

The background of the cover is a complex, abstract composition. It features a dark blue field with numerous fine, radiating lines that create a starburst or sunburst effect. Overlaid on this are large, irregular shapes in shades of yellow, cream, and light blue, which appear to be textured and somewhat ethereal. A central, vertical, light-colored form, possibly representing a human figure or a stylized symbol, is the focal point of the composition. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of mid-20th-century abstract art or perhaps a microscopic view of a biological structure.

***Interviews
and
Conversations***

Anilbaran Roy

Interviews and Conversations

with

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

by

Anilbaran Roy

This e-book has been prepared by *Auro e-Books*, an international website dedicated to e-books on Well-Being and Spirituality.



Discover more e-books and other activities on our website:

www.auro-ebooks.com

Ebook Edition 2014

Book Cover Art Courtesy: [The Word by nil nimand](http://4art.com/photo/1978-the-word-70x100-cm?context=user)
(<http://4art.com/photo/1978-the-word-70x100-cm?context=user>)

Materials originally published by Overman Foundation

Website: <http://overmanfoundation.wordpress.com>

Table of Contents

[Acknowledgment](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Interviews with Sri Aurobindo](#)

[May-June 1926](#)

[July 1926](#)

[August 1926](#)

[September 1926](#)

[Conversations with Sri Aurobindo](#)

[May-June 1926](#)

[July 1926](#)

[August 1926](#)

[September 1926](#)

[Diary Notes and Conversations With the Mother](#)

[Diary Notes of Anilbaran Roy](#)

[Anilbaran Roy's Conversations with the Mother](#)

Acknowledgment

The material in this e-book originally appeared on the Overman Foundation website (<http://overmanfoundation.wordpress.com>) and has been published here with the kind permission of the founder of the Overman Foundation, Anurag Banerjee. Although the material has been rearranged somewhat for clarity and ease of reading, every effort has been made to ensure that this is a faithful reproduction of the original material prepared by Anurag Banerjee.

We are extremely grateful to Anurag Banerjee and all of the many other authors and publishers of original works who have graciously allowed us to publish their material in multiple digital formats in our effort to increase the circulation of this very important material which mankind so desperately needs at this time in our history.

Auro e-Books is a multinational digital bookstore/library project dedicated to e-books on Well-Being and Spirituality. Its aim – to popularize and disseminate these books in digital formats both through its own website and through the network of other digital bookstores.

*Krishna/Vladnesh,
“Auro e-Books” Founder*

Introduction

Anilbaran Roy (3.7.1890—3.11.1974) was born in the village of Guir in the district of Burdwan in Bengal to Nabakumar Roy and Chandibala Devi. He was a student of Scottish Church College and St. Xavier's College of Kolkata. He obtained his M.A. degree in English and Philosophy and Bachelor of Law degree from the Calcutta University. He was a remarkable scholar who excelled not only in subjects like Physics and Mathematics but also in languages like Sanskrit, French and German. He worked as a professor in Hetampur College of Birbhum and Christian College of Bankura. In 1921 he resigned from his services and joined the Non-Cooperation Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi. He was also elected as the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. In 1924 he was in charge of the Corporation Elections which was initiated under the New Law. The aforesaid election elevated Chittaranjan Das and Subhash Chandra Bose to the posts of Mayor and Chief Executive respectively. He also played a pivotal role in organizing the Swaraj Party established by Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru.

He was introduced to Sri Aurobindo's works during the peak of his political career. In 1924 he was arrested and imprisoned at the Alipore Central Jail and Berhampore Central Jail respectively. After his release from prison in 1926 he left for Pondicherry following the instruction of Sri Aurobindo and spent 40 years in Sri Aurobindo Ashram during which he engrossed himself in the Integral Yoga. He was acclaimed as the best exponent of the Gita as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo. *The Message of the Gita* edited by him was taught at the University of Cambridge. In 1935 as a mark of protest against a defamatory book penned by Miss Mayo he wrote the book *Mother India* with Sri Aurobindo's approval. His other notable works include *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, *Gitar Bani*, *Purushottam Sri Aurobindo*, *Sri Aurobindo O Bartaman Jagat*, *Songs from the Soul*, *India's Mission in the World*, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Age*, *World Crisis*, etc. He also translated Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, *Uttarpara Speech* and *Yoga and Its Objects* into Bengali. In 1966 he returned to Bengal to spread the message of Sri Aurobindo after spending forty years in the Ashram. He worked to abolish the partition of India and unite the nation on the lines of provincial self-government as preached by Sri Aurobindo. He started the publication of a Bengali weekly named *Swarnayug* and an English monthly named *Light of India* and edited both the journals. He also

established the 'Sarva Sewak Sangha' to spread the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



Anilbaran Roy

Interviews with Sri Aurobindo

Foreword

During the early years of his stay at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo used to have informal conversations with people who would come to visit him. These talks, which were held after the evening meditation at 4 o'clock in the evening, depended on the leisure hours of Sri Aurobindo. From 1918 to 1922 these conversations took place on the verandah in the first floor of the 'Guest House' situated at 41 Rue François Martin Street. In October 1922 he shifted to 9 Rue de la Marine and accordingly the venue of the conversations too shifted. This house was known as the 'Library House' and here too the talks began soon after the half-an-hour long evening meditation ended. The visitors as well as Sri Aurobindo's disciples could ask him any question that occurred to them. The topics of the conversations covered a diversified range of subjects which included not only politics, yoga or spirituality but art, poetry, literature, medicines, education-system and psychology to name a few. These talks came to be known as 'Evening Talks' since they were held in the evening.

Among the notable participants of the evening talks were Anilbaran Roy (1890 – 1974), the renowned leader of the Congress Party. Having made a name for himself as a brilliant professor of philosophy, he joined the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921. When Chittaranjan Das was the President of Bengal Provincial Congress, he served as its Secretary. Sri Aurobindo's book *Essays on the Gita* had deeply influenced him; he accepted Sri Aurobindo as Krishna incarnate and wrote to Sri Aurobindo seeking his permission to translate *Essays on the Gita* into Bengali. Sri Aurobindo sent his written consent and added that Anilbaran was the competent person for the work. As a matter of fact, one of the best interpretations of the Gita in the light of Sri Aurobindo has come from the pen of Anilbaran. A regular correspondence followed through which Sri Aurobindo gave him directions in the path of yoga. After the untimely demise of C.R. Das, Anilbaran became the undisputed leader of Congress in Bengal. At this point of time, Sri Aurobindo wrote to him asking him to leave politics and pursue the path of yoga at Pondicherry. Anilbaran was not quite willing to leave his political career and insisted Sri Aurobindo to guide him in the path of sadhana through epistolary communications. Sri Aurobindo flatly refused and wrote back that if Anilbaran was desirous to follow the yoga mentioned in the Gita then he was welcome to go ahead in his political career but he must not expect

any help from Sri Aurobindo; but if he sincerely craved to follow the path of Integral Yoga then he could surely expect to receive Sri Aurobindo's guidance but for that he would have to leave politics. Anilbaran went to Pondicherry in May 1926 and Sri Aurobindo not only granted him a number of personal interviews but also allowed him to be present during his evening talks. When Anilbaran asked Sri Aurobindo about the freedom of India, he replied: "The independence of India is a thing decreed." At the same time, he informed Anilbaran that though the Indians did not deserve independence they would definitely get it. [Anilbaran Roy, *Purushottam Sri Aurobindo*, p. 4] Anilbaran stayed in Pondicherry for five months and was present on 15 August 1926 when Sri Aurobindo's fifty-fourth birthday was celebrated. He left Pondicherry on 1 October and after leaving his political career returned to Pondicherry on 10 December 1926. By that time Sri Aurobindo had retired and the Mother had taken charge of the newly-formed nucleus of the Aurobindonian community. He was to remain in Pondicherry till April 1966 and emerge as one of the brightest sadhaks of the Integral Yoga.

Between May and September 1926, Anilbaran Roy had a series of personal interviews with Sri Aurobindo. These interviews have been published in the online forum of Overman Foundation. We take the opportunity to thank Shri Debranjana Chatterjee, Librarian of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library and Shri Raman Reddy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Department for helping us to collect these interviews.

*With warm regards,
Anurag Banerjee, Founder
Overman Foundation.*

May-June 1926

24 May 1926: The First Interview

Sri Aurobindo: At what stage are you? How far?

Anilbaran: Can't make out clearly.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? Tell me what is happening.

Anilbaran: When I was in the jail I got a contact of peace of sorts, – I used to receive different lights from above. That was quite a joy. Having come out of the jail everything has got muddled up due to the shocks of the external world. As far as I see it, nothing can be realized in the midst of this confusion.

Sri Aurobindo: Why don't you step aside from all these? You say you had an experience of peace in the jail; can you tell me what sort of peace was that? Was it only mental or something else?

Anilbaran: I can't tell you definitely but this much I can say that I experienced peace to a good extent.

Sri Aurobindo: How did this peace come?

Anilbaran: I used to think that all was being done by the Nature – Prakriti – and I made an effort to be a witness of everything and this was sufficient to give me peace.

Sri Aurobindo: You are talking about the process of separation of Purusha and Prakriti as given in the Gita. Well, what about the light that used to come from above – was it coming from inside or from outside?

Anilbaran: I thought it came from inside.

Sri Aurobindo: What comes from outside, one mistakes it as coming from inside. So many thoughts etc. move about outside in the universal – these manifest inside you. All these you must push away as foreign to you and the inside must be made peaceful, calm and quiet; then it will start descending from above.

Anilbaran: Two things make me very restless: first, a sense of duty towards my family. My wife and children are going through all sorts of suffering due to my negligence.

Sri Aurobindo: You won't be able to help them anyway. Only, while trying to do them good you will bring harm to yourself. Don't consider them as your own, see them as so many souls (struggling for self-manifestation).

Anilbaran: All right, I shall try to see them as such. I shall no more worry about them. This idea of duty troubles us a lot.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is difficult for man to cross beyond the idea of duty.

Anilbaran: I have one more difficulty – the pull of the lower vital. It troubles me a great deal. Under its pressure I may suddenly do something – can't trust myself.

Sri Aurobindo: So much! What are you doing to control it?

Anilbaran: I try to control it by mental will. Sometimes there is no desire to control it and I allow it a short play. But it cannot overpower me.

Sri Aurobindo: It cannot overpower?

Anilbaran: No.

Sri Aurobindo: With the mental will you can suppress it temporarily but that does not bring real mastery. This pull shows that you have a strong vital force – this has to be regenerated. All thoughts, desires, conventions, attachments which come from outside must be ruthlessly pushed away. The inside must be made entirely calm and quiet and there should reign an upward aspiration – a state of awaiting.

Anilbaran: If this is done, will the mind become completely vacant?

Sri Aurobindo: The mind will remain still but it won't lose its power. Look! once I was to go to the Surat Congress and one who taught me this yoga instructed me to reject all thoughts coming from outside and establish an inner calmness. Accordingly, in three days I made my mind entirely vacant. Then I told him, what is this? I am here to give a speech at the Congress! He said, "Do not worry, everything will descend from above." And that's what happened. My mind remaining still and vacant, I used to speak out whatever came down from above. This is how I delivered speeches in so many places. This is also how I wrote in the Bande Mataram journal. How many days will you stay here?

Anilbaran: I came here without any fixed idea about that. I think I'll stay as long as it is necessary. I have left everything behind and laid all my stress on this yoga. I feel from within that I shall succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: As a result of the Karma of your past life certain tendencies are causing obstructions. It will take time. Persevere, you may succeed. Why not?

Anilbaran: Karma? You mean of my past activities?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that of course but also the consequences of your previous birth... What is the pecuniary condition at your house?

Anilbaran: So so! It is necessary that I earn some money.

Sri Aurobindo: Everyone does not find it helpful to do sadhana from here. There are all kinds of people, and in the attempt to build up a solidarity among them, defects of each one affect all the others. It is for this reason that for many it is better to do sadhana all by oneself remaining away. You watch for a few days, do what I have asked you to do and then you meet me again and report.

Anilbaran: Yes, sir! Once I have got your protection I am very confident that I shall get the realization.

27 May 1926

Anilbaran: I have done what you had advised me to do. I have got back the peace I found in the jail. All those things which I could not realize as coming from outside, now I perceive them as such – now I feel a great sense of quiet inside me. But I do not experience anything descending from above.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, this quiet or peace, is it mental, – only negative or something positive?

Anilbaran: I have a feeling that it is not merely mental.

Sri Aurobindo: Apart from the mind do you feel this peace in the physical body also?

Anilbaran: Yes, it is a positive peace, I feel it in my entire being. But nothing is descending from above – and I have no anxiety about it. I know it will surely come and I can wait indefinitely for it. The fact that I have left everything of my active life and that I am feeling peace and joy in the act of waiting for something unknown and uncertain – can this be ever possible due to a negative peace?

Sri Aurobindo: From this it is clear that there is a seeking in your inner being. This is necessary for yoga. Do not be eager for things above. If you have this seeking and this peace, it will descend in its own time.

Anilbaran: This waiting for something above – that which you call the Supermind – I have not the least idea of it. How to invoke a thing which is a mere zero to my mind?

Sri Aurobindo: What is required is faith. Man has body, life and mind but that is not all that constitutes man. He has risen to the mind as a result of evolution. Now a higher consciousness will be evolved – this I call Supermind. It is the instrument of the Divine Consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness. There are three ways to call it down: to take a quiet resolution and wait, or to keep alive an aspiration, or to exert will-force. But there need not be no straining eagerness for it. In order to be a pure instrument of God one must attain to this Supermind. God does work through both pure and impure vessels but that does not mean that one should keep nature impure for ever. When the vessel will become pure the urge for action coming from within will be a flawless, definitive action. As long as that does not happen one has to minimize one's activities. There should of course be left a field of work for the sake of experi-

ment but at all times one must remember that there will always remain open a possibility of err.

Anilbaran: What sort of work should one undertake?

Sri Aurobindo: Whatever it may be – whatever is to one’s liking. You should exercise your intelligence and discretion in this matter but you must remember that it is only an experiment and that there are possibilities of committing many mistakes. Until you get a guidance from above you cannot be sure; but to get this guidance it requires time and sadhana.

Anilbaran: It is this Supermind, I think, which will purify all layers of the being.

*

Sri Aurobindo: Do you know about the Chakras – the Tantric Chakras?

Anilbaran: No.

Sri Aurobindo: On the top of the head is a Chakra – Sahasradala or the thousand-petalled lotus. There is a Chakra in the middle of the forehead between the eyebrows and one in the heart-centre. The region between the navel and head constitutes the mental field. From navel downward extending till the terminus of the spinal chord, mūlādhāra, is the seat of the vital. At present concentrate on the mental field. The restlessness of the active mind is your chief obstacle now. After the mind becomes quiet you will have to deal with the vital plane. All these will come in course of time. How do you like Pondicherry? When are you going back?

Anilbaran: I like it immensely. I get so much of peace and delight that I have no desire to leave this place and go back. It will be better if I could stay here.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, you were saying that you would have to earn money for your family?

Anilbaran: Let me see if I can do it from here only. I am no more that much worried about my family. The Divine will surely make some arrangements. I left my job during the non-cooperation movement in the same way.

Sri Aurobindo: Stay here and see for some time and then if you should stay here permanently we shall have to rent a room for you.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The Force which has to be called down from above must be pure and quiet because there are all kinds of forces – it will not do to call them all. And one must have sincerity. What do you want to do sadhana for? The aim should not be the satisfaction of egoism: “I want to be a great yogi; I shall have so much power and with that power I shall establish myself in the world.” All such thoughts must be thrown far away. One has to do sadhana for the total manifestation of the Divine in oneself.

