisfaction of desires give only a vague, uncertain pleasure, mixed, fugitive and altogether unsatisfactory. That is usually the starting-point.

Then, if one is a reasonable being, one must learn to discern what is desire and refrain from doing anything that may satisfy one's desires. One must reject them without trying to satisfy them. And so the first result is exactly one of the first observations stated by the Buddha in his teaching: there is an infinitely greater delight in conquering and eliminating a desire than in satisfying it. Every sincere and steadfast seeker will realise after some time, sooner or later, at times very soon, that this is an absolute truth, and that the delight felt in overcoming a desire is incomparably higher than the small pleasure, so fleeting and mixed, which may be found in the satisfaction of his desires. That is the second step.

Naturally, with this continuous discipline, in a very short time the desires will keep their distance and will no longer bother you. So you will be free to enter a little more deeply into your being and open yourself in an aspiration to... the Giver of Delight, the divine Element, the divine Grace. And if this is done with a sincere self-giving — something that gives itself, offers itself and expects nothing in exchange for its offering — one will feel that kind of sweet warmth, comfortable, intimate, radiant, which fills the heart and is the herald of Delight.

After this, the path is easy.

Sweet Mother, what is the true Delight of being ?

That very one of which I am speaking !

Then, Sweet Mother, here when Sri Aurobindo speaks of an existence "that multiplied itself for sheer delight

of being", what is this delight ?

The delight of existing.

There comes a time when one begins to be almost ready, when one can feel in everything, every object, in every movement, in every vibration, in all the things around — not only people and conscious beings, but things, objects; not only trees and plants and living things, but simply any object one uses, the things around one — this delight, this delight of being, of being just as one is, simply being. And one sees that all this vibrates like that. One touches a thing and feels this delight. But naturally, I say, one must have followed the discipline I spoke about at the beginning; otherwise, so long as one has a desire, a preference, an attachment or affinities and repulsions and all that, one cannot — one cannot.

And so long as one finds pleasures — pleasure, well, yes, vital or physical pleasure in a thing — one cannot feel this delight. For this delight is everywhere. This delight is something very subtle. One moves in the midst of things and it is as though they were all singing to you their delight. There comes a time when it becomes very familiar in the life around you. Of course, I must admit that it is a little more difficult to feel it in human beings, because there are all their mental and vital formations which come into the field of perception and disturb it. There is too much of this kind of egoistic asperity which gets mixed with things, so it is more difficult to contact the Delight there. But even in animals one feels it; it is already a little more difficult than in plants. But in plants, in flowers, it is so wonderful ! They speak all their joy, they express it. And as I said, in all familiar objects, the things around you, which you use, there is a state of consciousness in which each one is happy to be, just as it is. So at that moment one knows one has touched true Delight. And it is not conditioned. I mean it does not depend upon... it depends on nothing. It does not depend on outer circumstances, does not depend on a more or less favourable state, it does not

depend on anything: it is a communion with the *raison d'être* of the universe.

And when this comes it fills all the cells of the body. It is not even a thing which is thought out — one does not reason, does not analyse, it is not that: it is a *state* in which one lives. And when the body shares in it, it is so fresh — so fresh, so spontaneous, so... it no longer turns back upon itself, there is no longer any sense of self-observation, of self-analysis or of analysing things. All that is like a canticle of joyous vibrations, but very, very quiet, without violence, without passion, nothing of all that. It is very subtle and very intense at the same time, and when it comes, it seems that the whole universe is a marvellous harmony. Even what is to the ordinary human consciousness ugly, unpleasant, appears marvellous.

Unfortunately, as I said, people, circumstances, all that, with all those mental and vital formations — that disturbs it all the time. Then one is obliged to return to this ignorant, blind perception of things. But otherwise, as soon as all this stops and one can get out of it... everything changes. As he says there, at the end: everything changes. A marvellous harmony. And it is all Delight, true Delight, real Delight.

This demands a little work.

And this discipline I spoke about, which one must undergo, if it is practised with the aim of finding Delight, the result is delayed, for an egoistic element is introduced into it, it is done with an aim and is no longer an offering, it is a demand, and then.... It comes, it will come, even if it takes much longer — when one asks nothing, expects nothing, hopes for nothing, when it is simply that, it is self-giving and aspiration, and the spontaneous need without any bargaining — the need to be divine, that's all.

