The Real Awakener

Lights on the Path

Words of the Mother – 6

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The One whom we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates.

– Sri Aurobindo

I. Questions and Answers, Jan – Feb 1954

1. The Mother on Character, Body-Formation and Accidents

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

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

And when the body has been deformed by illness?

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

that is, of the forces of disintegration, disorganisation. It depends.

There are teachings, like that of theosophy for instance, which take Karma in an altogether superficial and human sense and tell you: "Oh! You have met with this accident because in a former life you did something bad, so that comes back upon you in the form of an accident." This is not true, not at all true. This is but human justice, it is neither the justice of Nature nor the justice of the Divine.

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

an hour with a sick person, they catch the illness. That too depends on what they are within themselves."[1]

2. The Association Between the Physical and the Psychic and Between the Mental and the Vital Being

"There is a sort of association between the physical and the psychic and between the mental and the vital being. A mental being is very often a very vital being. A psychic being is very often a physical being. Children – just because this psychic consciousness is in the front – live also altogether in their body. But as soon as one begins to develop the mind, the need for association also develops, with all the deformations that go with it. People who make very strict distinctions between man and woman (I don't know why, for one is as good as the other), say that man is mental and vital and woman physical and psychic. There is some truth in it. But naturally it involves all possible exceptions and complications. These are arbitrary simplifications. In fact the physical being has a simplicity and even a goodwill (which is not always very enlightened, far from it), but still a simplicity and goodwill which put it in a closer relation with the psychic than the passions of the vital or the pretensions of the mind. And it is probably because of that also that in children the psychic can feel more at ease, being less constantly jostled by mental and vital contradictions."[2]

3. Power of Observation and Different Parts of the Being

"I think the power of observation develops in all the parts of the being. You may have a mental power of observation, a vital power of observation, a physical power of observation.

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

Is there a power of observation in the psychic?

More than that! There is the capacity for a direct vision of things. It is like a mirror in which all things are reflected, whatever they may be. But that is just what most children, when not deformed, have very clearly, a great sensibility – for example, to the atmosphere of those who approach them. There are children who, without any apparent reason, rush towards one person and run away in horror from another. For you both of them are equally good or not good, you make no difference. But in one instance the child is immediately attracted by the person, and in the other, try as hard as you may, it will weep, it will cry or it will run away, but it will have nothing to do with that person; and all this is a translation, in a consciousness of ignorance, of a psychic phenomenon: the vision of the psychic quality of that person.

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

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

Can it be increased?

One can develop it, one can, and there are no limits to the development. And it is even altogether indispensable to develop it."[3] (27-1-1954)

4. The Development of Mind and Vital in Children

"…the vital is much more developed than the mind. You know, I have said there that things are crystallised,* that is they take a form, and a more and more precise, a more and more fixed form (the more precise the form, the more fixed it is). In children it is much more like water; it is not yet in a very concrete and precise form. That is why,

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

moreover, one can have a great influence upon them, for it is still supple, it is not crystallised; one can notice it: it has something malleable about it, as though one were moulding butter; however, as soon as they are about twenty or twenty-five, the special disposition, the turn of character is fixed and, at that moment, instead of preventing defects, it becomes necessary to mend them. That is another thing. If one wants to give an education which prevents bad habits from being formed or bad tendencies from being pursued, an education which leads children constantly into the right path (that one wants them to follow), well, when they are small it is possible, when they become bigger, it becomes hard. One cannot change the imprint easily. Even sometimes it is necessary to break things to be able to change them: as those who are not progressive, who are fixed and remain fixed, who cling with all their strength to their petty habits. While the little ones are supple, one can change their opinions, one can make them progress, give them the sense that tomorrow one must do better than today."[4]

5. Unconsciousness in the Use of Material Things

"People who don't know how to deal with things carefully, don't deserve to have them. Sri Aurobindo has often written on this subject in his letters. He has said that **if you don't know how to take care of material things, you have no right to have them. Indeed this shows a kind of selfishness and confusion in the human being, and it is not a good sign.*** And then later when they grow up, some

** Bold letters in the text, used here for emphasis, are from the Editor and are not there in the original.*

of them cannot keep a cupboard in order or a drawer in order. They may be in a room which looks very tidy and very neat outwardly, and then you open a drawer or a cupboard, it is like a battlefield! Everything is pell-mell. You find everything in a jumble; nothing is arranged. These are people with a poor little head in which ideas lie in the same state as their material objects. They have not organised their ideas. They haven't put them in order. They live in a cerebral confusion. And that is a sure sign, I have never met an exception to this rule: people who don't know how to keep their things in order – their ideas are in disorder in their heads, always. They exist together, the most contradictory ideas are put together, and not through a higher synthesis, don't you believe it: simply because of a disorder and an incapacity to organise their ideas. You don't need to speak even for ten minutes with people if you can manage to enter their room and open the drawers of their tables and look into their cupboard. You know in what state they are, don't you?"[5]

6. To Know Oneself – One Single True Reason for Living

"Essentially there is but one single true reason for living: it is to know oneself. We are here to learn – to learn what we are, why we are here, and what we have to do. And if we don't know that, our life is altogether empty – for ourselves and for others.

And so, generally, it is better to begin early, for there is much to learn. If one wants to learn about life as it is, the world as it is, and then really know the why and the how of life, one can begin when very young, from the time one is very, very tiny – before the age of five. And then, when one is

a hundred, one will still be able to learn. So it is interesting. And all the time one can have surprises, always learn something one didn't know, meet with an experience one did not have before, find something one was ignorant of. It is surely very interesting. **And the more one knows, the more aware does one become that one has everything to learn.** Truly, I could say that only fools believe they know. That indeed is a sure sign, someone coming and telling you, "Oh! I know all that; oh! I know all that"; he is immediately sized up!"[6]

7. Can't One have Only the Light?

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

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

Yes, if one eliminates the shadow. But it must be eliminated. That does not happen by itself. The world as it is is a mixed world. You cannot have an object which gets the light from one side without its casting a shadow on the other. It is like that, and indeed it is the shadows which

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

make you see the lights. The world is like that, and to have only the light one must definitely go through the entire discipline necessary for eliminating the shadow. This is what I have explained a little farther; I have said that this shadow was like a sign of what you had to conquer in your nature in order to be able to realise what you have come to do. **If you have a part to play, a mission to fulfil, you will always carry in yourself the main difficulty preventing you from realising it, so that you have within your reach the victory you must win.** If you had to fight against a difficulty which is everywhere on earth, it would be very difficult (you would need to have a very vast consciousness and a very great power), while if you carry in your own nature just the shadow or defect you must conquer, well, it is there, within your reach: you see all the time the effects of this thing and can fight it directly, immediately. It is a very practical organisation."[7] (3-2-1954)

8. Why do We Forget Things?*

"Ah! I suppose there are several reasons. First, because one makes use of the memory to remember. Memory is a mental instrument and depends on the formation of the brain. Your brain is constantly growing, unless it begins to degenerate, but still its growth can continue for a very, very long time, much longer than that of the body. And in this growth, necessarily some things will take the place of others. And as the mental instrument develops, things which have served their term or the transitory moment in the

** The titles marked with an * are from the original. All the unmarked titles in the text are from the editor.*

development may be wiped out to give place to the result. So the result of all that you knew is there, living in itself, but the road traversed to reach it may be completely blurred. That is, a good functioning of the memory means remembering only the results so as to be able to have the elements for moving forward and a new construction. That is more important than just retaining things rigidly in the mind.