*

Sri Aurobindo: There is a veil between the Supermind above and the lower Prakriti below – the veil of ingrained formations. This veil may completely withdraw or be partially withdrawn. Thus even if there is some little opening, with the contact of Light from above the lower nature will get slowly changed.

Even if the being is not entirely purified, varieties of inspirations and powers may come down from above but this may lead to serious errors. Inspirations from above mixing with the impurities from below get all muddled up and the sadhak takes this for an absolute command. Many a sadhak has thus fallen into danger. Therefore, one must particularly lay stress on the purification of the being. All desires and egoism will have to be banished from the being.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The feeling of power which you experience, – is there a sense of vastness in it?

Anilbaran: Well, no. What sort of vastness do you mean?

Sri Aurobindo: The all-embracing vast being which is there behind the play of the universe and with which you will have to identify yourself – for this is your true self.

Anilbaran: Am I there one with all?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

3 June 1926

Anilbaran: In the last few days I have observed that the difficulties of which I spoke to you earlier, e.g. the downward pull of the vital being – all these now I understand to be not much of a problem. If I keep them aside they remain aside. But the attacks of my dynamic mind trouble me a great deal. They do not leave me, however much I try.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that may be so! This is a very strong element in your nature. You will have first to focus attention on this. What sorts of thoughts come to you? Plans of all kinds?

Anilbaran: Yes. I shall have to do this or do that, etc.

Sri Aurobindo: From where do these thoughts come? Do they rise from inside or do they come from outside?

Anilbaran: That I cannot discern. How can I differentiate?

Sri Aurobindo: By observation. You do not now have this habit. Watch closely and see from where they come. Do not allow things to intrude from outside.

Anilbaran: I can't keep them away, however much I try. They simply overpower me.

Sri Aurobindo: Persevere. Watch them – as soon as they come, throw them away. In spite of everything they do not go away, let them have their play and you only watch them. Realize the separation, – the Purusha is quite separate from these workings. Your nature is very active, that is why you have to face so much of difficulty.

Anilbaran: Yes, right from my childhood I have such an active nature.

Sri Aurobindo: That is very good, but you will have to purify it. Now concentrate on this part of the being.

Anilbaran: Yes, I shall do so.

At home my relatives are a great deal worried. They are afraid that I may not return. My son is threatening to start a hunger-strike. He is clamouring that his father should be brought back.

Sri Aurobindo: (With a smile) Yes, such things do happen.

[After the interview mentioned above the following two notes written together are entered in Anilbaran's diary.]

6 June 1926: A Note

After having come to Pondicherry everything appeared fine as if it was a land of peace. The thought of having to leave this place soon used to pain me. My mind had prepared itself for a long time for coming to Pondicherry and this feeling of peace in the mind was the result of finding the desired object. But for some time now I get a feeling of suffocation and somehow I feel that to run away from here will be a blessing. The pull of the lower nature is showing itself powerfully. All kinds of ingenious suggestions to escape from here are rising in the mind: can't the sadhana be done at home amidst my relatives? or else can't another place be found for doing the same all by oneself? The idea that I shall have to stay here for good to do sadhana does not appear happy to me.

*

There has been a slight change of mood since yesterday after the evening meditation. Now this is the firm resolution of the inner being that it will definitely rise above the lower nature and it is ready to stake everything for this. And for this, whatever command I receive from above I shall follow. If I fail to understand the command from above I shall proceed according to the instructions of Sri Aurobindo – it will all depend upon him.

23 June 1926: A Note

The above-mentioned phase of restlessness in the mind seems to have disappeared. I am beginning to feel sufficiently the atmosphere of sadhana here in Pondicherry. The other pulls are growing feeble. But still, I am not getting any clear hint from above about the place which I should choose as the seat of my sadhana. At the same time there is no call from inside to go away from Pondicherry.

10 June 1926

Anilbaran: The habit of my dynamic mind to go on spinning plans is still continuing – but now it is only around choosing a place for sadhana and the problem of earning money.

Sri Aurobindo: Has the pull towards other types of activities decreased?

Anilbaran: Yes. Thoughts about other works no more disturb me. I remain preoccupied with sadhana. But which place shall I choose for sadhana and from where shall I get the money for my expenses – these thoughts worry me a lot.

Sri Aurobindo: So your main problem now is money. Yes, such is the way here. Everybody has to struggle for money. It does not come to this block¹ either.

Anilbaran: But money is not my only problem; to select a place for sadhana is one more problem.

Sri Aurobindo: Don't you receive any guidance from above regarding this?

Anilbaran: Of course the suggestions come, but I can't discern which one of these comes from above.

Sri Aurobindo: The expression “from above” is for us only a way of speaking. Many receive from above the command for action – we call it intuition.

Anilbaran: I do get a hint of such commands.

Sri Aurobindo: Mere hints won't do – a clear command is needed. The person who had just now an interview with me is a chief of Gujarat – a minor chief. He is engaged in some sort of sadhana, but not in ours. He does meditation and has got an opening. He receives guidance for action from above, but cannot discern from where it comes. Nevertheless he receives it. Now, there was a man who dug a well but failed to get any water. This chief pointed out a place and said to him, “Dig here, and you are sure to get water.” Sands and rocks began to appear as he dug but he was asked to continue and ultimately water was truly found. Then the chief asked the man, “What do you want to cultivate after having dug the well here?” “Cotton”, said the farmer. “Sow the seeds on new moon day”, he told the farmer. Now, nobody sows the seeds on the last day of

1. The word ‘block’ is written in English in Anilbaran's notebook.

the dark fortnight. But the farmer did as he was asked and as a result he reaped that year a harvest better than anyone else.

Having thus received a command and abandoning all hankering after fruits, one should do the work as an instrument. This is one way of doing work. But this is not the way of our yoga. We want to acquire the very power from which such commands come and organize it and not merely be the instruments, but instead, to cooperate with the power whose instruments we are. For this yoga it is necessary to abandon every kind of work. It will not do to work for philanthropic purposes. Some work has to be retained but only as a field of experiment. Under this condition we cannot be engaged in philanthropy.

Anilbaran: I do not want to be engaged in philanthropy. I want to be engaged in this very yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: If people pull you for work will you be able to resist?

Anilbaran: Yes, I think I will be able to. Now it is necessary to select a place for my sadhana. I felt a lot of disturbance at home in my sadhana. There are two reasons for this: first, I took up the work of village organization on my shoulder. Secondly, I tried to cure my wife of her mental illness through affectionate behaviour, but I couldn't do any good to her, rather I harmed myself. Now I shall get rid of both these obstacles. Of course, I never involved myself in family life, otherwise I could not have ventured to work for the country. I was getting suggestions right from inside the jail for doing sadhana by remaining with the family but in a detached condition. If I do sadhana there then there won't be so much of financial strain.

Sri Aurobindo: No financial strain?

Anilbaran: No, I shall be there much more favourably placed.

Sri Aurobindo: Wait for some time more and see if you get a happy solution.

Anilbaran: All right! Now there is one more problem – the meeting of the Council for the amendment of B.T. Act. If it is passed it will lead to much disturbance.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the situation regarding this? Will the Nationalists join hands with the Swarajists?

Anilbaran: There is no certainty about this as yet.

Sri Aurobindo: What sort of politics you people do? Such is the way of all parliaments: one can sense even beforehand the trend of voting, in which direction it will turn. Will there be a majority on the side of the government?

Anilbaran: When Das was there one could have a definite idea about these things. Now the party remains disorganized and none is sure of his own intention. But if this bill is passed it will crush the middle class.

Sri Aurobindo: So much the better for it! Given the present miserable condition, if it breaks down, perhaps it may be a blessing. It is no use asking me about it, for I have a very different opinion regarding this.

Anilbaran: Now the question is, whether I should attend this meeting or not. The voters want that I should go and oppose it. They have nominated me and it is my duty to attend the meeting.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, yes, again it comes to that idea of duty. This is only a sentiment.

Anilbaran: Yes, indeed! And I should have submitted my resignation. But I thought it was just a meeting and I did not want to create a row by submitting my resignation – hence this problem.

Sri Aurobindo: You could attend if you were there. But now that you are here, can you discontinue this and go?

Anilbaran: No, that can't be.

Sri Aurobindo: When is the meeting?

Anilbaran: On the 6th July. If I should go there I must start on the 1st July from here.

Sri Aurobindo: 1st July?

Anilbaran: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, I will see to it.

(N.B. I have come to Pondicherry, and that I should stay here for some time and return only after having a definite hold on sadhana, this is what seems to be the wish of Sri Aurobindo.)

25 June 1926 (Morning)

Anilbaran: Distractions and doubts, when they are exposed to higher forces, get automatically solved. But I am unable to stop my mental activity; it continues even during the meditation. But then many ideas become clear.

Sri Aurobindo: That's good! You have an opening there. But things which become clear, are they practical or intellectual matters?

Anilbaran: They are of both types. They are intellectual: for instance, when I was writing an article expounding the relation between the Sankhya and the Gita, many points became clear during my meditation. They are practical: such as, when this morning it became clear to me that the way our national leaders are now acting is leading them to their own degeneration and also impeding our nation's progress.

Sri Aurobindo: Why this degeneration?

Anilbaran: Degeneration, because they fail to contact the higher forces and, in consequence, they are possessed by all sorts of lower forces.

Sri Aurobindo: Can everybody contact the higher forces? No, not indeed; but they submit themselves to a discipline and this brings them success. Those in our country who enter into the field of work, value their own intelligence and egoism so highly that they fail to work together in harmony. They get entangled in all sorts of personal conflicts and bickerings. It is, of course, not true that countries like England are free from such failings. But they possess a strength which helps them to control such lower movements. Turkey, Japan do great work because they can keep under control their little personal selfishness, egoism, jealousy, etc. when they get down to work. To make a revolution is not in the grain of our people's nature. They have no discipline. They cannot control their egoism and other failings, they cannot maintain secrecy. They seek only to create some sensation and in the process bring about their own ruin. As a result of this lack of discipline they hasten their own degeneration and spoil the work as well. Your assessment in this regard is correct: such an activity does bring about degeneration. And then?

Anilbaran: Since I could not control these mental activities I mentioned earlier, I had thought of stopping entirely all studies and writings. For a few days I did not do any writing or reading work

and spent the whole day quietly doing nothing. But that did not seem to help much.

Sri Aurobindo: How can it help? In the early stages some work is necessary. An active mind needs an outlet. If it stops by itself from within, well and good; otherwise one should not try to stop this by force. You have an inclination for clarity. All kinds of indications will come from above and whatever you do must be referred to the Above. It will not do to depend on the mind alone. When initiative, guidance etc. will come down from above, then the thing begins; the next step will be to change the Adhara. Thus to act under the guidance coming from above, this is one side of the sadhana, the dynamic side. The other one is the discrimination between the Purusha and the Prakriti. The Purusha will calmly observe, give sanction, choose, but will realise that all this does not belong to him – all these are outside him. This is the static side of the sadhana. These two aspects constitute the basis of Yoga.

Anilbaran: I perceive that the dynamic side of sadhana has begun in me.

Sri Aurobindo: That is natural, because you are dynamic by nature. It is for this reason that I hesitated to draw you to this path. The Karmayoga of the Gita would have suited you better. That is your svadharma [The true law of one's own being and action]. You have however within you an inclination towards completeness.

Anilbaran: Yes, I can feel it.

*

Sri Aurobindo: You have a strong active nature. And this in you is a point of strength. If you can mould it rightly this will become a very great strength. On the other hand, this too is your weak point – a hindrance in sadhana. While doing work if the mind continues to be active let it be so, but there must be at the same time a capacity for silence. While doing sadhana you must quieten your mind and keep awake the Purusha consciousness behind all your activities.

Anilbaran: How can one acquire this silent Purusha consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: That is what constitutes sadhana. There are many who experience this inner silence when they stand before nature. Does this ever happen to you?

Anilbaran: No.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you feel then?

Anilbaran: It all the more increases my mental activity.

*

Anilbaran: But one thing I have gained: I can fairly watch what goes on within me.

Sri Aurobindo: With which part do you watch? Surely with the mind? That won't do. It is the silent Purusha within who must watch all.

Anilbaran: The activity of the mind is getting reduced. And I can see well that I am gradually making some progress. But here we have an isolated atmosphere. But once I go outside this atmosphere, everything will get muddled, I fear.

Sri Aurobindo: That is very true. One must have first of all a solid foundation.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The intuitions and impressions that you receive in you, do they come from inside or outside?

Anilbaran: I feel that they come from above.

Sri Aurobindo: The experience of the Purusha which you get, do you feel it inside you or above you? It enters you from above?

Anilbaran: I feel it inside me.

Sri Aurobindo: Good. Make the dwelling clean for it.

28 June 1926 Monday (Morning)

Anilbaran: I can feel the silence in mountainous scenes, but I can't feel the same in the restlessness of the sea.

Sri Aurobindo: In the middle of an ocean on board a ship, one can get a sense of vastness.

*

Anilbaran: If one should stop all mental activities during the meditation should one stop all thinking also? Say, about the relation between the Purusha and the Prakriti, attributes of the Purusha, etc.?

Sri Aurobindo: One may have an experience, a perception of these things, but one should not indulge an intellectual thinking or mental debate on such issues. In the normal play of our mind there are all sorts of perversions; hence the need to stop all these things and inculcate right thinking, right willing – in other words, Truth must be established. And, in order to possess the Truth, the plays of the lower nature must be stopped. The Purusha should assume at all times the attitude of a giver of sanction while rejecting the lower movements and accepting only truth-movements.

Anilbaran: The Gita says: ātmasamstham manah krtvā...chintayet [Chapter VI, Verse 25] what does this mean?

Sri Aurobindo: The mind is running on all sides to think about many things, – what we call thoughts coming from outside. We must withdraw the mind from these distractions and make it abide in the self. Thus guarding the peace within we shall have to do the work without. Now, what the Gita has not mentioned but what we say is this: the Truth-power must be brought down from above into that state of peace, and this higher power – Parashakti – will directly guide the vehicle – ādhāra – and transform it.

After having stopped the lower activities of the mind, it must be made receptive; and, instead of weaving all kinds of empty and idle thoughts, the mind should receive intuitions from above. The reason why we recommend the suspension of external activities is that otherwise the mind cannot abandon its habitual activities and old movements and accept truth-movements so long as it is engaged in such activities. This is why isolation is necessary.

Anilbaran: Does the higher Truth work in us only when we are established in the silent consciousness? and not at other times?

Sri Aurobindo: The higher Truth is all the time working in us but through the lower power – Aparashakti. It is when we become conscious of the play of this higher Power then only yoga begins. Not in the state of unconsciousness, but in full awareness when the higher Power will descend into and direct us, then only the yogic life will begin.

Anilbaran: The lower distractions are less and I feel peace quite well. Will this be lasting?

Sri Aurobindo: It will be lasting if you want it to be so. It is not that the distractions will never recur; but you must go on rejecting them and thus the state of peace will be established.

July 1926

4 July 1926 (Morning)

Anilbaran: I find an insincerity in me.

Sri Aurobindo: What sort of insincerity?

Anilbaran: Whatever work I do, that alone seems to me the real life. But so long as I am engaged in meditation or practise yoga that appears as a formal affair. I do not find much interest in it.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you feel yourself pulled to any particular type of work?

Anilbaran: No, whatever work I take in hand, that alone seems to me to be real, and my mind gets engrossed in it alone and I have to force myself in order to pull it out of the work. And it does not succeed. Even during meditations the mind keeps on ruminating on its own ideas and plans.