Mother, will you explain this "drop of honey" ?

Oh ! the honey.... But that is an image, my child.

He says: "If one could imagine...." It is simply to give a more concrete approach than intellectual abstractions. He says: If you can imagine, for example, a honeycomb, well... a honeycomb which would have the capacity to taste itself and at the same time each drop of honey; not only to taste itself as honey, but to taste itself in each drop, being each drop of the honeycomb, and if each one of these drops could taste all the others, itself and all the others, and at the same time if each drop could taste, could have the taste of the whole honeycomb as if it were itself.

So, it would be a honeycomb capable of tasting itself and tasting in detail all the drops in the honeycomb, and each drop capable of tasting itself and all the others individually and the honeycomb as a whole, as itself.... It is a very precise image. Only you must have some power of imagination !

Like that I understand. I am asking what it means.

Honey is something delicious, isn't it ? So, these are the sweetnesses of divine Delight.

And just now, when I was evoking this joy which is in things, spontaneous, simple, this joy which is at the heart of everything, well, for the physical body it has something truly... oh ! naturally, the taste of honey is very crude and gross in comparison — but something like that, something extremely delicious. And very simple, very simple and very integral in its simplicity; very complete in its simplicity and yet very simple.

You see, this is not something to be thought out, one must have the power to evoke it, one must have some imagination. So, if one has this capacity, one can do that simply by reading, then one can understand.... It is an analogy, it is only an analogy, but it is an analogy which truly has a power of evocation.

But everyone will imagine something different, won't he, Mother ?

Obviously. But that doesn't matter ! It will be good for him.

XI

"The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.

"Man is in love with the bonds of birth; therefore he is caught in the companion bonds of death. In these chains he aspires after freedom of his being and mastery of his self-fulfilment.

"Man is in love with power; therefore he is subjected to weakness. For the world is a sea of waves of force that meet and continually fling themselves on each other; he who would ride on the crest of one wave, must faint under the shock of hundreds.

"Man is in love with pleasure; therefore he must undergo the yoke of grief and pain. For unmixed delight is only for the free and passionless soul; but that which pursues after pleasure in man is a suffering and straining energy.

"Man hungers after calm, but he thirsts also for the experiences of a restless mind and a troubled heart. Enjoyment is to his mind a fever, calm an inertia and a monotony.

"Man is in love with the limitations of his physical being, yet he would have also the freedom of his infinite mind and his immortal soul.

"And in these contrasts something in him finds a curious attraction; they constitute for his mental being the artistry of life. It is not only the nectar but the poison also that attracts his taste and his curiosity."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 385

Sweet Mother, what does "artistry" mean?

What most men call "artistry" is just contrast. Artists say and

feel that it is the shadows which make the light, that if there were no contrasts, they would not be able to make a picture. It is the same thing with music: the contrast between "forte" and "piano" is one of the greatest charms of music.

I knew some poets who used to say, "It is my enemies' hatred which makes me value the affection of my friends...." And it is the almost inevitable likelihood of misfortune which gives all its savour to happiness, and so on. And they value repose only in contrast with the daily agitation, silence only because of the usual noise, and some of them even tell you, "Oh! it is because there are illnesses that good health is cherished." It goes so far that a thing is valued only when it is lost. And as Sri Aurobindo says here: When this fever of action, of movement, this agitation of creative thought is not there, one feels one is falling into inertia. Most people fear silence, calm, quietude. They no longer feel alive when they are not agitated.

I have seen many cases in which Sri Aurobindo had given silence to somebody, had made his mind silent, and that person came back to him in a kind of despair, saying: "But I have become stupid!" For his thought was no longer excited.

What he says here is terribly true. Men want freedom but they are in love with their chains, and when one wants to take them away, when one wants to show them the path of true liberation, they are afraid, and often they even protest.

Almost all man's works of art — literary, poetic, artistic — are based on the violence of contrasts in life. When one tries to pull them out of their daily dramas, they really feel that it is not artistic. If they wanted to write a book or compose a play where there would be no contrasts, where there would be no shadows in the picture, it would probably be something seemingly very dull, very monotonous, lifeless, for what man calls "life" is the drama of life, the anxiety of life, the violence of contrasts. And perhaps if there were no death, they would be terribly tired of living.