Now, there is another aspect also. Apart from the mental memory, which is something defective, there are states of consciousness. Each state of consciousness in which one happens to be registers the phenomena of a particular moment, whatever they may be. If your consciousness remains limpid, wide and strong, you can at any moment whatsoever, by concentrating, call into the active consciousness what you did, thought, saw, observed at any time before; all this you can remember by bringing up in yourself the same state of consciousness. And that, that is never forgotten. You could live a thousand years and you would still remember it. Consequently, **if you don't want to forget, it must be your consciousness which remembers and not your mental memory. Your mental memory will be wiped out inevitably, get blurred, and new things will take the place of the old ones. But things of which you are conscious you do not forget. You have only to bring up the same state of consciousness again. And thus one can remember circumstances one has lived thousands of years ago, if one knows how to bring up the same state of consciousness. It is in this way that one can remember one's past lives.** This never gets blotted out, while you don't have any more the memory of what you have done physically when you were very young.

You would be told many things you no longer remember. That gets wiped off immediately. For the brain is constantly changing and certain weaker cells are replaced by others which are much stronger, and by other combinations, other cerebral organisations. And so, what was there before is effaced or deformed.

One can remember things which happened thousands of years ago!

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

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

I have just told you how, my child, you did not listen to what I said. I said that if it is a mental remembrance it will be effaced; even in your present life you cannot recall incidents which took place twenty or thirty or forty years ago. But a state of consciousness is not a mental state. It has nothing to do with the mind. Indeed, most minds are dissolved with the body, except when there is a very well-made special formation, very "cohesive", very well organised, which can last. But that is fairly rare. These are only exceptional cases. But consciousness is something quite different. **Consciousness is an eternal state. The state of consciousness is an eternal state. Creation is born**

through consciousness and if consciousness were withdrawn, there would be no creation any longer. And if you enter into contact with consciousness, you can discover the whole history of creation, for creation comes from consciousness. Consciousness is eternal."[8]

9. How to Get Rid of Unpleasant thoughts?

"There are several methods. Generally – but it depends on people – generally, the easiest way is to think of something else. That is, to concentrate one's attention upon something that has nothing to do with that thought, has no connection with that thought, like reading or some work – generally something creative, some creative work. For instance, those who write, while they are writing (let us take simply a novelist), while he is writing, all other thoughts are gone, for he is concentrated on what he is doing. When he finishes writing, if he has no control, the other thoughts will return. But precisely when a thought assails you, one can try to do some creative work; for example, the scientist could do some research work, a special study to discover something, something that is very absorbing; that is the easiest way. Naturally, those who have begun to control their thought can make a movement of rejection, push aside the thought as one would a physical object. But that is more difficult and asks for a much greater mastery. If one can manage it, it is more active, in the sense that if you reject that movement, that thought, if you chase it off effectively and constantly or almost repeatedly, finally it does not come any more. But in the other case, it can always return. That makes two methods.

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

The first step is to think of something else (but in this way, you know, it will be indefinitely repeated); the second is to fight; and the third is to transform. When one has reached the third step, not only is one cured but one has made a permanent progress."[9] (10-2-1954)

10. The Essence of the Approach to Yoga

"Sometimes one may read a whole book of philosophy and not progress a step farther. Sometimes one may be quite a fervent devotee of a religion and not progress. There are people who have spent entire lifetimes seated in contemplation and attained nothing. There are people (we have well-known examples) who used to do the most modest of manual works, like a cobbler mending old shoes, and who had an experience. It is altogether beyond what one thinks and says of it. It is a gift, that's all. And all that is needed is to be that – to succeed in identifying oneself with it and live it. At times you read one sentence in a book and that leads you there. Sometimes you read entire books of

philosophy or religion and they get you nowhere. There are people, however, whom the reading of philosophy books helps to go ahead. But all these things are secondary. There is only one thing that's important: that is a sincere and persistent will, for these things don't happen in a twinkling. So one must persevere. When someone feels that he is not advancing, he must not get discouraged; he must try to find out what it is in the nature that is opposing, and then make the necessary progress. And suddenly one goes forward. And when you reach the end you have an experience. And what is remarkable is that people who have followed altogether different paths, with altogether different mental constructions, from the greatest believer to the most unbelieving, even materialists, have arrived at that experience, it is the same for everyone. Because it is true – because it is real, because it is the sole reality. And it is quite simply *that*. I do not say anything more. This is of no importance, the way one speaks about it, what is important is to follow the path, *your* path, no matter which – yes, to go there."[10]

11. Physical Things not Necessarily More Egoistic than Mental or Emotional

"Physical things are not necessarily more egoistic than mental or emotional ones. Far from it. They are often much less so. Egoism does not lie in that, egoism lies in the inner attitude. It does not depend on the field in which you are concentrated, it depends on the attitude you have. It does not depend on what you do, it depends on the way you do it."[11] (17-2-1954)

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II. Questions and Answers, March – April 1954