Sri Aurobindo: The desire of your vital being is towards work. And the vital being won't find any interest in yoga so long as you do not have any experience of the higher and fuller life that is in yoga. As long as this experience is not there, the vital being will not find any interest. If the mind has sufficient strength, then it can progressively make the vital being seek it. Otherwise, the progress will be very slow. In order to satisfy the vital being, it must be offered some activity, and at the same time the mind should be slowly made to take interest in yoga. For this reason, I have told you many times that I hesitated to call you to this yoga. Your mind has some clearness and capacity for right thinking; it opens towards the heights, but for its own sake, – to receive light from above for its own activity. But our yoga demands surrender; the entire being has to be put in the hands of the higher force and allow itself to be transformed. For this an opening is needed.

Anilbaran: I have only this much of opening that I have no doubts in me. Whenever I refer any of my problems to the power above, I receive a satisfactory solution.

Sri Aurobindo: But you make this reference for the benefit of your mind. Your vital being has so long been accustomed to work and had

considered that alone to be yoga. Now it does not find it easy to turn to a new direction. But if, with the insistence of the mind you can make it seek for it, then you may succeed. But what about the quiet detachment you were experiencing?

Anilbaran: That is not getting sufficiently settled. If I can live in the quietness of some mountainous surroundings, I may perhaps experience peace. What do you say?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no certainty about that.

Anilbaran: Quite so! The vital may very well start hungering even there.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it will think, what's all this for! About people who come here, their difficulties, their being's true nature come out in the open. This is what is happening in your case. Just now you mentioned that your problems are getting solved. Well, this too is a problem.

Anilbaran: My reference to the light above makes me see this clearly that my vital being is not finding any interest in yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: This indeed is the real problem. But what is the solution?

Anilbaran: Well, even before the solution is found, it is important to understand the problem. I have now rightly understood the problem. So far I could not detect in such a clear way the pull of my vital being. Now that I have realized the problem, I hope that I shall surely find a solution.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, try and see what solution you find.

11 July 1926 (Morning)

Anilbaran: I have found a rough solution to the problem.

Sri Aurobindo: What is it?

Anilbaran: I was telling you that my vital being is not taking any interest in the yogic life, but that is not correct; for I am not feeling any great uneasiness because I have left the active life behind to enter into this path of yoga.

Sri Aurobindo: This does not mean much, for it may be that your vital being has submitted itself to your mind. It may say, “let’s see what he does!” Your vital being had agreed to your previous yogic life. This you must feel within you, for upon this depends your future yogic life. If the vital being refuses to give consent, then later on it may cause trouble. Just now you are a mental man, your mind has illumination, harmony; you govern everything with your mind but you have not been able to open yourself to the Supermind which is above. Do you have just an impression that the vital being has consented, are you simply making a conjecture or do you feel it?

Anilbaran: I do feel that my vital being has also give consent.

Sri Aurobindo: The vital being may have responded within you. But in the earlier stages of our yoga there is nothing much in which the vital being can be interested.

Anilbaran: I feel that things are getting organized within me. I can understand that the movements of the mind and the vital are coming from outside. It is only when my psychic being takes interest in them that these movements continue.

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being takes interest! What you call the psychic being is the mind of the vital. The heart is the seat of this mind. And this mind is the essence of the senses. It receives things from outside, acts upon things that are outside – knows, gives consent, takes interest in them. But this mind cannot be the Ishwara, but it is the knower, the giver of the consent. Above this mind is the Buddhi. This Buddhi has two aspects: one is understanding, the other is will or play of the dynamic mind. Above this is the higher mind which organizes all these. This higher mind is the instrument of the Supermind. The Supermind organizes this higher mind and intuitivizes it. There are other levels of the mind. There is the physical mind which is mechanical but the awareness

which is the essential character (dharma) of the mind is also to some extent present there. The mind has these four levels: physical, vital, budhi, higher mind. The Supermind is far above these.

The psychic being and the mental being, Manomaya Purusha, are not the same. The psychic being is behind the mind, it is what the Westerners call the soul. It takes interest in the movements of the mind and the vital only when there is a harmony between these movements and the truth above. The knowledge of the psychic being is deeper.

Anilbaran: The solution that I have found is this: the condition of my vital being is such that if I get absorbed in external activities, I shall be unable to do any yoga. Therefore for the time being I am keeping myself occupied with studies, and in this way I am advancing slowly. I think I should settle here permanently. But I should like to go back once to my place during the Puja.

Sri Aurobindo: Have you been able to make arrangements for that?

Anilbaran: No, I have not yet been able to make any arrangements. But I trust that some arrangements will be made.

Sri Aurobindo: Well, see to it! Your solution has been the right solution.

*

Sri Aurobindo: But the play of the vital being is not of one kind only. As I was telling you yesterday, there are several personalities within this vital being.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The yogin becomes aware in part of the action of the supramental power organizing the lower vehicle (*ādhāra*). A part of it remains behind the veil and prepares itself.

12 July 1926 Monday (Evening)

Anilbaran: X and some others of Bengal have been nourishing a hurt feeling against you.

Sri Aurobindo: I am quite indifferent to that. Hurt for what? Because I have pulled you?

Anilbaran: No, it is because you are doing nothing for the country.

Sri Aurobindo: How do they know that I'm doing nothing?

Anilbaran: They see that you are not doing anything.

Sri Aurobindo: Rather I see that they are not doing anything.

Anilbaran: If people fail to recognize it, then, what's the use of such work?

Sri Aurobindo: I would have been happy if instead of beating their drums while doing nothing, they could have done some work quietly without any propaganda.

Anilbaran: Some propaganda is necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: Propaganda is necessary only for the sake of money!

*

Anilbaran: The Hathayoga speaks of three different nādis [channels of nerve], Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. Do they correspond to something physiological or they are psychical?

Sri Aurobindo: Psychical.

Anilbaran: Some people claim that physiological operations help in various ways to attain brahmajnāna [the knowledge of the Brahman].

Sri Aurobindo: They make Brahman depend on nerves? These processes are often dangerous to the body – e.g. even leading to phthisis.

Anilbaran: What is the use of Pranayama?

Sri Aurobindo: It shakes you up.

18 July 1926

Anilbaran: I observe that if, instead of keeping the mind just blank during meditation, I take the help of a symbol such as my entire being remaining turned above towards the Sun of Knowledge (Vijnana Surya), then it becomes easy to quieten the mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Have you tried it?

Anilbaran: Yes, sir!

Sri Aurobindo: There is no objection to that. Why make the mind blank? There should be an idea of the higher truth, light and power within.

Anilbaran: Isn't that idea also a symbol? When we look upward from below, isn't that a symbol too?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, of course, it is a symbol, but a right symbol. The experience will come – even the experience of the Sun of Knowledge (Vijnana Surya).

Anilbaran: I am also getting some experience of the Purusha consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Anilbaran: I feel myself to be a vast infinite reality, having no wants of its own; it is complete in itself. The movements of the mind seem to lie in one corner of that infinite being.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, this Purusha consciousness must be maintained; otherwise the calm will not last. The knocks and blows that come from outside cannot disturb one, if this Purusha consciousness remains at the back.

Anilbaran: I have another feeling. As a result of my effort to turn the gaze within, although as yet no positive gains have been made, still, as a result of that sincere effort it appears to me that the plays of the external life are less real and that there is a higher reality within.

Also I clearly perceive the opening of the dynamic side in me. At times a substance, at other times a complete form comes down in me from above. And in this way I compose my essays and write letters.

Sri Aurobindo: From where do they come? From above?

Anilbaran: Yes, I perceive that they come from above – very clear and definite.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, such definite things will come down from above. They come from different levels – higher mind, intuitivized mind, or from a still higher level, but they are not intellectual.

25 July 1926

Anilbaran: During the meditation my mind remains quieter than before. Previously I used to feel that the mind was near the heart centre and the higher Truth was in the heart centre. Now I have a feeling that the mind is in the head and the higher Truth is outside, above the head.

Sri Aurobindo: The mind of an ordinary man is truly near the heart. Those who have advanced rise to the mind which is in the head, – they have the play of their mental movements in the head itself. But all these are inside the body; man is, as it were, shut up in a box, his entire consciousness is confined within the organism. This imprisonment has to be undone. Outside and above the mind there is the play of a consciousness which is lighted by the higher Truth, but man is not conscious of it and of that he has to be conscious.

Anilbaran: The other day I saw something like a vision – may be that was only an imagination. There was over my head something like a thick lid. All of a sudden a small round hole was made in it (like that of a coin), and through this hole there came upon me a bright golden light. I was taken aback.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, perhaps not exactly like this, but similar visions are seen by many. It is said in the Isha Upanishad as if a hole were being bored from above through this lid. What lies above this lid is not known to man. This lid had to be pierced. The Upanishad says: hiranmayena pātreṇa apihitam.

Anilbaran: Since the day I had that vision, I have almost a constant feeling that a light was playing over my head. Because I feel it to be so real, it has become somewhat easier for me to concentrate above. Before this, only the external physical world seemed to be real.

Sri Aurobindo: One can see light above the head; that indicates a consciousness outside the body. But that itself is not the Truth-Consciousness or Vijnana. But much light descending from there illumines this consciousness.

Anilbaran: What is the relation between the Purusha consciousness and the supramental consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: The consciousness of the supreme Purusha remains above, but in the mind there may be a Purusha consciousness which they

call the cosmic consciousness – it is wide, all-pervading, one. Outside this goes on the play of Prakriti.

Anilbaran: I get the experience of this consciousness, but within the mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Even if it is in the mind, it is a spiritual consciousness.

Anilbaran: I can enter this consciousness at will. Then no outside distractions or attractions can affect me. I feel quite at peace. I have another feeling. Earlier I had an impression that I was an undivided simple being, but now I perceive that my being is very complex, that I can stay at different planes of consciousness.

From what you see now, I hope, I have nothing to be disheartened about?

Sri Aurobindo: No, you have rather begun well. You will have it.

Anilbaran: I have a strong conviction that I shall get the thing.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you will have it.

Anilbaran: What you were saying to us yesterday about our past lives, was it all a joke? Or, was it said in seriousness?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it was not a joke.

Anilbaran: What about my past life?

Sri Aurobindo: That I have not yet seen.

Anilbaran: Does it help if one can know one's past life?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it does help much to know what elements are there.

Anilbaran: That one may surely know from within.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, of course.

August 1926

1 August 1926

Anilbaran: I feel peace within but this peace has not established itself on my surface mind and life. I can never get rid of the restlessness of my mind. The play of idle thoughts goes on in full vigour.

Sri Aurobindo: The fundamental peace is being established in you and what goes on on the surface is the habitual play of the superficial mind. It will take time for this play to cease.

Anilbaran: Yes, I can well understand it and I am not impatient about it. Yet, I feel somewhat sad that I still cannot stop these plays of the superficial mind. This does not however disturb my inner being.

Sri Aurobindo: What about the light that was descending in you from above?

Anilbaran: I do not see any visions of it. But I observe in me a great deal of intellectual clarity. And when I settle down to write without any thoughts of my own, thoughts do come pouring down upon me from above. I put no effort but what comes out seems to be quite satisfactory.

Sri Aurobindo: All these are the results of the play of that light which you experienced as a hole of the size of a coin. You'll have to widen this play; the mind has to be kept open to the higher consciousness.

Anilbaran: The vital forces are all lying in wait as it were to enter at the slightest opportunity. I have to be extremely vigilant.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it will be so until the power from above comes down and establishes itself in the vital plane.

Anilbaran: I suppose I'll have to control them with the mind at present.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but when the higher consciousness will descend into the mind, then one will have to transfer this control from the mind

to the overhead centre. All the thinking will take place in the consciousness above.

Anilbaran: At times I get glimpses of this thinking in the higher consciousness; at these moments comes a consciousness of mastery.

Sri Aurobindo: That is what is known as cosmic consciousness.

Anilbaran: Another thing which I quite realize is that behind the mental, the vital and the physical beings there is a psychical being from where rises an aspiration towards the heights. But I cannot locate the positions of these outer beings. The mind is within the head but where exactly is the seat of the vital?

Sri Aurobindo (with a smile): The navel region is the centre of the vital. It is from here that the movements of the vital rise upward. Above the navel and behind the chest is the centre of the play of emotions and below this takes place the play of the physical. Mulādhāra is the base of the physical. In between the Mulādhāra and the navel, there is another centre of the vital.

Anilbaran: I see a play of light above. But is it because I think about it?

Sri Aurobindo (with a smile): No.

Anilbaran: What should I do about those idle thoughts that go on when I sit for meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: Do these thoughts go on outside and you see them as such?

Anilbaran: No, I get absorbed in those thoughts. After some time I wake up and think: what is all this happening? Once again I quieten the mind and turn it upward.

Sri Aurobindo: This habitual play will continue at present. But all these must be kept outside. This awakening of the mind and self-control have to be done faster.

8 August 1926 (Morning)

Anilbaran: I have nothing much to say today. But last night I had a vision – the sun over my head, very vivid.

Sri Aurobindo: Was the light penetrating inside or was it spreading outside?

Anilbaran: It was spreading outside over the head.

Sri Aurobindo: You have seen it alright. This is what the Yogis called brahmajyoti.

Anilbaran: Are these not illusions of the mind?

Sri Aurobindo (with a smile): This is your European concept. The mental images are not so vivid. You have seen it alright.

Anilbaran: Let me tell you about my smoking. I had left cigarette and tobacco four years back. The other day I saw in the notebook of Purani that you had said that the use of tobacco etc. inhibits the activity of the tamasic centres. To test this, these few days I have been smoking cigarettes.

Sri Aurobindo: In order to explain why the ordinary Sadhus and Yogis take to tobacco and gānja [an intoxicant], I said that these cause stimulation of the physical brain. But these have reactions. And to stimulate the brain thus is not the proper process.

Anilbaran: After I smoked a cigarette at night, the very next morning I had the vision of a hole of a coin's size being made on the covering of my head.

Sri Aurobindo (with a smile): You thought it was the result of your smoking cigarettes?

Anilbaran: So it does not help?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

22 August 1926 (Morning)

Anilbaran: On the 15th August, since the morning I began to feel a sort of profound peace. The experience of light above the head became real. During the afternoon meditation the aspiration within blazed up. All these days I had been as it were in the outskirts of the Yoga; now I am feeling quite within it.

Sri Aurobindo: The light which you see above – does it descend within?

Anilbaran: No. But that it is possible to live in that light above has become clear to me. I cannot yet live there but that has to be worked out. I have seen another light above which is not whitish but red and is not limited like the sun but something infinite.

I have made an analysis of the play of sexual desire in me. I do not know if it is correct.

Sri Aurobindo: What is it?

Anilbaran: There is no hankering in me for the satisfaction of this desire. Generally speaking, if I stay away from its objects, I do not feel any desire, but if some vital wave comes from outside, if the vital wave of someone else affects me, then there is something in me which readily responds and then I have to apply the mental control. Otherwise by themselves no such desires disturb me. I have desire in me for satisfactions in the mental field.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Anilbaran: My mind is naturally attracted towards studies, mental constructions and the satisfaction one derives from them.

Sri Aurobindo: The response that comes from your vital being – does it persist? Does your mind keep spinning thoughts about these later on – all sorts of imaginations?

Anilbaran: No. If its objects are not in front of me I feel no disturbances.

Sri Aurobindo: That shows that it is only in your superficial being, not in the central.

Anilbaran: Today I have received a letter from home – my wife is seriously ill.