(Long silence)

XII

"Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 386

There seems to be matter enough here for us not to need to go any further. This is a question which every person whose consciousness is awakened a little has asked himself at least once in his life. There is in the depths of the being such a need to perpetuate, to prolong, to develop life, that the moment one has a first contact with death, which, although it may be quite an accidental contact, is yet inevitable, there is a sort of recoil in the being.

In persons who are sensitive, it produces horror; in others, indignation. There is a tendency to ask oneself: "What is this monstrous farce in which one takes part without wanting to, without understanding it? Why are we born, if it is only to die? Why all this effort for development, progress, the flowering of the faculties, if it is to come to a diminution ending in decline and disintegration?..." Some feel a revolt in them, others less strong feel despair and always this question arises: "If there is a conscious Will behind all that, this Will seems to be monstrous."

But here Sri Aurobindo tells us that this was an indispensable means of awakening in the consciousness of matter the need for perfection, the necessity of progress, that without this catastrophe, all beings would have been satisfied with the condition they were in — perhaps.... This is not certain.

But then, we have to take things as they are and tell our-

selves that we must find the way out of it all.

The fact is that everything is in a state of perpetual progressive development, that is, the whole creation, the whole universe is advancing towards a perfection which seems to recede as one goes forward towards it, for what seemed a perfection at a certain moment is no longer perfect after a time. The most subtle states of being in the consciousness follow this progression even as it is going on, and the higher up the scale one goes, the more closely does the rhythm of the advance resemble the rhythm of the universal development, and approach the rhythm of the divine development; but the material world is rigid by nature, transformation is slow, very slow, there, almost imperceptible for the measurement of time as human consciousness perceives it... and so there is a constant disequilibrium between the inner and outer movement, and this lack of balance, this incapacity of the outer forms to follow the movement of the inner progress brings about the necessity of decomposition and the change of forms. But if, into this matter, one could infuse enough consciousness to obtain the same rhythm, if matter could become plastic enough to follow the inner progression, this rupture of balance would not occur, and death would no longer be necessary.

So, according to what Sri Aurobindo tells us, Nature has found this rather radical means to awaken in the material consciousness the necessary aspiration and plasticity.

It is obvious that the most dominant characteristic of matter is inertia, and that, if there were not this violence, perhaps the individual consciousness would be so inert that rather than change it would accept to live in a perpetual imperfection.... That is possible. Anyway, this is how things are made, and for us who know a little more, there is only one thing that remains to be done, it is to change all this, as far as we have the means, by calling the Force, the Consciousness, the new Power which is capable of infusing into material substance the vibration which can transform it, make it plastic, supple, progressive.

Obviously the greatest obstacle is the attachment to things

as they are; but even Nature as a whole finds that those who have the deeper knowledge want to go too fast: she likes her meanderings, she likes her successive attempts, her failures, her fresh beginnings, her new inventions; she likes the fantasy of the path, the unexpectedness of the experience; one could almost say that for her the longer it takes, the more enjoyable it is.

But even of the best games one tires. There comes a time when one needs to change them and one could dream of a game in which it would no longer be necessary to destroy in order to progress, where the zeal for progress would be enough to find new means, new expressions, where the *élan* would be ardent enough to overcome inertia, lassitude, lack of understanding, fatigue, indifference.

Why does this body, as soon as some progress has been made, feel the need to sit down? It is tired. It says, "Oh! you must wait. I must be given time to rest." This is what leads it to death. If it felt within itself that ardour to do always better, become more transparent, more beautiful, more luminous, eternally young, one could escape from this macabre joke of Nature.

For her this is of no importance. She sees the whole, she sees the totality; she sees that nothing is lost, that it is only recombining quantities, numberless minute elements, without any importance, which are put back into a pot and mixed well — and something new comes out of it. But that game is not amusing for everybody. And if in one's consciousness one could be as vast as she, more powerful than she, why shouldn't one do the same thing in a better way?

This is the problem which confronts us now. With the addition, the new help of this Force which has descended, which is manifesting, working, why shouldn't one take in hand this tremendous game and make it more beautiful, more harmonious, more true?