1. On Occult Planes and Practice of Occultism

"We have subtle senses; even as we have a physical body, we have other more subtle bodies which also have senses, and much more refined senses, much more precise and much more powerful than our physical senses. But naturally, as it is not customary in modern education to work in these domains, these things generally escape our ordinary knowledge. Yet children spontaneously live a great deal in this domain. They see things which are as real for them as physical things, they speak about them – and they are usually told that they are stupid because they speak of things others don't see but which are as true for them, as tangible and real as what can be seen by everyone. Their dreams have an intensity and a capital importance in their life, and it is only with intensive mental growth that those capacities diminish. Now, there are people who are fortunate to be born with their inner senses naturally developed, and nothing can prevent them from remaining awake. If these people meet in good time someone who can help them in a methodical development, they can become very interesting instruments for the study and discovery of this occult world. In all ages there have been initiatory schools which took up these particularly talented people and educated them in this kind of science. These schools were always more or less secret or hidden, for ordinary men are quite intolerant of those capacities which are beyond them – and disturb them. But there were fine periods in human history when these schools were recognised and much appreciated and respected, as in ancient Egypt, ancient Chaldea, ancient India,

and even partially in Greece and Rome. There were always schools of initiation, even in mediaeval Europe, but there they had to be very carefully hidden, for they were pursued and persecuted by the official Christian religion, and if perchance it was discovered that such and such men or women were practising these occult sciences, they were tied to the stake and burnt alive as sorcerers!... In our times this knowledge is almost lost; there are only a very few people who have it; but with mental growth the intolerance also has gone. People don't like these things very much – they are disturbed, annoyed by them – but still they are obliged to admit that these things are not crimes and people practising occultism are no longer burnt at the stake or imprisoned. Only, there are many people who claim to know but there are very few who do know. In any case, before entering upon this study, one must have, as I told you at the beginning, a very great self-mastery, must have attained a kind of abnegation, a self-forgetfulness, an egolessness, a disinterestedness and sense of sacrifice which enables one to practise this without any danger. …"[12]

"I practised occultism when I was twelve. But I must say I had no fear, I feared nothing. One goes out of one's body, but is tied by something resembling an almost imperceptible thread; if the thread is cut, it is all over. Life also is ended. One goes out, and then can begin seeing the world he has entered. And usually the first things one sees, as I said, are terrifying. Because, for you the air is empty, there is nothing in it – you see something blue or white, there are clouds, sunbeams, and all that is very pretty – but when you have the other sight, you see that it is filled with a multitude of small formations which are all residues of desires or of mental deformation and these swarm inside it, you see, in a mass,

and this is not always very pretty. At times it is extremely ugly. This assails you; it comes, presses upon you, attacks you; and if you are afraid, it takes absolutely frightful forms. Naturally, if you do not flinch, if you can look upon all that with a healthy curiosity, you perceive that it is not at all so terrifying. It may not be pretty, but it is not terrifying.

I could tell you a little story.

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

What does the tiger represent?

It was probably... That day he had become angry with somebody, he had lost his temper and entertained bad thoughts; he had hoped that something very unpleasant would happen to this person. Now, in occultism there is the "rebound". You send out a bad thought, it returns to you as an attack. That is exactly one of the reasons why you must have a complete control over your feelings, sensations, thoughts, for if you become angry with someone or think badly of him, or if, still worse, you wish him ill, well, in your very dream you see this person coming with an extreme violence to attack you. Then, if you do not know these things, you say, "Why, I was right in having bad thoughts against him!" But in fact, it is not at all that. It is your own thought that comes back to you. And the person may be absolutely unaware of all that has happened, for – and this is one of the commonest laws in occultism – if you make a formation, for instance a mental formation that an accident or something unpleasant should happen to a certain person and you send out this formation, if it so happens that this person is in a very high state of consciousness, does not at all wish anything bad, is quite indifferent and disinterested in the affair, the formation will come up against his atmosphere and instead of entering will rebound upon the one who has made it. In this way serious accidents have taken place. There were certain people who practised that low deformation of occultism which is called magic and they had made formations through magic against someone. But this person happened to be far above this and could not be touched by those formations. So they returned upon those people, fatally. If they had made a formation of death, it would have been they who died."[13] (3-3-1954)

2. The Layers of Determinisms

"…there are, as it were, different "layers of determinisms" in our being. The physical existence has a determinism; the vital existence has a determinism; the mental existence has a determinism; the higher mental, the psychic have a determinism. And then the higher existences have determinisms – the supramental existence has a determinism. And the determinism of everyone comes from the combination of all these determinisms (I am sure I have written this somewhere). If, for instance, at a given moment, when the entire physical determinism must necessarily bring death, you suddenly enter into contact with an extremely high determinism, like the supramental one, for example, and you succeed in joining the two, you change your physical determinism completely at that moment: death which had been determined by the physical determinism is abolished, and the conditions change and are pushed back."[14]

"If you do not make a higher determinism intervene, truly you can change nothing. That is the only way of changing your physical determinism. If you remain in your physical consciousness and want to change your determinism, you cannot... During the First War I knew a boy who had been told he would die of a gunshot (you know in war one dies easily), and he had even been given an approximate date. And that caused him such agony that he had succeeded in getting a long leave. He came to Paris on leave. He was an officer and had his pistol in his pocket. He jumped from a tram and fell down, the pistol went off and he was killed on the spot. He could not escape."[15]

3. "Domain of Death" – What Happens After One Leaves One's Body

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

passes away without anyone's having a special attachment for him, either because he is surrounded by people he has harmed and who do not love him or by people who are in a terribly unconscious state – he is like a prey delivered to these forces. And that indeed is an experience that's difficult to bear. They cannot touch anything else except what belongs to their own domain, that is, the most material vital – the higher vital escapes them altogether, they can do nothing there. And so, this material vital goes out but the other remains; and this higher vital is attacked by other dangers, simply that. And if it also disappears, the mind remains. But behind all this is the psychic being which nothing can touch, which is above all possible attacks, and it indeed is free to go where it wants. Usually – unless it has a special opportunity and has reached a state of complete development – it goes to rest in the psychic worlds. There it enters into a kind of beatific contemplation in which it remains, and this is an assimilation of all its experiences, and when it has finished assimilating them and resting, well, it starts preparing to come down again for a new life. That being nothing can touch. But so very few are conscious of their psychic that one can hardly say that it is such and such a person whom one has known, for people as we know them are made of what? – of all their physical experiences, all their vital reactions, all their mental formations – that is, the body, the character, the thought – and with these we have a human being! Well, all that cannot persist after death unless it is organised and centralised around the psychic being and to the extent it is perfectly unified with the psychic. Otherwise all this mixture is dissolved and the psychic being alone remains, at times just as a flame, at times as a completely conscious being.

This of course is the general law. Now there are bridges, as it were, "protected passages" which have been built in the vital world in order to cross over all these dangers. There are atmospheres which receive people leaving their body, give them shelter, give them protection. There are all kinds of other conditions; what I have told you just now is the normal state of those who die, of ordinary human beings, but as soon as we come to a little higher type of humanity, all these conditions change. The general law remains unless there is a special higher development within the being. There are people with so total a cohesion in their being that they no longer depend upon the body – not at all – whether it be there or not there.