Sri Aurobindo: Ill? What kind of illness?

Anilbaran: For a long time she has been suffering from indigestion and stomach ailments. Now she is passing loose motions, also vomiting. She has swelled and feels extremely weak – such a weakness she has never experienced before. My mother writes, “I have informed you and now you do what you like.” Indirectly she asks me to go back. I can’t decide what I should do.

Sri Aurobindo: One must not go. Such obstacles will surely come. If one has to go like this, how can one do Yoga! You’ll have to be severe – understand?

Anilbaran: I do not have so much pull of sympathy as of a sense of duty which gives me the trouble. That too I have been practising long to control. Some other obstacles are also showing up. The demand of money is increasing.

Sri Aurobindo: Increasing?

Anilbaran: All these days I somehow managed to keep myself within a budget. I could somehow manage to pull on. But now again I shall have to bear the expenses of my nephew’s studies. I can very well see that all kinds of obstacles are coming on the way.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they will come to see if they can find anything responding in you.

Anilbaran: Please keep an eye on me.

26 August 1926 (Morning)

(This morning I have received a letter from X. My wife has expired at 4 a.m., in the night of 20 August, 3rd of Bhadra last. I had a meeting with A.G.)

Anilbaran: I was expecting this news everyday. I felt it strongly that my wife's death was very certain.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes in such a state...it was no use for her to remain alive. It has been rather good for her.

(A.G. remained silent for a long time. I spoke to him about one of my latest experiences. The light which I see above my head became so bright that one never sees anything like it upon earth. After having seen this I do not enjoy any more even the full moon on the sea. All on a sudden I saw in that light an infinite sky getting lighted as it were and in that there were many beings, but I could not discern their forms.)

Sri Aurobindo: What you saw – was it temporary?

Anilbaran: Yes, it was a sudden glimpse and then it all faded away. But I have been so much impressed that it has left a constant memory in me. That world of light above appears to be more real than this earth. Earlier I thought it to be my mental imagination but now this is more real than anything on this earth.

Sri Aurobindo: It is the Effulgent Heaven of the Veda.

Anilbaran: I feel like rising to that region and dwelling there.

(Sri Aurobindo just smiled.)

*

Anilbaran: What about my going back home? It has been decided before that I should return home in October. I have some work there.

(Sri Aurobindo remains silent.)

Anilbaran: Shall I go a few days earlier?

Sri Aurobindo (with a smile): What will you do by going early?

Anilbaran: No, nothing to do. Well then, I would rather go in October.

29 August 1926

Anilbaran: The night before I saw an interesting dream.

Sri Aurobindo: What was it?

Anilbaran: There was in the sky a crescent moon of the third day of the bright fortnight. My son pointed out to me the eclipse occurring on its convex side.

I saw another dream. The sun was setting beautifully, everybody was asking me to see it but I was unable to see it. Then at the very last moment when I was able to see, the sun had begun to sink fast. What is the difference between such dreams and the visions one sees during the meditation?

Sri Aurobindo: The dreams are something in the mind. But one sees something real in a vision – may be something symbolical.

Anilbaran: Can dreams in sleep be symbolical?

Sri Aurobindo: They can be but to discern their significance is very difficult. What you had seen belonged to the vital plane.

(I spoke to him about X of Bankura. He has a strong inclination to make money but he wants to spend it for some good cause.)

Sri Aurobindo: That's fine.

Anilbaran: He has taken a mantra from a guru and is engaged in some sort of sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo: What sort of sadhana?

Anilbaran: That I don't know. He is going through a lot of struggle in business. He was a contractor but now he has installed a rice mill. At times he gets depressed due to all sorts of difficulties. He gets encouragement from conversations with me. He has an aspiration for a higher life.

(I spoke to him about R's sadhana)

Sri Aurobindo: Well, I shall see.

September 1926

5 September 1926

Anilbaran: Peace is getting established within. During the meditation it comes down in waves from above to the soles of the feet. Aspiration and consecration appear quite real. That the power above has accepted me, this too I realise. But the troubles created by the mind are not getting solved. When I sit for meditation all sorts of thoughts invade and spoil everything.

Sri Aurobindo: What sorts of thoughts?

Anilbaran: Habitual thoughts. Perhaps what I have done or seen at one time rises up in the mind and then the whole game of association starts.

Sri Aurobindo: The experiences of your past life which are stored within come up to the surface to be rejected. By rejecting all these by and by the inside will have to be cleansed. What about the aspiration you feel?

Anilbaran: I want to rise into the light above.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a wrong process. Now you cannot rise there. It will take a long time. You will have to bring down the strong power from above and prepare the vessel. At present you must prepare the mind – the entire play will take place within the mind. Just now the power will not descend into the vital and the physical.

Anilbaran: What is the process of bringing down the power from above? How to bring it down?

Sri Aurobindo: How will you bring it down? The power will descend by itself. You will only have to surrender to it.

Anilbaran: From time to time I can feel the pressure coming from above.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the power is willing to descend but you are making an effort to rise above and that way the power will not descend. Just as peace will descend, so also the light and power will descend and transform your vessel.

Anilbaran: Sometimes I see a shower of rays as it were, white rays, coming down from the lights above.

Sri Aurobindo: Very well; it does come down like that.

Anilbaran: But I have a feeling that all this is bogus. I feel like this because I tend to see it simply as mental imagination.

Sri Aurobindo: You do have such intellectual obstacles. To doubt the experience is to discourage it. Let it be developed, see what is in it. How can it help to always doubt it?

Anilbaran: My mental doubts are great obstacles. Since I am near you, a word or two from you demolishes these doubts.

Sometimes I sense the play of intuition in the mind. The truth descends from above and all problems get solved.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not sufficient. Sometimes the glimpses will come, but only when the light from above will descend and enlighten the mind, you will have the full knowledge. You will have to live in that.

Anilbaran: Within the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, now in the mind and later on having risen above the mind you will be able to live in the higher knowledge. Before this, only from time to time you can rise there.

Anilbaran: For this a long period of practice is required.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but now it may not take much time. If you had come ten years earlier, what progress then you could make, the same you can do now much faster.

Anilbaran: But I have no impatience in me. I have now no doubt about the path and I will go on patiently as long as the thing is not achieved.

Sri Aurobindo: That is very good.

Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

Foreword

These conversations with Sri Aurobindo were recorded by Anilbaran during his stay in Pondicherry from May to September 1926. The entire set of conversations – which was originally published in the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* from 1977 to 1986 – has been divided into four parts – each part denoting the conversations of a particular month, that is, May-June, July, August and September.

We are thankful to Shri Debranjana Chatterjee, Librarian of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library and Shri Raman Reddy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Department for helping us to collect these conversations.

*With warm regards,
Anurag Banerjee, Founder
Overman Foundation.*

May-June 1926

18 May 1926 (Evening)

(This is the first conversation I attended. Henceforth I am to attend on Thursdays and Saturdays. Newcomers are not at once admitted daily.¹)

Disciple: When the Supermind comes down will it have an expression in external life? What will be the form which such external activity will take? What will be the form and nature of the external activities of a superman?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by external life?

Disciple: We have our sadhana – that is inner activity.

Sri Aurobindo: Take cooking, is this external or internal?

Disciple: Cooking is external activity.

Sri Aurobindo: Then you have taken a wrong attitude. The cooking you do ought to be a part of your sadhana. Certainly when the Supermind is realized in yourself you will have external activities – a Superman is not going to pass his time sitting on an arm chair, meditating on philosophy. But yours is a state of preparation. You will have to make your mind plastic, – your whole being a proper instrument, – so that the higher power may work through you. This is sufficient work for you – this preparation of your mind and being by sadhana. During this time you retain certain external activities as a field of experiment. You do any kind of work, so as to learn to do it in the proper way. In ordinary life, the manner of work is blind and haphazard – there is not the right attitude. When a Yogi works, he works with a deeper consciousness; his hands and fingers move automatically – not as a dead automatic instrument but with a full consciousness behind the automatic activity.

A Yogi is not to be a Jack of all trades; everyone has a role to play, and that role is found out with the descent of the higher knowledge. In the meantime we must prepare ourselves in such a manner as to be able to do any kind of work. I prepare fish for the cats because that is an act which comes to my hand and I do it with the right attitude and in the

1. The diary notes begin with these lines from the pen of Anilbaran Roy.

proper manner. I could have blackened your shoes, but that would falsify the relations between you and me – you may misunderstand me. The cats at least do not misunderstand.

When the Supermind comes and sets you to work, what form that work will take it is not possible to say from beforehand. There are infinite possibilities, and the Truth-Force will determine the work for each according to his *svadharma* and according to the development of circumstances. The mind can catch glimpses of the nature of work that will be accomplished, but these can be falsified. I have certain ideas in my mind about the future work but I do not accept them as final. If I communicate these ideas to you, you may misunderstand and misapply them. You may hastily try to execute them and make various mental formations and constructions which may be an impediment to the coming down of the higher Truth.

Some years ago, I had certain ideas in my mind about social and economic organization and I gave them to X to be worked out. But his activities have taken such a turn as I cannot approve of now. At that time I was for communism, but now I have no “isms” – the Truth has no “isms” in it. The creations of Truth are very complex, they cannot be stated in any cut and dried formula. Of course there will be some forms, but these will be progressive forms and these forms will vary with varying conditions. Now some say communism is the only right thing, some say democracy. Mahatma speaks of foul-force, Rabindranath of love, the Russians of communism – but Truth is not limited by any of these conceptions. Each of these men has grasped some part of the Truth; in their attempts to express Truth, they build up organizations which are but imperfect expressions of Truth and thus collapse after a short time, giving place to newer forms, newer organizations of expressing the Truth-Force.

Of course Truth has infinite possibilities and the earth and mankind are not yet ready for all kinds of manifestation. There are stages in the manifestation of the Truth. The very gods will come down on the earth but if the attempt is made now the physical earth and the whole structure of humanity will break down. Yet, a beginning is going to be made, and we must keep our mind free and plastic so that we may be the proper instruments of working that out.

We should reject the constructions of the mind. The constructions of the mind, the plans and forms evolved by the physical mind are an obstacle, an impediment to the workings of Truth. Observe the forces that are at work, study the mistakes committed in life and find out the

Truth behind them but do not form plans; leave it to the higher power to organize and effectuate the work that has to be done. All political leaders, all workers in the active field, ought to have an open and plastic mind – not to have plans and programmes fixed for all time. Of course the purpose must be fixed, there should be an unalterable purpose before you. But as to the means and methods of achieving that purpose, you must always be ready to change and modify them according as developments arise.

The question betrays impatience – it arises from the vital being. I myself am not sure as to the form my work should take, though I have some ideas within me. I am constitutionally an anarchist and a communist and try to form plans according to my bent and this has become an obstacle to the real Truth-Force organizing its work. So I keep these in check. There may be forms and moulds prepared in the minds for verification for application if proper conditions are forthcoming, but these are never to be taken as final. I have not yet got the whole plan to be worked out, otherwise I would myself have given that to you. I am perfecting my ideas within and people misunderstand me saying that I am doing nothing. I do not mind at all what the outside world says of me – I have my own work to do, and I am doing that. What I want from outside world is only a few lacs of rupees (*laughter*).

In the meantime you have plenty of work in the shape of preparing yourself for the task that may be demanded of you.

That India will be liberated, there is absolutely no doubt about that, but for the mere liberation of India Yogins or Supermen are not needed. Ordinary men by ordinary methods can bring about the freedom of India – let them achieve that by any means or plans they like. I will have no objection. If the people of India are not absolutely doomed, they will certainly make themselves free and I am sure India is not destined for destruction. But within what time India will be free or whether India will be freed suddenly or by partial stages – these are questions which cannot be definitely answered.

A worker must have plans but it is not necessary that the whole plan must be given out at once. I do not believe with Gandhi that there should not be any secrecy. Only that part of the plan which is fit for materialization is to be given out, otherwise there will be endless futile discussion and the opposing forces will be forewarned.

Sri Aurobindo: Gandhi made a confusion when he sought to gain the Mahomedans by helping them in the Khilafat movement. There was some sort of plan constructed by his mind, but it has proved to be a mistake. The nature of the Mahomedans has to be changed; their spirit is more communal than national; they feel more for Islamic brotherhood than for Indian solidarity. The Khilafat agitation gave nourishment to this wrong mentality of the Mahomedans and the result has been disastrous. It required no super-mind, but ordinary common sense ought to have told us not to help the Khilafat movement. But some mental obsession confused Gandhi and his followers. Gandhi took no account of facts, ignored the nature of the Mahomedans, formed in his own mind a scheme of Hindu-Muslim unity and thrust it on the country without having regard to the existing circumstances.

*

Sri Aurobindo: We must reject all formed ideas and *samskāras* – all forms we have received from our parents, from our past life and so forth. Thus our likes and dislikes are only matters of habit; these habits can be overcome. What appears to be offensive to you, you will learn to take from that even what that has to give. I have no likes and dislikes – from everything I can take the essence, the *rasa*.

*(An old quotation on this subject from elsewhere:
Disciple: In eating a long green plantain I suffer from biliousness and cough. Mr. N. says I have got to throw out that idea from my mind that it will produce biliousness and cough and then go on eating it. Is it this fixed idea or samskāra in the mind which is responsible for this disorder or there is something intrinsic in the plantain itself?)*

Sri Aurobindo: Both are true. There is *dravyaguna*, the particular nature of the food, as well as fixed idea in our beings. But the removal of that from the mind alone does not free you from it. You must be conscious of the same idea in your vital being and remove it from there as well. The vital has also strong likes and dislikes like that. I have removed it from down to the physico-vital and I can now take any food whether hot or spiced, good or bad. I can now take the essential *rasa* out of any and every kind of food. In my case this desire for and recoil (antipathy) from certain food is still there in the atoms of my physical being. If that can be removed then what you say may be possible, i.e., even a cup of poison will not affect me. There is not one law for everything.

We are affected even by the idea in our environment, as for instance, there is a rigidly fixed idea about poison and its killing properties in our environment down to the lower animal kingdom. In dealing with each thing you have to see its nature, your power to meet and overcome that play and so many other things before you can hope to succeed. You may abstain from a particular kind of food for a time not with the idea of rejection but as a temporary measure until the whole system is reconstituted from above and you have developed sufficient power to be able to remain unaffected by it.)

15 June 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is the vital form of the Asuras?

Sri Aurobindo: The Asuras are beings of the mental plane; they act upon men through their mental forms and constructions and their egoism. Men form ideas in their mind and accept them as truth; they form all sorts of plans and projects impelled by ignorance and egoism, this is where the Asuras find a scope in their play with man.

The Asuras are of a higher order of being than the Rakshasas and Pishachas – these latter are beings of the vital plane. There is some light and self-control – however imperfect and incomplete – in the Asuric activities. But the Rakshasas play on blind desires and dark passions, unbridled and unrestrained.

The beings working in the physical plane are very obscure and of lower order and it is difficult to bring them under a type and a name. Perhaps the *Bhutas* (ghosts) belong to this sphere.

The Asuras and Rakshasas can be classified into clear types according to their nature, but men are mixtures of Asuric, Rakshasic and divine characteristics.

*

Disciple: What are the beings which cause disease? Are there individual beings representing individual diseases?

Sri Aurobindo: No, there are no individual personalities for diseases. The darker forces such as the Rakshasas may find work in the diseases of men.

*

Disciple: What is the relation between the health of a man and the observance of the laws of nature?

Sri Aurobindo: What are the laws of nature? Have they been ascertained? Do men in diseases go against the law of nature?

Disciple: Suppose a man observes the laws of hygiene – will he not keep in good health?