It only needs brains powerful enough to receive this Force and formulate the possible course of action. There must be conscious beings powerful enough to convince Nature that there are

other methods than hers.... This looks like madness, but all new things have always seemed like madness before they became realities.

The hour has come for this madness to be realised. And since we are all here for reasons that are perhaps unknown to most of you, but are still very conscious reasons, we may set ourselves to fulfil that madness — at least it will be worthwhile living it.

XIII

"Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 386

Quite naturally we ask ourselves what this secret is, towards which pain leads us. For a superficial and imperfect understanding, one could believe that it is pain which the soul is seeking. Nothing of the kind. The very nature of the soul is divine Delight, constant, unvarying, unconditioned, ecstatic; but it is true that if one can face suffering with courage, endurance, an unshakable faith in the divine Grace, if one can, instead of shunning suffering when it comes, enter into it with this will, this aspiration to go through it and find the luminous truth, the unvarying delight which is at the core of all things, the door of pain is often more direct, more immediate than that of satisfaction or contentment.

I am not speaking of pleasure because pleasure turns its back constantly and almost completely on this profound divine Delight.

Pleasure is a deceptive and perverse disguise which turns us away from our goal and we certainly should not seek it if we are eager to find the truth. Pleasure vapourises us; it deceives us, leads us astray. Pain brings us back to a deeper truth by obliging us to concentrate in order to be able to bear it, be able to face this thing that crushes us. It is in pain that one most easily finds

the true strength again, when one is strong. It is in pain that one most easily finds the true faith again, the faith in something which is above and beyond all pain.

When one enjoys oneself and forgets, when one takes things as they come, tries to avoid being serious and looking life in the face, in a word when one seeks to forget, to forget that there is a problem to solve, that there is something to find, that we have a reason for existence and living, that we are not here just to pass our time and go away without having learnt or done anything, then one really wastes one's time, one misses the opportunity that has been given to us, this — I cannot say unique, but marvellous opportunity for an existence which is the field of progress, which is the moment in eternity when you can discover the secret of life; for this physical, material existence is a wonderful opportunity, a possibility given to you to find the purpose of life, to make you advance one step towards this deeper truth, to make you discover this secret which puts you into contact with the eternal rapture of the divine life.

(*Silence*)

I have already told you many a time that to seek suffering and pain is a morbid attitude which must be avoided, but to run away from them through forgetfulness, through a superficial, frivolous movement, through diversion, is cowardice. When pain comes, it comes to teach us something. The quicker we learn it, the more the need for pain diminishes, and when we know the secret, it will no longer be possible to suffer, for that secret reveals to us the reason, the cause, the origin of suffering, and the way to pass beyond it.

The secret is to emerge from the ego, get out of its prison, unite ourselves with the Divine, merge into Him, not to allow anything to separate us from Him. Then, once one has discovered this secret and realises it in one's being, pain loses its justification and suffering disappears. It is an all-powerful remedy,

not only in the deeper parts of the being, in the soul, in the spiritual consciousness, but also in life and in the body.

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

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

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

XIV

"The limitations of the body are a mould; soul and mind have to pour themselves into them, break them and constantly remould them in wider limits till the formula of agreement is found between this finite and their own infinity."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 386

Sweet Mother, how should we understand: "the limitations of the body are a mould" ?

If you did not have a body with a precise form, if you were not a formed individuality, fully conscious and having its own qualities, you would all be fused into one another and be indistinguishable. Even if we go only a little inwards, into the most material vital being, there is such a mixture between the vibrations of different people that it is very difficult to distinguish any of you. And if you did not have a body, it would be a sort of inextricable pulp. Therefore, it is the form, this precise and apparently rigid form of the body, which distinguishes you one from another. So this form serves as a mould. (*Speaking to the child*) Do you know what a mould is? — Yes! One pours something inside, in a liquid or semi-liquid form, and when it cools down one can break the mould and have the object in a precise form. Well, the form of the body serves as a mould in which the vital and mental forces can take a precise form, so that you can become an individual being separate from others.