But all this development does not come about just like that, simply by thinking about it from time to time, desiring it still less often and forgetting it most of the time – no, it is not like that that it can happen. These are disciplines, I may say, at least as arduous as the strictest spiritual disciplines.... Essentially it is for this that we are on the earth. Truly speaking, human beings were made for this purpose, to do that work, and it is perhaps because they refuse to do it that there is so much chaos in the world. If they did it truly, things would go much better."[16] (10-3-1954)

4. Animal Sacrifices in Temples and Cruelty

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

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

unconsciousness and a great fear. Oh, fear! In religions there is so much fear! Fear: "If I don't do this or that, if I don't cut the throat of a dozen chickens, disastrous things will happen to me all my life through or at least the whole of this year. My children will be ill, I shall lose my job, I won't be able to earn my living; very, very unpleasant things will happen to me."... And so, let us sacrifice the dozen chickens. But it is not from the desire to kill. It can't be said that it's through cruelty: it's through unconsciousness."[17]

5. Reality of Ganapati and Black Kali

"…I have found that there is really a Ganapati – something I didn't believe. I used to think it was a purely human formation, that story of the elephant head – but there is a being like that. I saw it, it is quite alive, and it is not a formation. So too there is a black Kali with her garland of skulls and her huge hanging tongue. I have seen her. I saw her entering my room with her eyes wide open. So I am sure she exists. And it was not a human formation: it was a being – a real being. Now, it is possible that some of the details may have been added by human thought. But still the being was a real being, it was not purely a formation.

What does that black Kali do?

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

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

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

What is Mahakali like?

Well, my children, when you see her, you can tell me! She is not like that Kali. All I can tell you is that she is not black, she doesn't stick out a big tongue, and she doesn't wear a necklace of human heads!"[18]

6. The Vital's Perverse Pleasure in Suffering and Cruelty

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

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

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

That's a psychological problem. It depends on where their sense of beauty is located. One may have a physical sense of beauty, a vital sense of beauty, a mental sense of beauty. **If one has a moral sense of beauty – a sense of moral beauty and nobility – one will never be cruel. One will always be generous and magnanimous in all circumstances.** But as men are made of many different

pieces... For instance, I was thinking about all the artists I knew – I knew all the greatest artists of the last century or the beginning of this century, and they truly had a sense of beauty, but morally, some of them were very cruel. When the artist was seen at his work, he lived in a magnificent beauty but when you saw the gentleman at home, he had only a very limited contact with the artist in himself and usually he became someone very vulgar, very ordinary. Many of them did, I am sure of it. But those who were unified, in the sense that they truly lived their art – those, no; they were generous and good."[19] (17-3-1954)

7. Unhealthy Conversations and Reading

"Unhealthy conversations and reading – I can tell you that there's nothing worse than that, and when you do sadhana truly, when you are really trying to progress, you notice that when you say useless words, no matter how few they are, immediately there is a terrible uneasiness which gets hold of you; you feel as though all the nerves of the head were being pulled and there is also something churning here (*gesture*) which hurts you, and you feel a great emptiness within and have heartburn, as though you had eaten something very bad – all this only because of some uselessly spoken words. Besides, it is a sure indication: as soon as the uneasiness begins, one knows one must stop: "Now it is finished." Only, most people are so unconscious that they don't even notice it, and with their warped will they compel their system to do what it should not. So, the system is more or less docile, obeys and continues to deteriorate slowly, in this way, without even showing visible reactions."[20]

8. How Nature Plays With Men?

"Nature, oh how she plays with men! Good heavens, when you see how it is, oh! Truly it is enough to make you revolt. I don't understand how they do not revolt.... **She sends round a wave of desire, and they are all like sheep running after their desires; she sends round a wave of violence, they are once again like other sheep living in violence, and so on, for everything. Anger – she just does "poof", and everybody gets into a rage. She has but to make a gesture – a gesture of her caprice – and the human mobs follow.** Or else it passes from one to another, just like that; they don't know why. They are asked, "Why?" – "Well, suddenly I felt angry. Suddenly I was seized by desire." Oh! It is shameful."[21] (24-3-1954)

9. How Most People Receive Their Vital Force?

"In the immense majority of people all their vital force comes to them from below, from the earth, from food, from all the sensations. From food... they draw vital energy out of food, and they... it is by seeing, hearing, touching, feeling that they contact the energies contained in matter. They draw them in this way. This is their customary food."[22] (31-3-1954)

10. The Imperative Necessity of Sleepless Vigilance for Moving Forward Integrally and Without the Risk of Falling Back

"…if one is not very careful all the time, as one is made up of a lot of pieces, if he doesn't have the habit of dragging along those parts which lag behind, he may advance on one

side and go backward on another. That happens. And then the sum total is not very, very satisfactory.

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

If one wants to lead the spiritual life, one must not be three-fourths asleep. It is necessary to be wide awake and

very attentive, otherwise you are like a little boat upon a river or a great sea with terrible currents, and if you are not alert, if you do not pay close heed to these currents, if you relax, relax your vigilance, all of a sudden you find that you are at the other end from where you wanted to go! You are carried away, just like that, quite naturally. 'Why, yes, I wanted to go there and I find myself here!'

That's how it is.

In ordinary life this happens all the time. Only, you know, in ordinary life one says, "It is circumstances, it is fate, it's my bad luck, it is their fault", or else, "I have no luck." That is very, very, very convenient. One veils everything and expects... yes, one has happy moments and then bad ones, and finally – ah, well, finally one falls into a hole, for everybody tumbles over, and expects to, sooner or later. So, one does not worry, or worries all the time – which comes to the same thing. That is, one is unconscious, one lives unconsciously and puts all the blame for what happens on others and on the circumstances but never tells oneself: "Why! It is my own fault."... It needs a sufficiently vast consciousness to begin. **Even among those who profess to be conscious, there are not many who see clearly enough to become aware that all that happens to them comes from what they are and from nothing else.** They always say, "He is wrong; circumstances are unfavourable; oh! Why was that done?" – If you were not what you are, it would not happen in this way. It would happen differently."[23]

11. Let Your Acts Speak for Themselves

"Often we express in words our real sensations, our

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

No, it is not at all necessary, not at all. It is just one of the bad habits. Why, on the 1st of January this year I wrote something like that: "Do not boast, do not boast about anything. Let your acts speak for themselves." It is exactly that. It is not worthwhile saying, "Oh! I have so great a goodwill for you and I want to do so much and I..." Do it. That's all."[24]

12. The Meaning of "WORD"

"…The Word – it is not pronounced speech and words. There are old traditions which speak of "Let there be light and there was light." The Word is the Mantra. But it is something quite exceptional, it is when the will formulated in the spirit wants to come down into matter and act directly upon matter that it makes use of the sound – not only of the word but of the sound, the vibration of the sound – to act directly upon matter itself, in matter. It is the opposite movement. You are in the region of thought formulated in words, then from there you may rise higher and get an expression of the silent idea; again from there you may rise yet higher and have the Force: the Force is the Consciousness which is the very source of that thought. And so it becomes a total consciousness instead of something formulated – expressed and formulated. That is, you climb right back to the source. From there, once you possess this light in itself, this consciousness in itself and want to act upon matter to produce a result, this will comes down from plane to plane, and as it becomes more