Sri Aurobindo: The laws of hygiene are more or less artificial rules and they do not take us very far. A man apparently healthy often breaks down under unexpected attacks, while a man in poor health lives through many vicissitudes. All that can be said is that a vigorous life in fresh open air is congenial to health and longevity.

Disciple: What is it that really helps the man to keep good health?

Sri Aurobindo: Diseases are attacks on the vital being. For every individual there is a sort of balance between his vital being and the external forces; if he can keep this balance he keeps in good health. The body is in a way conscious of this balance and if left to itself is likely to adjust itself to circumstances, but generally this body-consciousness is disturbed and obscured by mental ideas and forms. We have formed many habits and *samskāras* which are responsible for many of our bodily ills.

Disciple: Is this body-consciousness a sort of an instinct?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the instinct is much stronger in animals. In man it has been hampered by artificial rules and habits. But one can become fully conscious of this vital balance and then he can consciously maintain himself in good health. Sometimes, even through blunders and mistakes man can accidentally stumble on the vital balance and then he has a fair chance of a long life.

Disciple: Is this instinct very strong in animals?

Sri Aurobindo: They also commit mistakes, which arise from circumstances. When an animal is very hungry it will eat food which it rejects in normal circumstances.

Disciple: We desire certain kinds of food while we dislike others. Are these desires safe guides?

Sri Aurobindo: The desires come from the vital being and they demand satisfaction irrespective of the well-being of the body. The body-consciousness referred to by me is not desire but an awareness of the needs of the body. A man who has this consciousness will not take any food because he feels a hankering after it nor will he reject a food because he dislikes it – after all likes and dislikes are mostly matters of habit and *samskāra* – but he selects food which he perceives to be necessary for the maintenance of the body, *śarīra dhāraṇa*.

Disciple: Is food absolutely necessary for the body?

Sri Aurobindo: What is necessary for life is vital force. There is an inexhaustible store of vital force in the universe and one can draw any amount of vital force direct from the universe.

Disciple: Is it not more difficult to take vital force directly from the universal energy than to take it through some kind of food?

Sri Aurobindo: For me the former is easier. I can draw as much vital force from the universe as I require. In jail I fasted for ten days. I slept on every third night. At the end of the tenth day I felt much stronger. I could lift weight which I could not lift before. But I lost 11 lbs. in weight. This waste of the purely material substance of the body could not be prevented. Once again I fasted for 23 days when living at Chetty's house. I felt no weakness, I did eight hours work, walked in my room, slept normally and after my 23 days' fast I began at once to take food normally without making small beginnings. I had not lost my balance in the least. I drew sufficient vital force from the universal energy to keep my strength intact, but my flesh shrivelled up and this waste of the purely physical substance I could not make up, hence the necessity of taking some material food.

Disciple: Is it not possible to overcome this physical need?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, possible – but I was not able to do that at that stage of my sadhana.

Disciple: Is sleep to be reduced when one fasts?

Sri Aurobindo: I slept normally during my second fast. But during the previous fast in jail I had to bear a great pressure of sadhana – hence I had to do without much sleep.

*

Sri Aurobindo evinced great interest in the story of a sadhu who is said to have been a young man at the time of the battle of Plassey. The man is said to have changed his body, having left his former body of an East Bengal man and entered the body of a Tibetan Lama.

Sri Aurobindo said that in this manner one can go on living indefinitely.

He also evinced great interest in the story about the Tibetan Lama.

19 June 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo came out with a magazine...devoted to spiritual matters, issued by... He read a brief outline of the...system – how the Yogis establish a connection with the cosmic energy which is expected to give them perfection, physical, mental and spiritual. He read some advertisements of the books on Yogic practice etc. issued by the School. The advertisements were very ably written to attract customers, and in reply to a remark Sri Aurobindo said that it is the atmosphere of America from which they have imbibed this spirit of business. This Yoga, he said, is nothing but a system which breaks down certain barriers and makes one open to the vital forces. The forces of the vital plane give them various sorts of success and they mistake those forces for something higher. It is “success” which checks their further advance, and they cannot rise to higher possibilities.

A similar thing happened in the case of R and V. They were progressing spiritually until success came to V – that was a test for their sadhana. When vital forces cannot turn sadhaks from the upward path, they give them success and thus win them over. Christ was offered success – possession of the world’s wealth and empires; he resisted but Christianity has not been able to resist the temptation of success. We must always be on our guard. We must not allow ourselves to be impatient of success, to fret under failure. We must absolutely turn our face against all the advances of the lower forces.

Men get certain truths and ideas from above and they think that they have got the whole thing, and then their further progress ceases. Christ stopped with Love, Buddha with Nirvana. What happens in most cases of sadhana is that some ideas, inspirations come from above, some truth descends and it acts upon the whole being – the mental, the vital, the physical. Now if these beings are not pure, they will betray, they will mix the truth with their own impure elements; they may achieve some apparent success but that will be neither complete nor permanent. That is the reason why I have resolutely abstained from beginning work – the whole being in me must be purified and transformed so that nothing in me may betray the true inspiration when it comes from above.

*

The supramental must be brought down to the lowest plane of our existence and this must be made conscious. The power of the supramental which is needed to transform the vital being is higher than that needed to

transform the mental being; similarly the power needed for the physical is higher than that needed for the vital.

*

Sri Aurobindo said to this effect that he is not doing his sadhana for his individual Mukti [salvation]. He wants to bring down the Supermind into himself, as well as in others. As the number of these supermen will gradually increase, the play of the lower forces in the world will be checked and gradually eliminated. These lower forces have all along undone the life's work of various sadhaks. Sri Aurobindo wants that his work may not be undone in that manner. Hence he is going on perfecting himself, so that when he begins work, it may be infallible and the results may be lasting and permanent. It is with this resolution that he has been resisting the call to work. He would have stopped Yoga ere long if he could.

23 June 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is the difference between the psychic being and the spiritual being?

Sri Aurobindo: The spiritual being is God himself. The psychic being is the inner being behind the body, life and mind in man – it is what is called the Soul in European philosophy.

Disciple: Is the psychic being the same as the Jiva?

Sri Aurobindo: No, the Jiva, the individual being is behind the psychic. The psychic being rather represents the Jiva. It is this psychic nature in man, which readily responds to higher truth.

Disciple: We distinguish between a lower nature and a higher nature. Is this higher nature the same thing as the psychic nature?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The higher nature is the nature of the Sachchidananda. There are the lower planes of consciousness – physical, vital, mental – and there are the higher planes. The psychic comes in between them. It is through the psychic consciousness that we rise to the higher planes.

*

Disciple: Is suffering a necessary condition of spiritual awakening?

Sri Aurobindo: No. There are certain religions such as Christianity which regard suffering as a part of sadhana – but this is not right.

Disciple: Does not suffering bring in purification?

Sri Aurobindo: Not always. Suffering is an obstacle – it may help only as an obstacle helps. Spiritual asceticism is quite different from moral asceticism.

Disciple: Ordinary people have always confused the two and taken moral asceticism and physical renunciation as the indications of a spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: This has not always been the case. It is due to the influence of Christianity, Brahminism etc. that people have come to have these wrong notions about spirituality. This has begun after the advent of the Europeans.

Disciple: Buddhism also contributed to this false notion.

Sri Aurobindo: The Buddhistic idea of morality was different from the European idea.

Disciple: People regard Gandhi as a greatly spiritual man.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a mistake – Gandhi is moral, not spiritual. He has a strong moral will. When it is said that Gandhi is a greater Christian than many a European, that statement is perfectly true. Gandhi is a Christian. He has been influenced more by the Bible and Tolstoy than by the Bhagavadgita and he interprets the Gita in that light. He is really a European under an Indian skin.

Disciple: What is European in him?

Sri Aurobindo: He has everything European. His moral ideas, religious ideas – they are all Europeans, especially of the Russian type. The cult of suffering preached by Gandhi is taken directly from the Russians. This is a teaching of Christianity, but only the Russian masses have accepted this teaching in their life.

Disciple: Has it affected Bolshevism even?

Sri Aurobindo: Bolshevism is a revolt.

Disciple: Suffering makes one dry.

Sri Aurobindo: The Russians have a sort of intellectual passion, emotion, which makes them less dry than Gandhi.

Disciple: If Gandhi is influenced by the European mentality, how the European spirit of industrialism has not affected him? How has he caught hold of the Charkha?

Sri Aurobindo: In Europe there are movements for simple life and handicrafts.

Disciple: Many Indian people have been influenced by the European spirit?

Sri Aurobindo: All have been influenced. See politics in India – the method and outlook is wholly European.

Disciple: Were there ever politicians in India?

Sri Aurobindo: What! India had no politicians! Was not Shivaji a politician?

Disciple: What is the essential difference in outlook between Indian politics and European politics?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a big question and cannot be answered in five minutes.

*

Disciple: Do you think that the atmosphere in India is more congenial to spiritual life than that in any other country?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a fact.

Disciple: What is the reason?

Sri Aurobindo: The reason is the spiritual sadhana carried on in India for the last four thousand years. Other countries also have a spiritual past, but they lost it, though they are again coming back to it. But in India the sadhana has gone on continuously. This does not mean that all men in India are spiritual, or that there are not spiritual men in other countries. What is meant is that in India one can more easily take up the spiritual life.

Disciple: Can the difficulties in the path be more easily overcome in India?

Sri Aurobindo: That is not the case. For example, the Mayavada is very difficult to be got over in India.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The best method of getting rid of any impurity in the lower being is to hold it up before the higher power. Then the defect is seen in its proper light – then is seen the real source of it in the supramental, which has been disfigured and misrepresented in the lower being. The seed of everything in our life is in the supramental which may be called the *kāraṇa śarīra* (?). What seems to be false and imperfect in the lower plane of consciousness is seen in its truth and perfection in the supramental and this is the proper method of eliminating imperfections and impurities.

*

Sri Aurobindo: When Yoga was first suggested to me I did not readily accept it, as at that time my idea was that Yoga takes one away from life and work and I was aspiring to bring about the liberation of my country. About two years before I met Lele, I began Yogic practice, as I expected that Yoga gives extraordinary powers. Thus I came to Yoga as an *arthārthī*, my object being the service of my country and humanity. But all that has changed in the course of time.

*

Disciple: *Is the psychic being referred to as Agni in the Vedas?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is the inner Agni, the priest, *purohita*, who brings down the real God.

*

Disciple: *What is the secret of Gandhi's great influence on the people during the non-cooperation movement?*

Sri Aurobindo: By the force of his moral will he could do much. His ascetic simple life drew admiration. The circumstances were very favourable – India was ready for a great movement. Gandhi has been called a new Christ – there is much truth in this statement. He is not a new Christ, but a prolongation of the old one. But in politics, he is not fit to be a leader; he can at least be a good lieutenant as men like K are, and carry on successfully such movements as the Kerala Satyagraha movement.

25 June 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: The other day you said that suffering purifies – how?

Disciple: Suffering emphasizes the distinction between self and not self and brings detachment.

Sri Aurobindo: Suffering itself does not bring detachment. The purifying effect of suffering depends not on itself but on something behind – the power to see. When suffering awakens one to a sense of the imperfections of the lower nature and impels him to rise above it then it purifies.

Disciple: Is not suffering a necessary element, an indispensable part of sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly not. It is an imperfection due to ignorance which has to be overcome.

Disciple: There are devotees who regard all sufferings as coming from God and they accept them without a murmur.

Sri Aurobindo: Sin also comes from God then – should you accept it? If you welcome suffering, you will never get out of it.

Disciple: Rabindranath has sung that suffering reminds him of God.

Sri Aurobindo: Rabindranath has a curious blend of sentiments which are partly true and partly false. There are many criminals suffering in jail; suffering instead of purifying them or bringing them towards God, rather degrades them.

Disciple: Christian mystics say that suffering can be transmuted into Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo: The movement of the Divine Ananda is not in the terms of joy and suffering, just as the movement of the divine power is not in the terms of good and evil.

Disciple: Why did God create suffering?

Sri Aurobindo: This is the plan of the world and of evolution in it. But why He made this plan and not any other cannot be answered. God is not like a man and His works cannot be judged by human standards. In the infinite there are infinite possibilities – all possibilities will be realized. The present plan is one of the infinite possibilities. God brings forth in-

conscient existence, and by pressing upon it gradually evolves life, mind and different grades of consciousness out of that inconscient existence until the consciousness reaches the highest level.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The story of Christ's visit to India was invented by some Russians. The very existence of Christ is questioned by some scholars. There might have been a man called Christ, and all the traditions regarding him may not be true of him historically but have been eventually attributed to him, just as many contend that all the teachings of Buddhism were not taught by Buddha. But it is immaterial whether there was actually ever a Christ exactly as he is regarded by the Christians. All the same, the idea of Christ is a living one – it has assumed a force in the psychic plane and has been wielding great influence over mankind. The character of Rama may not be historical – there is no historical proof about him. Rama and Sita symbolize the Sun and the Earth respectively in the Vedas. All the same they represent true ideals in life and have very real influence on mankind.

*

Sri Aurobindo: Suffering is due only to our weakness and imperfection. When external forces affect us, if we have acquired sufficient strength to assimilate them, we derive joy from them, otherwise they produce pain.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The suffering inflicted on the body in Indian asceticism and ascetic worship was intended to check the clamour of the senses – to rise above the calls of the flesh. In Christianity the idea is different; there suffering is a sort of a price to be paid for the happiness that is to be obtained hereafter.

26 June 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Is there a distinction between higher gods and lower gods?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they are separate classes. The gods represent forces of immortality. As a matter of fact, the gods are in a way beings similar to the Rakshasas and Asuras – they are all tendencies in the cosmic movement. The gods work for light, harmony, straightness in the cosmic movement, while the Rakshasas and the Asuras work for crookedness, for perversion. The gods, from their nature help the upward evolution, the other retard it. Of course all are derived from the Supreme Power.

Disciple: What exactly constitutes the personality of these non-human beings? Have they got a soul?

Sri Aurobindo: We must understand what we mean by a soul. In a sense every being has got a soul.

Disciple: What is the distinction between men and those beings in the constitution of their personality?

Sri Aurobindo: They are free forces; men are confined, embodied beings. Men are rather fields where the different forces of the universe have a play. They want to catch hold of men and play through them as in this they get pleasure.

Disciple: When do the Rakshasas and Asuras get a chance of exploiting men?

Sri Aurobindo: When men open themselves to their influence. If we indulge ourselves to any great extent in ambition, lust, greed etc. they get a chance of establishing their sway over us. When groups of persons begin sadhana, all these forces gather round them and try to find out some hole or weak points through which they may enter and frustrate the sadhana which tends to take these men away from the influence of these lower forces.

Disciple: How are these beings affected by the sadhana or tapasya of men?

Sri Aurobindo: They enjoy by associating with men.

Disciple: Have these beings any progress or evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: They may be changed into some other being but not by stages of evolution through which man has to pass. When they open themselves to the higher power, make themselves servants of the higher will, they may be transformed. Some say that they incarnate themselves as men in order to do sadhana and attain salvation; thus there is the view that Asuras attain salvation by dying in the hands of God. I cannot say why such a view is held and what truth there is in it. But these beings as they are, can be known very well, – their natures and different kinds of play can be easily discerned.

Disciple: Do the gods you speak of correspond to the Vedic or Puranic gods?

Sri Aurobindo: No, I do not refer to those conceptions about gods. What I refer to are forces in the world who take part in the cosmic movement. (All movement is between soul and nature.) The Vedic gods represented different aspects of the Supreme Power – the Supreme Deity. All the different manifestations of this Power from the lowest to the highest levels have been symbolically represented as gods in the Veda. Thus Agni represents the psychic being in man, but it is spoken of as being the same as the highest god also. The Puranic gods are minor deities.