It is only gradually, very slowly, through the movements of life and a more or less careful and thorough education that you begin to have sensations which are personal to you, feelings and ideas which are personal to you. An individualised mind is something extremely rare, which comes only after a long education;

otherwise it is a kind of thought-current passing through your brain and then through another's and then through a multitude of other brains, and all this is in perpetual movement and has no individuality. One thinks what others are thinking, others think what still others are thinking, and everybody thinks like that in a great mixture, because these are currents, vibrations of thought passing from one to another. If you look at yourself attentively, you will very quickly become aware that very few thoughts in you are personal. Where do you draw them from? — From what you have heard, from what you have read, what you have been taught, and how many of these thoughts you have are the result of your own experience, your own reflection, your purely personal observation? — Not many.

Only those who have an intense intellectual life, who are in the habit of reflecting, observing, putting ideas together, gradually form a mental individuality for themselves.

Most people — and not only those who are uneducated but even the well-read — can have the most contradictory, the most opposite ideas in their heads without even being aware of the contradictions. I have seen numerous examples like that, of people who cherished ideas and even had political, social, religious opinions on all the so-called higher fields of human intelligence, who had absolutely contradictory opinions on the same subject, and were not aware of it. And if you observe yourself, you will see that you have many ideas which ought to be linked by a sequence of intermediate ideas which are the result of a considerable widening of the thought if they are not to co-exist in an absurd way.

Therefore, before an individuality becomes truly individual and has its own qualities, it must be contained in a vessel, otherwise it would spread out like water and would no longer have any form at all. Some people, at a rather lower level, know themselves only by the name they bear. They would not be able to distinguish themselves from their neighbours except by their name. They are asked, "Who are you?" — "My name is this."

A little later they tell you the name of their occupation or about their main characteristic. If they are asked, "Who are you?" — "I am a painter."

But at a certain level the only answer is the name.

And what is a name? It is nothing but a word, isn't that so? And what is there behind? Nothing. It is a whole collection of vague things which do not at all represent a person as different from his neighbour. He is differentiated only because he has another name. If everybody bore the same name, it would be very difficult to distinguish one person from another!

I read to you the other day from that book on aviation¹ the story of the slave who, whenever he was asked a question, always answered by his name. But that was already a progress compared with all those who were given the name of slave — for all of them it was the same one — and they all accepted to have the same name, and therefore to be the same person. For they had no individuality at all, they only had an occupation; and that occupation being the same for a successive number of slaves, they all had the same name.

One lives by a kind of habit which is barely half-conscious — one lives, does not even objectify what one does, why one does it, how one does it. One does it by habit. All those who are born in a certain environment, a certain country, automatically take the habits of that environment, not only material habits but habits of thought, habits of feeling and habits of acting. They do it without watching themselves doing it, quite naturally, and if someone points this out to them they are astonished.

As a matter of fact, one has the habit of sleeping, speaking, eating, moving and one does all this as something quite natural, without wondering why or how.... And many other things. All the time one does things automatically, by force of habit, one does not watch oneself. And so, when one lives in a particular society, one automatically does what is normally done in that

¹ Saint-Exupéry, *Terre des hommes*.

society. And if somebody begins to watch himself acting, watch himself feeling and thinking, he looks like a kind of phenomenal monster compared with the environment he lives in.

Therefore, individuality is not at all the rule, it is an exception, and if you do not have that sort of bag, a particular form which is your outer body and your appearance, you could hardly be distinguished from one another.

Individuality is a conquest. And, as Sri Aurobindo says here, this first conquest is only a first stage, and once you have realised within you something like a personal independent and conscious being, then what you have to do is to break the form and go farther. For example, if you want to progress mentally, you must break all your mental forms, all your mental constructions to be able to make new ones. So, to begin with, a tremendous labour is required to individualise oneself, and afterwards one must demolish all that has been done in order to progress. But as you do not watch yourself doing things and as it is the custom — not everywhere, of course; let us say here — the custom to work, to read, to develop yourself, to try to do something, to form yourself a little, you do it quite naturally and without even watching yourself, as I said.

And only when these external forms come into a mutual friction you begin to feel that you are different from others. Otherwise you are this person or that, according to the name you bear. It is only when there is a friction, when something does not go smoothly, that you become aware of a difference, then you see that you are different, otherwise you are not aware of it and you are not different. In fact, you are very, very little different from one another.