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

An aspiration for all that is essentially true, real, perfect. And this aspiration must be free from words, simply a silent attitude, but extremely intense and unvacillating. Not a word must be allowed the right to enter there and disturb it. It must be like a column of vibrations of aspiration which nothing can touch – and in total silence – and therein, if something comes down, what descends (and will be clothed in words in your mind and in sounds in your mouth) will be the Word. But nothing less than this will do."[25] (7-4-1954)

13. Possibility of Loving Another Person Truly

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

Inevitably, love between two human beings, whatever it may be, is always made of ignorance, lack of understanding, weakness and that terrible sense of separation."[26]

14. The Truth About the Parent's Love for their Children

"**…Like all human loves: frightfully mixed, with all sorts of things. The need of possession, a formidable egoism.** At first, I must tell you that a wonderful picture has been painted... many books written, wonderful things said about a mother's love for her children. I assure you that except for the capacity of speaking about the subject in flowery phrases, the love of the higher animals like the... well, the mammals for their children is exactly of the same nature: the same devotion, the same self-forgetfulness, the same self-denial, the same care for education, the same patience, the same…

…At the risk of removing many illusions in your consciousness, I must tell you something about the source of a mother's love for her child. It is because this child is made of her very own substance, and for quite a long time, relatively long, the material link, the link of substance, between mother and child is *extremely* close – it is as though a bit of her flesh had been taken out and put apart at a distance – and it is only much later that the tie between the two is completely cut. There is a kind of tie, of subtle sensation, such that the mother feels exactly what the child feels, as she would feel it in herself. That then is the material basis of the mother's attachment for the child. It is a basis of material identity, nothing else but that. Feeling comes

much later (it may come earlier, that depends on people), but I am speaking of the majority: feeling comes only long afterwards, and it is conditioned. There are all kinds of things.... I could speak to you for hours on the subject. But still this must not be mixed up with love. It is a material identification which makes the mother feel intimately, feel quite concretely and tangibly what the child is feeling: if the child receives a shock, well, the mother feels it. This lasts at least for two months. This is the basis. The rest comes from people's nature, their state of development, their consciousness, education and capacity for feeling. This is added to the first."[27]

15. Human Mental Atmosphere – Full of Collective Suggestions and Wondering Imaginations

"…there are all the collective suggestions that make up all sorts of stories – for people are wonderful at constructing stories. They write novels about everything. They have used their minds to build up their imaginations which go round in the atmosphere and then are caught just like that. So some catch a certain type of these, others another kind, and then, as imagination is a force of propulsion, with it one begins to act, and then finally one makes a novel of one's life, if he is in the least imaginative.... This has absolutely nothing to do with the true consciousness, with the psychic being, nothing at all, but people come and talk to you in flowery language and tell you stories – all these are wandering imaginations. If one could see, that is, if *you* could see this mental atmosphere, that of the physical mind, which is circulating everywhere, making you move, making you feel, making you think,

making you act, oh, good heavens! You would lose many of your illusions about your personality. But indeed it is like that. Whether one knows it or not, it is like that."[28] (14-4-1954)

16. The Physical Consciousness Knows a Thing Only When it is on the Point of Being Realised

"There is something quite remarkable: the physical consciousness, the body-consciousness, cannot know a thing with precision, in all its details, except when it is *on the point* of being realised. And this will be a sure indication when, for instance, one can understand the process: through what sequence of movements and transformations will the total transformation come about, in what order, in what way, to put it thus? What will happen first? What will happen later? – all that, in all its details. Each time you see a detail with exactitude, it means that it is on the point of being realised."[29] (21-7-1954)

17. Unconsciousness of the Effect of Aspiration

"There are people, you know, who have a lot of aspiration. They call the force. The force comes to them – even enters deeply into them – and they are so unconscious that they don't know it! That indeed happens quite frequently. It is their state of unconsciousness which prevents them from even feeling the force which enters into them. It enters into them, and does its work. **I knew people who were gradually transformed and yet were so unconscious that they were not even aware of it. The consciousness comes later – very much later.** On the other hand, there are people who are more passive, so to speak, more open,

more attentive, and even if a very slight amount of force comes, they become aware of it immediately and use it fully.

When you have an aspiration, a very active aspiration, your aspiration is going to do its work. It is going to call down the answer to what you aspire for. But if, later, you begin to think of something else or are not attentive or receptive, you do not even notice that your aspiration has received an answer. This happens very frequently. So people tell you: "I aspire and I don't receive anything, I get no answer!" Yes, you do have an answer but you are not aware of it, because you continue to be active in this way, like a mill turning all the time."[30]

18. The Reason for the Non-opening of a Part and the Way to Bring About its Opening

"You may aspire that this part may open – let the part that is open aspire for the other to open. It will open after a certain time; one must continue, persist. That is the only thing to do. There is something that does not want it, an acute resistance there, which does not want it. It is like a stubborn child: "I don't want it, I shall remain what I am, I won't move."... It does not say, "I am pleased with myself", because it does not dare. But the truth is it is quite self-satisfied, it does not budge."[31]

19. On What Does Receptivity Depend?*

"It depends first of all upon sincerity – on whether one really wants to receive – and then... yes, I believe the principal factors are sincerity and humility. There is nothing that closes you up more than vanity. When you are self-

satisfied, you have that kind of vanity of not wanting to admit that you lack something, that you make mistakes, that you are incomplete, that you are imperfect, that you are... There is something in the nature, you know, which grows stiff in this way, which does not want to admit – it is this which prevents you from receiving. You have, however, only to try it out and get the experience. If, by an effort of will you manage to make even a very tiny part of the being admit that "Ah, well, yes, I am mistaken, I should not be like that, and I should not do that and should not feel that, yes, it is a mistake", if you manage to make it admit this, at first, as I said just now, it begins by hurting you very much, but when you hold on firmly, until this is admitted, immediately it is open – it is open and strangely a flood of light enters, and then you feel so glad afterwards, so happy that you ask yourself, 'Why, was I foolish enough to resist so long?'

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

One is not made all of a piece, don't you know? There is something in the being which can aspire. There is always something in the being which is conscious exactly of what is not all right, at times vaguely, imprecisely, but yet sufficiently conscious that still, after all, one is not perfect, you see, that things could be better than they are. That's enough! That part can aspire."[32] (28-4-1954)

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III. Questions and Answers, May – June 1954

1. Faith, Trust and Confidence

"…*"Faith is a feeling in the whole being."*

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

Faith is a certitude without any proof.