*

Sri Aurobindo: Modern Europe is now in the grip of vital forces; if you look into society there you will find how corrupted and rotten it is. The mad rush for power, wealth, possession, the huge conflicts; all these are indications of the play of the vital forces.

Disciple: Does not the condition of India, degenerated as the people are, offer a suitable field for the vital forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Degenerated?

Disciple: I mean, centuries of slavery must have brought weakness and degeneration.

Sri Aurobindo: But there is very little here which vital forces can enjoy – except the Hindu-Muslim riots and such other things which they certainly do. But India can offer these vital forces nothing on such a big scale as Europe.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The great War offered a sumptuous feast to vital forces. As I have often said, when the higher truth tends to come down, there is a great pressure put on the vital play of this world and there arises a stern conflict between these lower forces and the higher truth. If the lower forces succeed there is a cataclysm, humanity goes back to barbarism and has to begin the march anew. If the higher forces succeed a newer and better condition of the world is evolved. Generally, it is the vital forces that win.

29 June 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *What is the essential difference in outlook between Indian politics and European politics?*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by Indian politics?

Disciple: *Politics as it is being carried on in India at the present time?*

Sri Aurobindo: Present politics in India is not essentially different from, it is rather an imperfect imitation of, European politics. The modern Indian politicians readily adopt catchwords and intellectual ideas from Europe and without reference to their own life and genius they try to introduce them into the country. Sometimes it is Democracy, sometimes Bolshevism, sometimes Fascism. Europe does not seem to have made any real progress with the help of these ideas. Is it worth while for the Indians to give up their own *svadharma* in pursuit of these alien foreign ideals? Then our politicians have adopted the whole machinery of European politics – e.g. the press, the platform, the Congress organization; specially they have adopted the British methods. Propaganda and public agitation has its use in England, where the voters determine the policy of the Government, but in India it is meaningless. The only thing Indian in the present political movement is the demand for freedom. Instead of frittering away energy in useless imitations of foreign methods the people of the country should be organized for freedom.

Disciple: *What is the essential nature of real Indian politics?*

Sri Aurobindo: You ask me to epitomize my *Defence of Indian Culture*. European politics (as it is now – not medieval European) has three essential characteristics. First, they form some intellectual ideas about the organization of government and society, and they think that if everything can be made to fit to those ideas, there will be perfection and harmony. These ideas change from time to time – it is aristocracy, or democracy, or monarchy, or republic, or socialism, bolshevism, fascism and so forth. The more they fail in the application of these ideas, the more they cling to them and try to force to fit all circumstances to those ideas – until the whole artificial arrangement crashes down giving place to some other new idea. The second characteristic of European politics is interest. It is interest which gives real force to those intellectual ideas – it is the interest of some particular class or group which determines all political organizations and activities. Sometimes it was the interest of the aristocrats; then it was the interest of the middle class (which produced the so-called

democracy); now it is the interest of the proletariat or the mass which is seeking to rule society. The third characteristic is machinery. The Europeans depend on mechanical organization and think that all their troubles and difficulties will disappear if only they can perfect the machinery of government or society.

The genius of India was quite different. She depended more on life than on machines. The conception of life adopted by the ancient Indian politicians was to allow the free growth of life in all sorts of autonomous centres. They had machinery, organization, but the mechanical part of it was secondary, subordinate; the principle of life, the *svadharma* of every group or centre was the primary thing. Thus there were the village centres, the town centres, all with their own assemblies of elected members, their own laws suitable to their peculiar needs and conditions. There were similar other groups, the clan, the family, the caste guilds, the religious *sanghas* – each developed life in its own way without trying to thrust its law or *dharma* on others. Thus the whole country pulsated with life; a mechanical set organization or rule from above did not hamper their free growth.

Then, there was the idea of function, *dharma*. Every centre, every group had a function to fulfil, a *dharma*, and the conditions were sought to be made favourable for the fulfilment of this *dharma* by all.

The most difficult thing, however, was to harmonize these various kinds of autonomous centres so that they might not conflict with each other. This task was left to the Raja, i.e. the central government. This government did not seek to thrust its own law, its own ideas, upon the whole people; it allowed the people to grow in their own way. It only held the power to remove the conflict and friction between the different centres of life and evolve a harmonious whole out of these numerous autonomous centres of life. This was sought to be done by boards with a minister at the head of each, every board being responsible for a particular department. No department of life was left out. This was a sort of bureaucratic organization.

The first historical empire, that of Chandragupta, was organized on these principles, and the main structure, though it has deteriorated in many respects, has lasted to the present day. That must have been a very remarkable construction which lasted for two thousand years through all vicissitudes. The Guptas continued the system which was afterwards taken up by the Moghul emperors who placed the central Asiatic stamp on it. The idea of the absolute monarch was unknown in India, it was brought by the Mahomedans. Thus Buddha's father was not a king but

only an elected president.

After the Moghuls, the British took up the frame which has lasted for all these years. It is for this reason that foreign ideas, foreign institutions are not fitting in with the life of the people in whose subconsciousness there remain the essentials of ancient Indian organization.

The ancient organization failed for two reasons – partly because the country was too vast and the means of communication were very primitive. With modern systems of communication, with railways and telegraphs, the Indian organization could have lasted and developed. Its fall was partly due also to the decline in the vitality in the people. How this decline came cannot be explained but it was a fact.

Up to the Mahomedan invasion, the Indians assimilated everything that came from the outside – i.e., they took up whatever was good in the Greeks and the Persians and turned them into something Indian. But the Mahomedans were too hard for them and could not be assimilated. There occurred a mental union, but the fundamental assimilation was not there. If the mental union had lasted under the auspices of emperors like Akber, the essential unity might have been achieved by this time; but that union received too many shocks. The Hindus are always tolerant, they are always ready to take the Mahomedans, but the Mahomedans are intolerant and refuse to be assimilated. Unfortunately, this intolerance of the Mahomedans shows no sign of decrease.

***Disciple:** Was not the want of national consciousness in ancient India the main cause of its being conquered by foreign conquerors?*

Sri Aurobindo: There was certainly no national ideal in India as it is understood at present. They were moved mainly by the conceptions of culture, religion and so forth. They resisted foreign invaders, as they came with alien culture and religion. But the function of defending the country was left in the hands of the ruling class. There was no such thing as nation-in-arms. When the empire was strong it resisted foreign invasion. When the central government became weak, the country fell an easy prey to foreigners.

***Disciple:** Some say that the system of village communes acted against the function of national consciousness.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is cant. The central authority did not sufficiently take in the villages. The village organizations were conducive to the growth of the people; if the central government could sufficiently organize these centres of life, the nation could be mightily strong.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The English say that they have kept intact all the ancient institutions. As a matter of fact, they have been destroying everything and thrusting their own institutions everywhere, e.g. the municipalities, district boards etc. As it is, they are serving the purpose of clearing the rubbish, so that in proper time, newer forms of living organizations may flourish.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The modern nationalism has arisen in countries which are small and separate like England and Japan – the people there can become easily united and solidified. In bigger countries like France, Germany, and Italy, the idea, the development of nationalism was due to foreign invasion. Thus when the English first invaded France they found many allies there; gradually the necessity of defence moulded the people into a nation.

Disciple: Is it not a fact that France developed nationalism when under Napoleon it became aggressive?

Sri Aurobindo: No, much before that nationalism began to grow in France. It was at the time of Joan of Arc.

Disciple: Is it not necessary that nationalism should grow in every country?

Sri Aurobindo: If the nations continue to be inimical to each other, they must organize the whole people with the idea of defence but that must be at the cost of free growth of life.

A new idea has arisen – internationalism. But it will not succeed as long as the mentality responsible for nationalism lasts. But the mentality need not last, it may change.

July 1926

1 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is to be done with the existing national [educational] institutions which are struggling for existence?

Sri Aurobindo: If the workers have heart in the work and enthusiasm and if they can manage financially, let them go on, no matter if the number of students be very small. Generally the education in these institutions is only a repetition of what is done in official institutions – as the teachers have had no other education. The present system of education is rotten – it takes no account of the individuality of the students but thrusts upon them the routine work mechanically prepared by the authorities. This system represses and kills the best things in the students. Those who have exceptional merits can rise through all these resistance – but their number is small. Even they become much worse than they would have been under the proper system.

People require education only for a living and nothing else – hence they patronize institutions which are gateways to the services and professions. Again, to start national institutions for proper education you require sufficient financial resources. Under these circumstances it is not advisable to start national institutions at present.

But those who have begun an institution and have enthusiasm and resources, let them continue. They should keep three things before their mind:

- (a) They should see that the students understand and not memorize.
- (b) They should see that the students are teaching themselves and not the teachers are teaching them.
- (c) They should be able to create interest in the students.

If these fundamental principles are followed a good beginning will be made. In Western countries they are carrying on all sorts of experiments to achieve these things. There is life there. In our country there is no life, hence no creation is possible.

Disciple: How can life be imparted to our people?

Sri Aurobindo: Just by yourself having life. Life gives life.

Disciple: *The non-cooperation movement gave some life to the country?*

Sri Aurobindo: Do you call that life? It was based on falsehood – how could you expect it to create anything? It was sought to establish Swaraj by spinning – could anything come from such a false ideal? Some life was given to the country during the Swadeshi days in Bengal. You ought to have seen what this Bengal was before the Swadeshi movement to understand what it has accomplished. At that time we gave forms and ideals which have since degenerated. Mahatma Gandhi took up these forms and distorted them. Mahatma Gandhi has a sort of force – by exerting it he advances to a certain extent but in reaction he goes back much farther. We ought to give some mantras to the people and let them work these out in their own way without putting all sorts of restraints on their activity. In the Swadeshi days the Vande Mataram acted as a real mantra.

The Satyagraha movement is only meant for Gandhi and a few men like him – it ought not to be thrust upon a whole people.

People talk of village organization – let them first bring life to the villages and they will organize themselves.

Disciple: *The only life the villagers now have manifests in quarreling with each other.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is not life but absence of life.

Disciple: *They show great energy and activity in petty quarrels.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is energy disintegrated.

*

Disciple: *Is it any good to have universal general education?*

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on your standpoint. If you want a nation in the modern sense then there should be general education so that all people may act together for a common purpose. But for the development of the individual the present kind of general education does more harm than good.

In India the students generally have great capacities but the system of education represses and destroys them. The arrangement of the class room – the students must sit there for so many hours and pore over their

books – all this is very injurious. What is needed is an atmosphere – a general atmosphere of learning; the student should imbibe that, find out his own aptitude and develop in that line. They should be taught reading and writing generally and then left to themselves to teach themselves.

Under a proper system of education I suggest, both the needs – the need of the individual and the need of the nation – can be reconciled. I do not say that such a system is now practicable – but that is the future education of the race if it is to make any real progress. The teacher must see that the student is not only learning things but that his intelligence is developing – all his powers are developing. If you can make them truly develop their capacities – their life – they will be able to make a place for themselves in the world.

*

Sri Aurobindo: Your national workers should now try to create life in the villages.

3 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is the place of the sentiments of duty towards one's father, wife and so forth in Yogic life?

Sri Aurobindo: It is well known that these have no place in Yogic life.

Disciple: Is it a sign of fitness for Yoga, that the circumstances become favourable, e.g., the parents give permission?

Sri Aurobindo: The fitness does not depend on anything external – it depends on the inner call of the soul.

Disciple: Is it a sufficient basis for Yoga that one feels a certain peace of mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Mere peace is not sufficient – there must be some opening in the *ādhāra* for the higher power to work. To begin with, the mind is to be opened to the higher power and allotted to be changed.

Disciple: The delight of the heart, e.g., love or bhakti depending on some external object – can this delight be enjoyed before the purer delight of the soul comes?

Sri Aurobindo: Emotional delight is always dangerous – it is better to wait for the other.

*

Disciple: Is Yogic life compatible with political work?

Sri Aurobindo: At the beginning it is compatible – I myself did practise Yoga when I was doing political work. But politics as it is being carried on now-a-days is too low to be consistent with Yogic life...

Disciple: Cannot a Yogi keep himself intact even when taking part in this kind of politics?

Sri Aurobindo: If it becomes necessary for him to do political work he will have to do it – but he will keep himself detached, doing the needful but always keeping in mind the true dirty nature of the work. But he is inspired with a higher outlook, a higher ideal, than is ordinarily found in politics.

Disciple: Is not the political liberation of India a high ideal?

Sri Aurobindo: It is to be sought as being necessary for a higher purpose.

*

There are two kinds of work which should be distinguished – nation-building work and politics; the former should be kept apart from the latter; artificial organizations started to serve some political purpose die a natural death; national education should be done for the sake of education; village organization should be done for the sake of bringing life to the villages; if these centres of life are allowed to grow they will ultimately help the political advancement of the country. But along with nation-building work, political work is also necessary.

*

To be upright in politics is to do everything for the sake of the country and not for the sake of one's own personal interest. When there is a conflict between personal interests and the interest of the country, an upright politician will give preference to the interests of the country. This is the only moral law which a politician need observe. Of course one should avoid dirty things as lying etc.... But politics is a fight and in a fight you must have secrecy, camouflage and so forth. Mahatma Gandhi's dictum "Secrecy is a sin" has no place in politics.

*

***Disciple:** A Yogi can take up the work of national education.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is not politics but education; and there is also what is called village organization.

***Disciple:** What is there in these kinds of work which is of help to Yogic life?*

Sri Aurobindo: In these works he can express the truth of which he gets inner experience.

*

***Disciple:** There is a story that Sati – a chaste wife – can, through the force of love for the husband, ward off the death of a dying husband?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is only a case of concentration – which is a force by which one cannot prevent death, but can push it off. But it is not every Sati, every loving wife who can do this.

These stories belong to the ideal world – they are not for guidance in practical life. They are only exaggerated illustrations of particular truths or ideas. There is the story of the Shiviraja who gave his own flesh to save a bird – that example is not to be followed in actual life.

When I read English books as a boy, I had an impression that there was no lying in England. But the fact is that most of them lie. As a matter of fact politics is full of lies.

*

A whole people cannot practise civil disobedience except for a very short time.

6 July 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: Indian students are naturally very quick – whatever defects they show are due to defective education. Thus their want of knowledge about common objects is due to their constant poring over books on America and England. Then there is the medium of English; nothing can be more injurious to make children who have no sense of a foreign language to receive their education through it. But there can be no objection to their learning any foreign language at a tender age. This subject of education of Indian boys is as much jocose as lamentable. Let us turn to some other subject.

Disciple: Is want of health and sickness any help to psychic experiences?

Sri Aurobindo: No. What in such cases are known as psychic experiences are merely influences of the vital world. Only when the body is very crude it may be necessary to have some derangement of the body to have higher experiences, but such cases are exceptions.

Disciple: Is luxurious and sumptuous food detrimental to spiritual life?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not want to lay down any general rule for this; it must be determined in individual cases. As far as my experience goes I found no difference in varying or changing my diet.

8 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: About X and Y – what is it that is deranged in them?

Sri Aurobindo: The mind is deranged. They are possessed, they have lost control over themselves; their control has been taken up by some foreign powers and they act according to their suggestions.

Disciple: What is their chance of getting rid of this possession?