How many things in your life are done at least essentially in the same way as others. For instance, sleeping, moving and eating, and all sorts of things like that. Never have you asked yourselves why you do a thing in one way and not another. You wouldn't be able to say. If I asked you, why do you act in this way and not that? you wouldn't know what to say. But it is

quite simply because you were born in certain conditions and it is the habit to be like that in these conditions. Otherwise, if you had been born in another age and other conditions, you would act altogether differently without even realising the difference, it would appear absolutely natural to you.... For instance — a very, very small instance — in most Western countries and even in some Eastern ones, people sew like this, from right to left; in Japan they sew from left to right. Well, it seems quite natural to you to sew from right to left, doesn't it? That is how you have been taught and you don't think about it, you sew in that way. If you go to Japan and they see you sewing, it makes them laugh, for they are in the habit of sewing differently. It is the same thing with writing. You write like this, from left to right, but there are people who write from top to bottom, and others who write from right to left, and they do it most naturally. I am not speaking of those who have studied, reflected, compared ways of writing, I am not speaking of more or less learned people, no, I am speaking of quite ordinary people, and above all of children who do what is done around them, quite spontaneously and without questioning. But then, when by chance or circumstance they are faced with a different way, it is a tremendous revelation for them that things can be done in a different way from theirs.

And these are quite simple things, I mean the ones which strike you, but this is true down to the smallest detail. You do things in this way because in the place and environment in which you live they are done in this way. And you do not watch yourself doing them.

Indeed, the source was One, you see, and creation had to be manifold. And it must have represented quite a considerable labour to make this multiplicity conscious of being multiple.

And if one observes very attentively, if creation had kept the memory of its origin, it would perhaps never have become a diverse multiplicity. There would have been at the centre of each being the sense of perfect unity, and the diversity would

— perhaps — never have been expressed.

Through the loss of the memory of this unity began the possibility of becoming conscious of differences; and when one goes into the inconscient, at the other end, one falls back into a sort of unity that's unconscious of itself, in which the diversity is as unexpressed as it is in the origin.

At both ends there is the same absence of diversity. In one case it is through a supreme consciousness of unity, in the other through a perfect unconsciousness of unity.

The fixity of form is the means by which individuality can be formed.

XV

My eye won't allow me to read today.¹ But I have been asked a question on what I read to you last week. I am going to reply to it this evening. Pavitra, will you read, please ?

(Pavitra reads) *What does this paragraph mean: "Freedom is the law of being in its illimitable unity, secret master of all Nature: servitude is the law of love in the being voluntarily giving itself to serve the play of its other selves in the multiplicity."*

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 386

At a superficial glance these two things appear absolutely contradictory and incompatible. Outwardly one cannot conceive how one can be at once in freedom and in servitude, but there is an attitude which reconciles the two and makes them one of the happiest states of material existence.

Freedom is a sort of instinctive need, a necessity for the integral development of the being. In its essence it is a perfect realisation of the highest consciousness, it is the expression of Unity and of union with the Divine, it is the very sense of the Origin and the fulfilment. But because this Unity has manifested in the many — in the multiplicity — something had to serve as a link between the Origin and the manifestation, and the most perfect link one can conceive of is love. And what is the first gesture of love ? To give oneself, to serve. What is its spontaneous, immediate, inevitable movement ? To serve. To serve in a joyous, complete, total self-giving.

So, in their purity, in their truth, these two things — freedom and service — far from being contradictory, are comple-

¹ On the 27th February there was only a reading followed by a meditation, no talk was given. Since the Darshan of November 24, Mother had been having a slight haemorrhage in her left eye.

mentary. It is in perfect union with the supreme Reality that perfect freedom is found, for all ignorance, all unconsciousness is a bondage which makes you inefficient, limited, powerless. The least ignorance in oneself is a limitation, one is no longer free. As long as there is an element of unconsciousness in the being, it is a limitation, a bondage. Only in perfect union with the supreme Reality can perfect freedom exist. And how to realise this union if not through a spontaneous self-giving: the gift of love. And as I said, the first gesture, the first expression of love is service.

So the two are closely united in the Truth. But here on earth, in this world of ignorance and inconscience, this service which should have been spontaneous, full of love, the very expression of love, has become something imposed, an inevitable necessity, performed only for the maintenance of life, for the continuation of existence, and thus it has become something ugly, miserable — humiliating. What should have been a flowering, a joy, has become an ugliness, a weariness, a sordid obligation. And this sense, this need for freedom has also been deformed and has become that kind of thirst for independence which leads straight to revolt, to separation, isolation, the very opposite of true freedom.