Mother, on what does faith depend?

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

How can faith be increased?

Through aspiration, I suppose. Some have it spontaneously... You see, it is difficult to pray if one doesn't have faith, but if one can make prayer a means of increasing one's faith, or aspiring, having an aspiration, having an aspiration to have faith... Most of these qualities require an effort. If one does not have a thing and wants to have it, well, it needs great, great, great sustained efforts, a constant aspiration, an unflagging will, a sincerity at each moment; then one is sure, it will come one day – it can come in a second. There are people who have it, and then they have contrary movements which come and attack. These people,

if their will is sincere, can shield their faith, repel the attacks. There are others who cultivate doubt because it is a kind of dilettantism – that, there's nothing more dangerous than that. It is as though one were letting the worm into the fruit: it eventually eats it up completely. This means that when a movement of this sort comes – it usually comes first into the mind – the first thing to do is to be very determined and refuse it. Surely one must not enjoy looking on just to see what is going to happen; that kind of curiosity is terribly dangerous.

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

Mother, where does determination come from?

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

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

Faith is something much more integral – that is what Sri Aurobindo has written – much more integral than trust. You see, you have trust in the Divine, in the sense that you are convinced that all that comes from Him will always be the best for you: whatever His decision and whatever the experience He sends you or the circumstances in which He puts you, it will always be what is best for you. This is trust. But faith – that kind of unshakable certitude in the very existence of God – **faith is something that seizes the**

whole being. It is not only mental, psychic or vital: it is the whole being, entirely, which has faith. Faith leads straight to experience.

Can't trust be total and entire?

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

One has given oneself totally to the divine work, one has faith in it, not only in its possibility, but faith that it is *the* thing which is true and which must be, and one gives oneself entirely to it, without asking what will happen. And so, therein or thereon may be grafted a certitude, a confidence that one is capable of accomplishing it, that is, of participating in it and doing it because one has given oneself to it – a confidence that what one is going to do, what one wants to do, one will be able to do; that this realisation one wants to attain, one will attain. The first does not put any questions, does not think of the results: it gives itself entirely – it gives itself and then that's all. It is something that absorbs one completely. The other may be grafted upon it. Confidence says: "Yes, I shall participate, realise what I want to realise, I shall surely take part in this work." The other one has faith in the Divine, that it is the Divine who is all, and can do all, and does all... and who is the only real existence – and one gives oneself entirely to this faith, to the Divine, that's all. One has faith in the existence of the Divine and gives oneself; and there can also be grafted upon this a trust that this relation one has with the Divine, this faith one has in the Divine, will work in such a way that all that happens to him – whatever it may be, all that happens to him – will not only be an expression of the divine will (that of course is understood) but also the best that could happen, that nothing better could have happened

to him, since it is the Divine who is doing it for him. This attitude is not necessarily a part of faith, for faith does not question anything, it does not ask what the consequence of its self-giving will be – it gives itself, and – that's all; while confidence can come and say, "That's what the result will be." **And this is an absolute fact, that is, the moment one gives oneself entirely to the Divine, without calculating, in a total faith, without bargaining of any kind – one gives oneself, and then, come what may! "That does not concern me, I just give myself" – automatically it will always be for you, in all circumstances, at every moment, the best that will happen... not the way you conceive of it (naturally, thought knows nothing), but in reality.** Well, there is a part of the being which can become aware of this and have this confidence. This is something added on to faith which gives it more strength, a strength – how shall I put it? – of total acceptance and the best utilisation of what happens."[33]

2. The Relativity of All Things and All Happenings and the Power of the Right Attitude

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

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

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

The experience is not total, but it is there.

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

And the logical conclusion is that there is nothing impossible. It is *we* who put limitations. All the time we say, "That thing is possible, that other, impossible; this, yes, this can be done, that can't be done; oh yes, this is true, it is feasible, it is even done, but that, that is impossible." It is *we* who all the time put ourselves like slaves into the prison of our limits, of our stupid, narrow, ignorant sense which knows nothing of the laws of life. The laws of life are not *at all* what you think they are nor what the most intelligent people think. They are quite different. Taking a step, especially the first step on the path – one begins to find out."[34] (5-5-1954)

3. The Only Way to Perfection – Perfect Sincerity

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

Do you know what perfect sincerity is?...

Never to try to deceive oneself, never let any part of the being try to find out a way of convincing the others, never to explain favourably what one does in order to have an excuse for what one wants to do, never to close one's eyes when something is unpleasant, never to let anything pass, telling oneself, 'That is not important, next time it will be better.'

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

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

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

Try, just for an hour, try!"[35] (12-5-1954)

4. To Study and Learn for the Divine – The Best Way to Prepare for the Divine Work

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

Yes, if you study with the feeling that you must develop yourselves to become instruments. But truly, it is done in a

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

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

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

everything becomes an opportunity, and you project this consciousness and will to progress upon all things.

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

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

You can help."[36]

5. Lack of True Integrity and the Waste of Consciousness and Energy in the Ashram

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

It is not money alone that is wasted!

Energy, Consciousness is *infinitely*, a thousand times more wasted than money. Should there be no wastage... my word, I believe the Ashram couldn't be here! There is not a second when there isn't any wastage – sometimes it is worse than that. There is this habit – hardly conscious, I hope – of absorbing as much Energy, as much Consciousness as one can and using it for one's personal satisfactions. That indeed is something which is happening every minute. If all the Energy, all the Consciousness which is constantly poured out upon you all, were used for the true purpose, that is, for the divine work and the preparation for the divine work, we should be already very far on the road, much farther than we are. But everybody, more or less consciously, and in any case instinctively, absorbs as much Consciousness and Energy as he can and as soon as he feels this Energy in himself, he uses it for his personal ends, his own satisfaction.

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

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

If one wants to do a divine work upon earth, one must come with tons of patience and endurance. One must know how to live in eternity and wait for the consciousness to awaken in everyone – the consciousness of what *true* integrity is."[37] (2-6-1954)

6. Egoism – One of the Fundamental Obstacles to Transformation

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

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

And then, finally, habits!... There is a charming phrase here – I appreciated it fully – in which Sri Aurobindo is asked, "What is meant by 'the physical adhering to its own habits'?" **What are the habits which the physical must throw off? It is this *terrible, frightful* preference for the food you were**

used to when you were very young, the food you ate in the country where you were born and about which you feel when you no longer get it that you have not anything at all to eat, that you are miserable.