Sri Aurobindo: There must be something in them which wants to get rid of the possession. As a matter of fact, the possession left X some-time, but he again called it back. The cause of his breakdown is too much impatience in sadhana. He wanted to become a superman at once; he had vanity, ambition in respect of his sadhana and all these offered suitable conditions for the possession. If he could give up sadhana and take to ordinary life, he would have been successful in life; but he did not follow this advice. When Y had lucid intervals, he felt sad that all his sadhana had gone out of him – thus he called back the possession. Once their brain is injured, they have little chance of recovery.

10 July 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: The Indians are only learning the A B C of politics. When I came back from England I was surprised to find how the Indians easily believed whatever was said by the British politicians. In politics, the golden rule is not to take any word at its face value – you may be sure that there is something else behind it.

When any accusation is made against you, boldly deny it if you can; if not, remain silent, until the matter is forgotten. Those who show temper in politics are only new-comers, e.g. the labourites in England. Expert politicians do not show any temper, why should they? They know that they are playing a game.

Disciple: A politician may not be so bad in character as an individual as he is as a politician.

Sri Aurobindo: They seek to keep up a pretence, that is all.

*

I do not understand what the Swarajists can do by taking office at this time. They represent the extreme party in the country and by accepting office they will play into the hands of the Government. If the Government fulfil certain conditions, e.g. the release of all political prisoners and the allotment of more money to the transferred departments, the Swarajists can allow the independents to form a ministry.

But mere obstruction is useless. There must be sufficient backbone in the Swarajists to stick to their policy of not accepting office until there is a real change in the system; they should be able to take advantage of the changes in British politics; but they should carry on a movement in the country, so that the Government may feel that there is strength behind the Swarajists.

*

Disciple: As there are forces which are opposed to Yoga, are there not forces which help a Yogi?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, on every plane there are beings who profit by our Yoga and help us so far as they are profited, but when you want to go beyond they become a hindrance. As our goal is the highest truth, we should depend for help on the highest divine power, the power of Truth.

The gods may help us if they like, but they have their conditions which must be fulfilled, e.g. worship. So we should not rely upon them.

When the gods help us in our Yoga they work under the highest power. But they help from behind; their work is not so marked and prominent as that of the hostile attacks.

*

In the course of my Yogic evolution, I came to know some of my personalities in my past lives. The elements of character I had in those previous personalities are still working in this life. My capacities and incapacities come from those personalities. My active work in the political field and my Yogic work came from different personalities of my own in the past. There are other elements in my character which have not been derived from my past personalities – they have been derived by association with other personalities.

There is the incident of the personality of Vivekananda visiting me while I was in jail. He explained to me in detail of the work of the Supramental – not exactly of the Supramental, but of the intuitivised mind, the mind as it is organized by the Supramental; he did not use the word Supermind, I gave the name afterwards. That experience lasted for about three weeks. You may not believe this and regard all this as imagination – but in that case you will not be able to make any progress in this Yoga; you will have experiences, and you will have to trust them.

Disciple: Was that a vision?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it was not a vision. I would not have trusted vision.

11 July 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: The vital brutal forces have a tendency now to descend on India. This is shown in the vital productions in Art; also in politics, e.g. the labour movement, Bolshevism, etc.

Disciple: Also in the fanaticism of the Mussulmans.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh!...

Disciple: What is there in their religion or culture which makes the Mahomedans so brutal?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not their culture, but their lack of culture. There are fine elements in their religion though there is nothing great or high in it. The religion was meant for the uplift of a desert people. It has suited and helped many people in the lower stage of civilization. But the religion got the stamp of barbarism and brutality from the *ādhāra* or receptacles. Without a few exceptions, e.g. the Persians, the religion was not adopted by cultured people. In Persia it produced poetry and Sufism – though the philosophical elements were taken from the Hindus. Even in Persia, the Persian culture greatly deteriorated by coming in contact with Islam. The Africans seem to be the most suitable people for the Mahomedan religion.

When Islam came to India, the stamp of intolerance and barbarity was already fixed on it and it could not be improved by the lower strata of the Hindus who were taken into the fold of Islam by conversion.

The fine elements of Islam are found in the creations of their art and also literature – but the whole culture lacks in the psychic element; it draws all its inspiration from the vital world.

The Hindus have lost their vitality in the same way as the Greeks – they became too civilized; they forcibly suppressed the vital by the mental; at every turn, the movement of life was hampered by rules and orders. Then the teaching of asceticism and Mayavada did immense harm. The attempt to push Mayavada upon a whole people resulted in their losing all zest in life; the higher movements of life were choked; the vital being thus suppressed began to move in narrow channels – e.g. the family, husband and wife and children, service and so forth; people were not attracted by the higher plays of life. Mayavada is all right for a limited few who by their nature are capable of deriving some benefit from it but it should not have been so vigorously preached to the masses. The Ramakrishna Mission people once tried to meet this charge by saying that very few people did accept Mayavada in their life, very few

people left the world in pursuance of it – thus the evil effected by Mayavada is an exaggeration. This is a vicious argument. People did not realize Mayavada but all the same they were sufficiently influenced by it to lose all zest in life and work.

Then there were the Pundits who through their Shastras sought to put all sorts of restrictions on life. Thus the Brahmin Pundits and the ascetic philosophers crushed the vitality out of the Hindus. Our work is to recreate that life.

Disciple: We should then begin by burning the Shastras?

Sri Aurobindo: You should not only burn the Shastras but also burn them out of the mind of the people.

Disciple: Should this change be brought about gradually or all at once?

Sri Aurobindo: When these bindings become rotten, the whole thing collapses at once. Some confusion is likely whenever any such change is brought about. But there should be some great idea behind these changes.

Disciple: Perhaps the intermarriage of Hindus and Mahomedans will improve the situation (laughter).

Sri Aurobindo: Let the Hindus first intermarry among themselves.

Disciple: The purity in marriage has been carried to a ludicrous extent.

Sri Aurobindo: There is some justification for trying to keep the purity of the race when there is vitality; mixture brings confusion. But when there is lack of vitality, the defect should be sought to be made up by intermarriage and intermixture of blood; this truth is embodied in the saying – bringing of fresh blood.

Disciple: Are the methods of worship in any way responsible for the loss of vitality of the Hindus?

Sri Aurobindo: The methods of worship have nothing to do with the loss of vitality. The methods of the Catholic Christians were as stupid as possible, but that did not interfere with their vital growth. What injures are the hampering restrictions on the free movement of life.

Disciple: What is the remedy of the brutality often shown by the

Mahomedans?

Sri Aurobindo: That should not be met by equal brutality. We should not try to be as “vital” as the Mahomedans. The brutal outbursts should be met with disciplined force; brutality is always checked by such show of disciplined force which it learns to respect and fear.

*

Disciple: Did Islamic culture contribute to democracy?

Sri Aurobindo: Why then no Islamic country has been able to evolve democracy? Democracy in the sense of brotherhood is never achieved by politics. Look to the French Revolution – their cry of liberty, equality and fraternity, and then “or death”. What Islam preached was a sort of equality of all before God.

*

Gandhi’s doctrine of meeting violence by soul-force is most unpracticable [impracticable]. The oppressor’s soul will respond only when he has a soul, but in most cases there is no soul to respond.

*

Asceticism has a beauty of its own; there is a spiritual life behind it – the lower life is renounced for a higher life. But as pleasure suppressed gives rise to pain, so beauty suppressed leads to ugliness. Gandhi has made asceticism ugly. That is not asceticism but Puritanism.

*

Judaism as a religion was more intolerant than Mahomedanism.

13 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Is the supramental power a power of the divine nature?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Gita distinguishes the lower prakriti from the higher prakriti. Is the supramental power the higher prakriti?

Sri Aurobindo: It is only a part of the higher prakriti; it is that part of the higher divine nature which is ready for manifestation in man. Above the supramental is the Ananda and the Sachchidananda.

Disciple: Is there no Ananda in the supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; there is Ananda even in the mental. But the higher Ananda is not yet for man.

Disciple: Does the supramental power belong to the Jiva?

Sri Aurobindo: The supramental is a higher power and the Jiva is an instrument of it. Otherwise there would be no meaning in surrender to that power.

*

Disciple: The difficulties external and internal that beset the sadhak in the path of this supramental Yoga – why do they occur and what is the proper attitude to be adopted towards them?

Sri Aurobindo: At first some forces press down which are not the supramental, and these give rise to the difficulties. When the supramental begins to work in that field, all difficulties disappear, there is peace and harmony, knowledge and power. But until the *ādhāra* is prepared for the direct action of the supramental, difficulties arise in two ways: (1) the hostile forces create all sorts of obstacles; (2) the higher power tests the sadhak, shows his strength and weakness, the forces that play around him and thus prepares him for the upward march.

There are two ways of meeting these difficulties – immediate and ultimate. The immediate remedy is to refer these difficulties to the higher power (if you have already some opening to it), receive the solution and calmly follow it and meet all the troubles and difficulties with a detached attitude. The ultimate remedy will come when the *ādhāra* will be organized by the supramental and you will be able to

control yourself and external circumstances.

*

The Yogin can exert his influence on the external world through somebody as an instrument – he can throw some force on the instrument and achieve an end, provided that there is the sanction of the higher power.

***Disciple:** Can the Yogi control the world-forces which help or retard the progress of the world?*

Sri Aurobindo: The Yogi makes no such rigid classification – there are forces which sometimes help, sometimes retard what you call progress. These forces only seek to have their own play.

***Disciple:** Can the Yogi control these forces?*

Sri Aurobindo: The Yogi under the direction of a higher power can utilize these forces for some divine purpose. But if there is some egoism left in the Yogi, his work will be imperfect to that extent.

***Disciple:** The Yogi, you say, can work through somebody as an instrument. Is that work limited by the defects of the instrument?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is some limitation. Yet, the Yogi can achieve his purpose even with faulty instruments, although undoubtedly difficulties arise from the defects in the instrument.

14 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Is there any truth in the belief that capacity differs in different castes?

Sri Aurobindo: Like everything in this world, this is both true and not true. No general rule can be laid down; men born in the higher classes have greater chances on account of heredity and environment; thus a Brahmin understood more quickly the subtle points in the Vedanta than Rajendralal Mitra, though the latter possessed great capacity. But there is no incapacity in the lower classes which cannot be overcome. It is very difficult to say anything very definite on this point. Take the case of the Negroes in America – they have often received equal education with the whites but as yet they have not produced any first-class men.

Disciple: Booker T. Washington was a Negro.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you call him a first-class man?

Disciple: The Mahomedans in India have not produced any first-class men.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, there are the big brothers! Then there is Sir Syed Ahmed in politics, also Abdur Rahim – Quazi Nazrul – as a poet.

Disciple: Quazi's songs, some of them were greatly appreciated by Deshabandhu.

Sri Aurobindo: What poetry is there in his songs? That is all appeal to the vital emotions – there is nothing high, nothing psychic.

Disciple: The young men of Bengal now-a-days are very fond of the songs of Quazi.

Sri Aurobindo: So much the worse for them. In the Swadeshi days, the songs produced were much better and higher.

*

During the French Revolution at first all the generals came from the aristocracy, as it was then believed that only the aristocracy could produce good generals; but when the restriction was removed, very good generals were found out among the common people.

15 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: When we surrender our ādhāra to the higher power, what is it in us which makes that surrender?

Sri Aurobindo: The mind or the vital being may surrender itself.

Disciple: There is something in us which regards the mind etc. as outer instruments.

Sri Aurobindo: The central being in mind may regard the activities as something outside itself. The mental being may surrender itself to the higher power for knowledge, the vital being may make similar surrender for greater powers. But these surrenders need not be real. Hence it is that so many persons fail in this Yoga. The surrender is real only when it comes from the psychic being.

Disciple: Is the psychic being a part of nature as the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being is not a part of nature, nor the mental being – these beings represent the Purusha. The formulations of these beings are parts of nature.

Disciple: What is the relation between the mental being and the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: There are the different planes – the mental, the vital, the physical; the psychic is behind all these.

Disciple: Is there also a psychic plane?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can call it a plane – but it is a sort of plane which cuts through all the other planes from behind, – it enters into the other planes – mental, etc. as something like rays.

There is a direct connection between the psychic being and the higher Truth.

Disciple: Do the mind, etc. derive their light from the psychic?

Sri Aurobindo: The mental, the vital, the physical – they have their own light.

Disciple: Is there a psychic consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but it is simple and direct, not like the mental consciousness.

Disciple: How does the psychic help the mental, etc.?

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic touch helps to bring out the deeper potentialities in the mental, the vital and the physical and make these more fit for receiving the higher Truth and Power.

Thus the mental love is egoistic and depends on mutual interchange and enjoyment. By the psychic touch the love becomes nobler and purer – the egoistic element vanishes.

Disciple: Does the development of the mind in any way help the development of the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily. There are many persons with mental powers greatly developed, but in whom the psychic being is very weak. The reverse also is true in many cases.

Disciple: There are persons who are quite fit for this supramental Yoga, yet do not accept this Yoga (are not attracted by this Yoga), while less fit persons accept it; what is the explanation?

Sri Aurobindo: There are fitter persons outside this Yoga only in this sense that they have materials in their personality which if dealt with by Yoga may give good results. But they may not feel the call towards the Yoga and may use those materials in other ways.

Take concrete instances. X was a far superior *ādhāra* to Y. X had a great mind, the vital being was strong, there was nothing mean in the physical, the psychic being was strong. She was encouraged to practise this Yoga, but she could not stick to it. While Y, with a much inferior *ādhāra* was discouraged, yet she stuck to it.

Disciple: Whether a person will take up Yoga or not does not depend so much upon the capacity as upon the higher will – the will of God.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, everything ultimately comes to that.

*

Disciple: In what sense is all life a Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: The divine is involved in Nature and Nature is trying to bring out the union between the involved being and the higher free divine. This process is unconscious. This process is generally called evolu-

tion. When Nature succeeds in becoming conscious and the effort of union goes on consciously, then is the beginning of real Yoga.

*

The thoughts which go in our mind ordinarily come from outside. Sometimes we get the substance from others and it takes form in our mind, sometimes the form even is taken from other minds. Suggestions and hints are always coming from the universal. When all these work out in our mind, we suppose that “we are thinking”, but this egoism is an illusion due to ignorance.

*

The purification and transformation of the *ādhāra* requires patient and persevering sadhana, it cannot be performed by a miracle; but the descending of the higher truth is itself a miracle.

16 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: When a person rises to the Supermind, does he know the past, the present and the future?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly.

Disciple: Then there is everything settled and pre-arranged – there is no question of potentialities and possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo: But, as long as we are in the lower plane of existence, these statements are meaningless to us. Only what is true in the plane of existence in which we live is of practical validity to us.

Disciple: How does a man become liberated from the bondage of predetermination by nature, niyati karma?

Sri Aurobindo: A man lives in the mind; as long as one lives in the mind there is no liberation. One must rise above the mind in order to attain real freedom.

Disciple: Sankhya says it is Nature which works out the liberation of Purusha.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but what Nature? Everything is done by Shakti, the power of the Purusha.

*

Sankhya says Nature somehow begins movement, Purusha consents to reflect that movement and the world-play goes on; then somehow Purusha ceases to reflect, Prakriti somehow loses its movement and then the Purusha is liberated. But how does Prakriti begin? What is after the liberation of the Purusha? All these metaphysical determinations are arbitrary.

Sankhya says Purushas are many, Vedanta says there is only one Purusha. Which is true? When Vedanta says there is only one Purusha, Sankhya says that one Purusha is only you; there are many other absolute Purushas, like your one absolute. These metaphysical doctrines only express half-truths. I for myself have experience of many Purushas, as well as of one Purusha – so now it is very difficult for me to give definite answers to these questions. What I can say is, there is the infinite, and there is to be an upward endeavour to reach it. As one rises, so he enters into different levels of experience. Philosophy is of little

help in getting true knowledge, which must come from experience and actual realization. It serves as a mental gymnastic – it makes the mind supple and clear, it gives ideas to the mind that there is something higher than the mind to which it should aspire – thus it serves as a sort of a springing board.