Independence !... I remember having heard an old occultist and sage give a beautiful reply to someone who said, "I want to be independent ! I am an independent being ! I exist only when I am independent !" And the other answered him with a smile, "Then that means that nobody will love you, because if someone loves you, you immediately become dependent on this love."

It is a beautiful reply, for it is indeed love which leads to Unity and it is Unity which is the true expression of freedom. And so those who in the name of their right to freedom claim independence, turn their backs completely on this true freedom, for they deny love.

The deformation comes from constraint.

One cannot love through compulsion, you cannot be compelled to love, it is no longer love. Therefore, as soon as compulsion intervenes, it becomes a falsehood. All the movements of the inner being must be spontaneous movements, with that spontaneity which comes from an inner harmony, an understanding — from a voluntary self-giving — from a return to the deeper truth, the reality of being, the Origin and the Goal.

XVI

"The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul.

"Souls that do not aspire are God's failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.

"Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.

"Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

"God has made the world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of a great wrestle and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

"Distrust a perfect-seeming success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

"There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting place."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, pp. 391-92

All that Sri Aurobindo says here is aimed at fighting against human nature with its inertia, its heaviness, laziness, easy satis-

factions, hostility to all effort. How many times in life does one meet people who become pacifists because they are afraid to fight, who long for rest before they have earned it, who are satisfied with a little progress and in their imagination and desires make it into a marvellous realisation so as to justify their stopping half-way.

In ordinary life, already, this happens so much. Indeed, this is the bourgeois ideal, which has deadened mankind and made man into what he is now: "Work while you are young, accumulate wealth, honour, position; be provident, have a little foresight, put something by, lay up a capital, become an official — so that later when you are forty you "can sit down", enjoy your income and later your pension and, as they say, enjoy a well-earned rest." — To sit down, to stop on the way, not to move forward, to go to sleep, to go downhill towards the grave before one's time, cease to live the purpose of life — to sit down !

The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. Life is movement, it is effort, it is a march forward, the scaling of a mountain, the climb towards new revelations, towards future realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in the march forward that repose must be found, the true repose of complete trust in the divine Grace, of the absence of desires, of victory over egoism.

True repose comes from the widening, the universalisation of the consciousness. Become as vast as the world and you will always be at rest. In the thick of action, in the very midst of the battle, the effort, you will know the repose of infinity and eternity.

XVII

"Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

"The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation; but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly: neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God's purpose and thy will to accomplish.

"The hand of the divine Artist works often as if it were unsure of its genius and its material. It seems to touch and test and leave, to pick up and throw away and pick up again, to labour and fail and botch and repiece together. Surprises and disappointments are the order of his work before all things are ready. What was selected, is cast away into the abyss of reprobation; what was rejected, becomes the cornerstone of a mighty edifice. But behind all this is the sure eye of a knowledge which surpasses our reason and the slow smile of an infinite ability.

"God has all time before him and does not need to be always in a hurry. He is sure of his aim and success and cares not if he break his work a hundred times to bring it nearer perfection. Patience is our first great necessary lesson, but not the dull slowness to move of the timid, the sceptical, the weary, the slothful, the unambitious or the weakling; a patience full

of a calm and gathering strength which watches and prepares itself for the hour of swift great strokes, few but enough to change destiny.

"Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped; as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.

"Wherefore he selected or made such a material, when he had all infinite possibility to choose from? Because of his divine Idea which saw before it not only beauty and sweetness and purity, but also force and will and greatness. Despise not force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love only is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, pp. 392-93

After all, the whole problem is to know whether humanity has reached the state of pure gold or whether it still needs to be tested in the crucible.

One thing is evident, humanity has not become pure gold; that is visible and certain.

But something has happened in the world's history which allows us to hope that a selected few in humanity, a small number of beings, perhaps, are ready to be transformed into pure gold and that they will be able to manifest strength without violence, heroism without destruction and courage without catastrophe.