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

I make an exception for the very, very, very rare ones who are not like that. They could be counted on one's fingers. And all, all justify this, all, all – "Oh, my poor children! They are not used to eating this food. How shall we manage? They will die because of this change of food!" Well, I, indeed, can give a remedy for that. You take a boat, take a train and go round the world several times, you are obliged to eat in each country the food of that country, and after you have done this several times, you will understand your stupidity... It is a stupidity. A frightful *tamas*. One is tied up there like this (*Mother makes a movement with her hands*) to one's gastric habits."[38]

7. What is the Work of the Psychic Being?*

"One could put it this way, that **it is like an electric wire that connects the generator with the lamp.** Now, if someone has understood, let him explain what I said!

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

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

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

It is the body, it is the visible being.

So, that is its function. This means that if there were no psychic in Matter, it would not be able to have any direct contact with the Divine. And it is happily due to this psychic presence in Matter that the contact between Matter and the Divine can be direct and all human beings can be told, "You carry the Divine within you, and you have only to enter within yourself and you will find Him." It is something very particular to the human being or rather to the inhabitants of the earth. In the human being the psychic becomes more conscious, more formed, more conscious and more independent also. It is individualised in human beings. But it is a speciality of the earth. It is a direct infusion, special and redeeming, in the most inconscient and obscure Matter, so that it might once again awake through stages to the divine Consciousness, the divine Presence and finally to the Divine Himself. It is the presence of the psychic which makes man an exceptional being – I don't like to tell him this very much, because already he thinks too much of himself; he

has such a high opinion of himself that it is not necessary to encourage him! But still, this is a fact – so much so that there are beings of other domains of the universe, those called by some people demigods and even gods, beings, for instance, of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, who are very eager to take a physical body on earth to have the experience of the psychic, for they don't have it. **These beings certainly have many qualities that men don't, but they lack this divine presence which is altogether exceptional and exists only on the earth and nowhere else. All these inhabitants of the higher worlds, the Higher Mind, Overmind and other regions have no psychic being.** Of course, the beings of the vital worlds don't have it either. But these latter don't regret it, they don't want it. There are only those very rare ones, quite exceptional, who want to be converted, and for this they act without delay, they immediately take a physical body. The others don't want it; it is something which binds them and constrains them to a rule they do not want.

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

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

very much. There were two brothers, if I am not mistaken, Esau and Jacob. Well, Esau was very hungry, that's the story, isn't it? I believe he was a hunter or something; anyway, the story goes like this. He came back home very hungry, and told Jacob he was very hungry, and he was so hungry that he said to him, "Listen, if you give me your mess of pottage" (Jacob had prepared some stew), "if you give me your mess of pottage I will give you my birthright." You know, one can understand the story quite superficially, but it has a very profound meaning: the birthright is the right of being the son of God. And so he was quite ready to give up his divine right because he was hungry, for a concrete, material thing, for food. This is a very old story, but it is eternally true."[39]

8. An Almost Universal Weakness – Preference for the Food One is Used to Eating

"…There are people who come, full of goodwill, moreover – I think I have written this somewhere in the *Bulletin* – their goodwill is so overflowing that when they arrive everything is perfect, including the food. They find it very good as long as they are in their psychic consciousness. When *that* begins to go down, the old habits begin to rise up; you understand, when the psychic consciousness comes down, the old habits climb back into their place. And then they begin saying: "It is strange! I used to like this, but I don't like it any more; it has become bad, this food!" This is an intermediary period, and later, after some time, more or less shyly according to their nature they say (*Mother begins whispering*), "Couldn't I have my personal food? For... I don't know, my stomach does not digest this!" (*Laughter*) Well, I say that among the people in the Ashram, I am not sure...

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

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

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

I meant, are all the efforts then in vain?

My child, I hope not! The question of food is just one question – I can't say it's secondary, for it is very symptomatic – it is altogether... it is related to the most physical consciousness, and from that point of view it expresses very well the physical condition. But indeed, this poor body! One must be a little patient with it. It is not that which discourages me – if I could be discouraged – it is the vital. Oh! Really, with its accomplice, the mind, these two rascals together, taking each other's support, making excuses and presenting to you such a marvellous picture of your own difficulties in order to justify them – that, indeed, is terrible."[40]

9. The World is in Perpetual Transformation

"The world is in perpetual transformation. **Even were I to live a thousand years and more upon earth, I should continue to learn without stopping, and I am sure I would always learn something new, because what was true yesterday is no longer so today, and what is true today will no longer be so tomorrow; the world is perpetually changing, therefore, one can learn perpetually.** And after all, I don't know if that is not the very reason for the world, an objectification of oneself in order to know oneself in all detail; there are many details, it can last a very long time, and they are unexpected ones!"[41] (9-6-1954)

10. The Enemies of the Divine

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

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

Is it because there are adverse forces?

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

Do they act against the Divine?

Oh, yes! At least they try. I don't know if they succeed, but they try. They try, they have always tried."[42]

11. A Supreme Goodwill Arranges All Things Perfectly to Fulfil Sincere Aspiration

"…If you are in a state of conscious aspiration and

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

…If you say to the Divine with conviction, **"I want only You", the Divine will arrange all the circumstances in such a way as to compel you to be sincere.*** Something in the being... "I want only You."... the aspiration... and then one wants a hundred odd things all the time, isn't that so? At times something comes, just... usually to disturb everything – it stands in the way and prevents you from realising your aspiration. Well, the Divine will come without

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

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

But one has all kinds of imperfections!

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

BUT THE GOAL IS SURE!"[43] (16-6-1954)

12. What Happens if One Eats Meat?*

"Do you want me to tell you a story? I knew a lady, a young Swedish woman, who was doing sadhana; and she was by habit a vegetarian, from both choice and habit. One day she was invited by some friends who gave her chicken for dinner. She did not want to make a fuss, she ate the chicken. But afterwards, during the night suddenly she found herself in a basket with her head between two pieces of wicker-work, shaken, shaken, shaken, and feeling wretched,

miserable; and then, after that she found herself head down, feet in the air, and being shaken, shaken, shaken. (*Laughter*) She felt perfectly miserable; and then all of a sudden, somebody began pulling out things from her body, and that hurt her terribly, and then someone came along with a knife and chopped off her head; and then she woke up. She told me all this; she said she had never had such a frightful nightmare, that she had not thought of anything before going to sleep, that it was just the consciousness of the poor chicken that had entered her, and that she had experienced in her dream all the anguish the poor chicken had suffered when it was carried to the market, sold, its feathers plucked and its neck cut! (*Laughter*)

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

This is to tell you that perhaps now it is time to change

one's food and go over to something a little less bestial! It depends absolutely on each one's state of consciousness."[44]

13. The Stages to be Passed Before One Can Truly Have the Joy of Faithfulness

"Aren't dogs more faithful than men?

Certainly! Because it is their nature to be faithful, and they have no mental complications. What prevents men from being faithful are their mental complications. Most men are not faithful because they fear being duped. You don't know what it is to be duped? They fear being deceived, being exploited. They fear... Behind their faithfulness there is still a very big egoism which is more or less hidden, and there is always that bargaining, more or less conscious, of give-and-take: one gives oneself to someone but whether one tells oneself this or not, one expects something in exchange. You are faithful, but also want others to be faithful to you, that is, look after you, to be quite sweet to you, and, especially not to try to profit by your faithfulness. None of these complications are there in the dog, for its mind is very rudimentary. It does not have this marvellous capacity of reasoning that men have, a capacity which has made them commit so many stupidities.

Only one cannot turn and go back. One cannot become a dog again. So one must become a higher man and have the quality of the dog on a higher plane; that is, instead of its being a half-conscious fidelity, and in any case very instinctive, a sort of need that ties it down, it must be a willed, conscious fidelity, and especially above all egoism. There is a point where all the virtues are united: it is a point

that goes beyond the ego. If we take this faithfulness, if we take devotion, take love, the meaning of service, all these things, when they are above the egoistic level, they meet, in the sense that they give themselves and do not expect anything in exchange. And if you climb one step higher, instead of its being done with the idea of duty and abnegation, it is done with an intense joy which carries within itself its own reward, which needs nothing in exchange, for it carries its joy in itself. But then, for that you must have climbed quite high and must no longer have that turning back upon yourself which, of all things, pulls you down lowest. That kind of... that sympathy, full of self-pity, wherein one cajoles and caresses oneself and says, "Poor me!", that, indeed, is something terrible, and one does this so constantly, without being aware of it. **This turning back upon oneself, a kind of degrading self-compassion, in which one tells oneself in a tone so full of pity, "Nobody understands me! No one loves me! No one cares for me as people should!" etc., and one goes on and on.... And now this is really terrible, it draws you down into a hole immediately.**

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

something else. There are quite a few stages between the two."[45] (23-6-1954)

14. Occultism, Mysticism and Yoga

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That's the end of the book!

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

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

What is the difference between occultism and mysticism?

They are not at all the same thing.

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

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

Is occultism necessary in this life?

In this life? That depends upon what one wants to do. You mean in the life of yoga? Not at all necessary. And besides, as he says, there are many who are not gifted, who don't have the faculty."[46]

15. The Mother's Experience of the Presence of Hostile Beings in Religious Monuments – Churches, Temples, etc.

"In all religious monuments, in monuments considered the most... well, as belonging to the highest religion, whether

in France or any other country or Japan – it was never the same temples or churches nor the same gods, and yet my experience was everywhere almost the same, with very small differences – **I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable – in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people's devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this thing. But they had their faith which could change that evil thing into something good in them; they had their faith.** So, truly, if *I* had gone and told them, "Do you think you are praying to God? It is an enormous vital spider that's feeding upon all your forces!", that would really not have been very charitable. And that's how it is most of the time, almost everywhere; it is a vital force which is there, for these vital entities feed upon the vibration of human emotions, and very few people, very few, an insignificant number, go to church or temple with a true religious feeling, that is, not to pray and beg for something from God but **to offer themselves, give thanks, aspire, give themselves. There is hardly one in a million who**

does that. So they do not have the power of changing the atmosphere. Perhaps when they are there, they manage to get across, break through and go somewhere and touch something divine. But the large majority of people who go only because of superstition, egoism and self-interest, create an atmosphere of this kind, and that is what you breathe in when you go to a church or temple. Only, as you go there with a very good feeling, you tell yourself, 'Oh, what a quiet place for meditation!'

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! **I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. I remember painting in a basilica of Venice, and while I was working, in the confessional a priest was hearing the confession of a poor woman. Well, it was truly a frightful sight! I don't know what the priest was like, what his character was, he could not be seen – you know, don't you, that they are not seen. They are shut up in a box and receive the confession through a grille. There was such a dark and sucking power over him, and that poor woman was in such a state of fearful terror that it was truly painful to see it. And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon.** Besides, in the invisible world hardly any beings love to be worshipped, except those of the vital. These, as I said, are quite pleased by it. And then,

it gives them importance. They are puffed up with pride and feel very happy, and when they can get a herd of people to worship them they are quite satisfied.

But if you take real divine beings, this is not at all something they value. They do not like to be worshipped. No, it does not give them any special pleasure at all! Don't think they are happy, for they have no pride. It is because of pride that a man likes to be worshipped; if a man has no pride he doesn't like to be worshipped; and if, for instance, they see a good intention or a fine feeling or a movement of unselfishness or enthusiasm, a joy, a spiritual joy, these things have for them an infinitely greater value than prayers and acts of worship and pujas...

I assure you what I am telling you is very serious: if you seat a real god in a chair and oblige him to remain there all the while you are doing puja, he may perhaps have a little fun watching you do it, but it certainly gives him no satisfaction. None at all! He does not feel either flattered or happy or glorified by your puja. You must get rid of that idea. There is an entire domain between the spiritual and the material worlds which belongs to vital beings, and it is this domain that is full of all these things, because these beings live upon that, are happy with it, and it immediately gives them importance; and the one who has the greatest number of believers, devotees and worshippers is the happiest and the most puffed up. But how can anyone imagine that the gods could value... The gods – I am speaking of the true gods, even those of the Overmind, though they are still a bit... well, so-so... they seem to have taken on many human defects, but still, despite all that, they really have a higher consciousness – it does not

please them at all. An act of true goodness, intelligence, unselfishness or a subtle understanding or a very sincere aspiration are for them infinitely higher than a small religious ceremony. Infinitely! There is no comparison. Religious ceremony! For example, there are so many of these entities called Kali – who are given, besides, quite terrible appearances – so many are even placed in houses as the family-goddess; they are full of a terrible vital force! I knew people who were so frightened of the Kali they had at home that indeed they trembled to make the least mistake, for when catastrophes came they thought it was Kali who sent them! It is a frightful thing, thought. I know them, those entities. I know them very well, but they are vital beings, vital forms which, so to say, are given a form by human thought, and what forms! And to think that men worship such terrible and monstrous things; and what's more that these poor gods are given, are paid the compliment of believing that it is...

From this point of view, it is good that for some time men get out of this religious atmosphere, so full of fear, and this sort of blind, superstitious submission of which the hostile forces have taken a dreadful advantage. The period of denial, positivism, is from this viewpoint quite indispensable in order to free men from superstition. It is only when one comes out of that and the abject submission to monstrous vital forces that one can rise to truly spiritual heights and there become the collaborator and true instrument of the forces of Truth, the real Consciousness, the true Power.

One must leave all this far behind before one can climb higher."[47] (30-6-1954)

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