But in the very next paragraph Sri Aurobindo gives the answer: "If man could once consent to be spiritualised." If only the individual could *consent* to be spiritualised... could consent.¹

Something in him asks for it, aspires, and all the rest refuses, wants to continue to be what it is: the mixed ore which needs to be cast into the furnace.

At the moment we are at a decisive turning-point in the history of the earth, once again. From every side I am asked, "What is going to happen?" Everywhere there is anguish, expectation, fear. "What is going to happen?..." There is only one reply: "If only man could consent to be spiritualised."

And perhaps it would be enough if some individuals became pure gold, for this would be enough to change the course of events.... We are faced with this necessity in a very urgent way.

This courage, this heroism which the Divine wants of us, why not use it to fight against one's own difficulties, one's own imperfections, one's own obscurities? Why not heroically face the furnace of inner purification so that it does not become necessary to pass once more through one of those terrible, gigantic destructions which plunge an entire civilisation into darkness?

This is the problem before us. It is for each one to solve it in his own way.

This evening I am answering the questions I have been asked, and my reply is that of Sri Aurobindo: If man could once consent to be spiritualised....

And I add: Time presses... from the human point of view.

¹ "All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection."

XVIII

"All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection.

"The Spirit is the truth of our being; mind and life and body in their imperfection are its masks, but in their perfection should be its moulds. To be spiritual only is not enough; that prepares a number of souls for heaven, but leaves the earth very much where it was. Neither is a compromise the way of salvation.

"The world knows three kinds of revolution. The material has strong results, the moral and intellectual are infinitely larger in their scope and richer in their fruits, but the spiritual are the great sowings.

"If the triple change could coincide in a perfect correspondence, a faultless work would be done; but the mind and body of mankind cannot hold perfectly a strong spiritual inrush: most is spilt, much of the rest is corrupted. Many intellectual and physical upturnings of our soil are needed to work out a little result from a large spiritual sowing.

"Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer; Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and

cult-egoism stand in the way.

"All religions have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualise mankind. For that there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution.

"The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretations of present happening and forecast of man's future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity."

Thoughts and Glimpses, Cent. Vol. 16, pp. 393-94

Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: "A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way."

How is it possible to fuse into one all these views ?

It is not in the mental consciousness that these things can be harmonised and synthesised. For this it is necessary to rise above and find the idea behind the thought. Sri Aurobindo shows here, for example, what each of these religions represents in human effort, aspiration and realisation. Instead of taking these religions in their outward forms which are precisely dogmas and intellectual conceptions, if we take them in their spirit, in the principle they represent, there is no difficulty in unifying them. They are simply different aspects of human progress which complete each other perfectly well and should be united with many others yet to form a more total and more complete progress, a more perfect understanding of life, a more integral approach to

the Divine. And even this unification which already demands a return to the Spirit behind things, is not enough; there must be added to it a vision of the future, the goal towards which humanity is moving, the future realisation of the world, that last "spiritual revolution" Sri Aurobindo speaks about, which will open a new age, that is, the supramental revolution.

In the supramental consciousness all these things are no longer contradictory or exclusive. They all become complementary. It is only the mental form which divides. What this mental form represents should be united to what all the other mental forms represent in order to make a harmonious whole. And that is the essential difference between a religion and the true spiritual life.

Religion exists almost exclusively in its forms, its cults, in a certain set of ideas, and it becomes great only through the spirituality of a few exceptional individuals, whereas true spiritual life, and above all what the supramental realisation will be, is independent of every precise, intellectual form, every limited form of life. It embraces all possibilities and manifestations and makes them the expression, the vehicle of a higher and more universal truth.

A new religion would not only be useless but very harmful. It is a new *life* which must be created; it is a new *consciousness* which must be expressed. This is something beyond intellectual limits and mental formulae. It is a living truth which must manifest.

Everything in its essence and its truth should be included in this realisation. This realisation must be an expression as total, as complete, as universal as possible of the divine reality. Only that can save humanity and the world. That is the great spiritual revolution of which Sri Aurobindo speaks. And this is what he wanted us to realise.

He has traced its broad outline in the very book we shall start reading next Wednesday: *The Supramental Manifestation*.

And the first sentence I read today remains the key of the

entire problem not only for the individual but also for the collectivity:

"All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection."

I would like us to take this as the subject of our meditation.

(Meditation)

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.

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