At a certain stage of my sadhana, I experienced all intellectual truths to be false. Then I came to know that they are incomplete truths. Now I am in a position to put these truths in their proper place. I have written many things before which I must reject or revise now. That is the disadvantage of writing books – it is a record of one's imperfections.

When I wrote the *Arya*, most readers did not properly understand it and the author himself was not satisfied. Now if I have to write out all the truths I have experienced it will be necessary to write 100 *Aryas* for 70 years. But I am not going to do that. I only write what will be of immediate use.

*

In the course of evolution Nature has brought forth the mental consciousness. The next stage is the manifestation of the Supramental. The bringing down of the supramental consciousness is the object of our Yoga. One may only rise to the Supramental – that will be only a kind of Samadhi – but our object is to transform this life by the help of the Supramental.

*

Disciple: May we use symbols as aids in our Yoga at the beginning, as is done in other Yogas?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, provided you remember the meaning of the symbols. The central symbol in our Yoga is the Sun – the different planes may be regarded as seas.

17 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *Our thoughts seem to rise from the subconscious region of our memory – by the law of association thoughts rise from the past experience stored in our memory. How is it then that thoughts come from the outside?*

Sri Aurobindo: The impact comes from the forces that are playing in the universal – the movement of these forces suggest thoughts, sometimes only the substance, sometimes the forms are given. What is in the mind is certain formed habits – the mind carries on this habitual activity under the impact of the external forces. Sometimes the thoughts formed in other minds enter into it. The Yogi has to attain freedom from this influence of external forces – he must be able not to allow these forces to make any formations in the mind. It is for this reason that you are advised to observe these thoughts as they come from the outside and also the thought forces that are playing outside you.

Disciple: *Do these forces acquire experience by working upon our mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: Forces acquire experience! Experience has reference to consciousness. Only beings have consciousness and they alone can have experience.

Disciple: *Are these forces in any way changed or modified by their action on us?*

Sri Aurobindo: If the Yogi has acquired a certain power, he can change the disposition of these forces. This is what is meant by creating an atmosphere. The Yogi can create an atmosphere in which certain kinds of forces will have full facilities, while others cannot have any play. When the Yogi is sufficiently advanced he feels that his consciousness is not confined to the physical body – he has a sort of environmental being which he keeps calm so that the play of passions there may not affect his central being.

The atmosphere of cheerfulness etc. that surrounds many individuals is a vital atmosphere. This vital atmosphere is very common. There may similarly be a mental atmosphere. Around a Yogi there is an atmosphere of calmness which can be felt by others – which may either attract or dispel others; there is nothing vital in it.

Disciple: *What is the atmosphere of the person who lives in the supramental consciousness?*

Sri Aurobindo: That contains everything, vital, mental and so forth.

***Disciple:** Some hatred attracts the object of hatred, some hatred dispels – how is it?*

Sri Aurobindo: There are different kinds of hatred – as there are different kinds of fear. One may run away from the cause of terror or feel attracted towards it.

18 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *In the first chapter of the Gita Arjuna speaks of kula dharma, jāti dharma – what is meant by kula dharma here?*

Sri Aurobindo: Kula is the family or clan as the *kuru kula*. Each clan had its own standards and ideals of conduct, which were known as the *dharma* of the clan. It is difficult to say what Arjuna exactly meant by *jāti*; its root meaning refers to birth – those who were originated from the same stock. It might mean caste or race.¹ But the distinction is not important – what Arjuna referred to were the current social standards.

Disciple: *Arjuna speaks of the consequent unchastity of the women – he does not refer to unchastity as an evil in itself but rather to the disastrous consequences to the kula which would result from unchastity.*

Sri Aurobindo: In those times prominence was not given to individual morality – the welfare of the society was paramount. The individual had to obey the social standards and laws prescribed by society. The idea of individual liberty came into prominence through the influence of Buddhism and Christianity which taught individual salvation and laid down rules of morality for individuals who wanted salvation. The present prominence given to individuals shows that society has become individualistic.

*

The artistic taste of the Indians has greatly degenerated. The pictures they find amusement in are worthy only of the South Sea Islanders. In England also, real artistic appreciation is confined only to a very few. This shows that civilization, after all, is only polish on the crude humanity that has persisted all along.

1. Anilbaran's Note: Most Probably Arjuna meant ārya jāti, as is evidenced from Sri Krishna's answer where he explains the ideas of the Aryans.

19 July 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: All monasteries have a tendency to degeneration. It is due to the incapacity and incapability of human nature. Whatever it receives from above it spoils very soon. As long as the influence of the founder lasts, his teaching remains pure, but then his disciples who cannot fully grasp it or grasp it only intellectually deform the whole thing.

*

Mantras are vehicles through which the Guru at the time of initiation conveys his influence to the disciple; the disciple may feel the influence at once or at some future time. When the disciple recites the mantra in the proper manner, there is set forth a vibration which helps him in spiritual experience. But the mechanical repetition of words is useless. The popular belief that the very utterance of a name – e.g. Hari or Rama – purifies all the sins is quite unfounded.

Disciple: The word OM is said to represent Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the word OM is of great power – the utterance produces a sound-force which contains in itself all the sound-forces in the world and thus it is said to represent the Brahman.

Disciple: Is there any force in the sounds of words?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? Is not sound a force? If sound can produce physical vibration – it also produces spiritual effects.

Disciple: How does the shouting in Kirtan help?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the sort of help you want. If you want to enter into emotional ecstasy, the physical excitement of shouting and dancing helps you to attain that. If a man is fit, he may through these attain spiritual experiences. But these are generally vital movements and thus double-edged – in most cases they have a downward tendency.

Disciple: Ramakrishna was very fond of songs and Kirtans.

Sri Aurobindo: Ramakrishna was Ramakrishna; in 90 p.c. cases these devotional ecstasies do no good.

20 July 1926 (Evening)

***Disciple:** J. C. Bose had a vision of Mother India on the eve of an important lecture when he first went to England. He was at a loss about what to say in his lecture; there was great opposition against him. A force came on him with the vision and under the influence of that force he delivered his lecture. How to explain this vision?*

***Disciple:** Mother India came as a force?*

Sri Aurobindo: Is not Mother India a force, a Shakti?

***Disciple:** What sort of Shakti?*

Sri Aurobindo: Shakti is Shakti, there is one Shakti.

***Disciple:** Is Mother India an individualized Shakti?*

Sri Aurobindo: I think I have spoken on it before.

Bose's vision, which came as an emaciated widow, can be explained in three ways. First, it might have been only a mental image, produced from the idea of the condition of India as she at present is. Secondly, it may have been a vision from the vital world. Thirdly, it might have been the real Shakti – Mother India appearing in the form of an emaciated widow.

***Disciple:** People get inspirations – what is the source and nature of these inspirations?*

Sri Aurobindo: They are generally activities of the mind; substances and forms prepared by the mind itself often appear as inspirations, but those which come from above are quite different. The mind must be made calm and receptive before these higher inspirations come. I first had this experience when at Baroda. My Yoga had come to a critical point and I did not know how to proceed. Before that I had no higher movement except some activity of the mind and manifestations in the physical, e.g. health (?); I was doing *prānāyāma* and so forth. But I was at a loss how to proceed. At this time I met Lele. He advised me to sit with him and to make the mind calm – by watching every thought as it came and throwing it off. Following this advice I completely emptied my mind in three days; and then I experienced the silent Brahmic consciousness and all things and events of the world appeared only as names and forms – mere *māyā*. This condition lasted for several months, during which I had to deliver about 30 lectures at Poona, at Bombay and on my

way back to Calcutta. That was the time of my political career. I said to Lele, “My mind is empty. I have no thoughts. How shall I deliver lectures?” He said, “Never mind. You go to the meeting, bow to the audience as Narayana, and you will be able to speak.” I followed his instructions. When I stood on the platform, I had absolutely no idea as to what I should speak or on what subject. Then a force came on me and began to speak through me. It was quite a new style, quite different from mine – short effective sentences. This lasted for many months. Whatever I wrote at this time, also came in the same way from above.

Disciple: You acted there as a medium, as a Yantra for a higher force.

Sri Aurobindo: The object of our Yoga is to make ourselves a medium and a Yantra.

Disciple: What is the difference between the Yogi as a medium and the ordinary mediums we speak of?

Sri Aurobindo: So long you are practising Yoga and you do not know this distinction? In the case of the Yogi he is the instrument of his own higher Self; in other cases they are instruments in the hands of forces quite foreign to them.

Disciple: The inspirations which come to the poets and artists – wherefrom do they come?

Sri Aurobindo: In most cases they come from the vital world. The vital has a great power of creating beautiful forms. These poetic creations generally appeal to the senses and emotions – they more often debase than purify. The theory that poetry purifies and ennobles is a cant. But there is poetry which has a higher source of inspiration – under this influence the vital feelings and emotions are so transformed as to make them sublime.

Thus the drinking songs of Anacreon, the poetry of Kalidas – they are very good poetry but all belonging to the vital plane. The Upanishads come from a higher plane.

Disciple: Give us some specimens of English poetry which answers to your description of higher poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: There is Shakespeare, Milton, Mathew Arnold.

Disciple: The figures of Buddha and Nataraja – are they symbols of

the spiritual condition?

Sri Aurobindo: Not symbols – symbols are intellectual things. These artistic sculptures are expressions of the spiritual. They help you to come into touch with the spiritual. That is the characteristic of real Indian Art. If you assume the proper attitude, if you open yourself before it with calm and passive receptivity, you will realize the absolute and the infinite which is behind the art. Indian Art neglects aesthetic features because it seeks to express the infinite and the absolute.

*

Sri Aurobindo: When you open your being to the universal, you open yourself to the lower forces also and they get a chance of working on you if there is something in you which responds to them. Hence it is that the Yogin has to clear his *ādhāra* of all sorts of impurities.

21 July 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: I want to add something to what I said yesterday about the cant regarding the purifying and ennobling value of poetry and art. There is in these things an upward movement, an aspiration to the high and so far these serve as experiences to the soul in its upward march. But there is much impurity mixed up with these that they do not go very far. The flame of aspiration is mingled with the mist and the soil of the earth. What they cannot get in true light, they try to make up by mental glamour which only hides the true light. It is for this reason that I do not like the word love to be spoken of so freely. Generally the emotions and sentiments keep one bound to the lower plane, the vital plane, and so the Yogi has to leave behind and go in direct search of truth – unbridled by the *samskāras* or conventions of the mind and the heart.

Take the case of patriotism. In real patriotism there is an element of self-giving and so far it helps. But you have experience how this patriotism easily degenerates. In most cases patriotism is nothing but selfishness – it is only an enlargement of the ego which is sought to be satisfied. This kind of selfishness is most insupportable. I experienced this when I sought to combine Yoga with politics. I had all sorts of interests; the service of the country was not at all disinterested, though of course I was not actuated by such narrow self-interest as hoping to become the President or some such thing.

The philanthropic work that is ordinarily done is of this lower kind – the work is in the vital plane. There is very little of upward endeavour here. That was also the mistake of Vivekananda. He departed from the teaching of Ramakrishna, being influenced by the Christian missionary idea of the West. Of course, at first he had in his mind the idea of Buddhistic service, but it soon degenerated and the work that is being done by his followers contains very little spirituality.

Disciple: What is the distinction between Buddhistic philanthropy and Christian philanthropy?

Sri Aurobindo: In Buddhism, it was sought to be an expression of the inner spiritual life. Compassion was regarded as a part of Nirvana and philanthropy was its outward expression. The Mahayanists developed the ideal of service as an aid to Nirvana and as an expression of spiritual life. In Christian philanthropic work as it is, the whole thing is a satisfaction of the vital being in work and enlarged egoism. The ego or selfishness can never be got rid of in that manner.

It was of tremendous advantage to Ramakrishna that he had not

received any Western education and the Western ideas did not spoil the truths which he received in his own way. He had a central intuition from which he could see the truth, though he had his own limitations on account of his past personalities.

***Disciple:** The description of Avatarhood that you have given in the Essays on the Gita does not tally with what is heard of Ramakrishna. Was he an Avatar?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is not necessary that you should regard Ramakrishna as an Avatar. When I wrote about Avatarhood in the *Essays*, I tried to express the idea of the Gita about it. Avatar may be understood in many senses. The term is so loosely used now-a-days that it has almost become meaningless. X once asked me whether I was an Avatar; I replied to him, "Avatarhood is too small for my ambition." (*laughter*)

*

***Disciple:** There is the lower triplicity of the mental, the vital and the physical. Does it in any way correspond to the three gunas Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas?*

Sri Aurobindo: In each of the planes there is the play of all the three gunas. But when the mind is illumined and becomes greatly developed, it shows the dominance of the sattwa. The vital can be sattwic but the rajasic play is the most suitable to it; while tamas – inertia and ignorance – is a characteristic of the physical.

*

(There was a question regarding memory.)

Sri Aurobindo: The memory is a phenomenon only of the mind and not of the Supramental. In the mind when we want to remember anything which is in the mind, we grope about and stumble on it, but in the Supermind everything is ever present; whatever it wants to know, it knows at once.

It is very difficult to say anything about the Supermind because here we speak the mental language which cannot adequately express the Supramental.

22 July 1926 (Evening)

***Disciple:** You have not yet replied to the letter of the inspector of co-operative societies.*

Sri Aurobindo: Ask him whether the slokas and mantras he recites give any glimpse to the mind, create new waves there. It is only in such cases that they are of any use. He feels a quiet of the mind – that is to be increased. All thoughts should be thrown outside, at least must not be allowed to enter into this quiet. Let him practise these – he need not be anxious, his sadhana all right.

(There was a talk about the organization of the physical sense-organs.)

Sri Aurobindo did not accept X's assertion that the touch organ is not as elaborate as the organs of sight or hearing. The senses do not see, hear and so forth – there is something behind these which actually perceives and that need not depend on the physical senses.

There are psychic visions of light and sound. There is the psychic nature of colours. Thus when you see an inner light of rosy colour, that indicates the psychic feeling of love; the colour blue indicates spiritual power and so forth.

23 July 1926 (Evening)

The disunion between the Hindus and Mahomedans helps to perpetuate the British rule.

Philip talked about an old woman in Japan who is said to have had a revelation. She declared that Japan was destined to rule the world, the village in which she lived would be the centre of all activities in the world and so forth. There was some talk about prophets. Y talked about an elementary school-teacher who thought himself to be a prophet. There was some humourous talk about teachers becoming asses after some years and thereafter becoming Avatars. Sri Aurobindo said he was some sort of a teacher. Myself said I was a professor for 8 years.

***Disciple:** But you are neither an ass nor an Avatar.*

Sri Aurobindo: But he may have the material in him.

***Disciple:** Many great men in the world came from teachers, e.g. Mussolini, Kamal Pasha.*

Sri Aurobindo: They were different kinds of teachers.

24 July 1926 (Evening)

X read a letter from Y who appeared to have misunderstood what is meant by *prāna* and by coming down from *mana* and *buddhi* to the *prānastara*.

Sri Aurobindo: The vital plane is a plane of desires – not only of sexual or physical desire, but desire for activity, ambition, pride – all these are of the vital plane. The vital plane consists of two parts – one in the mind, where the play consists of emotions, and another in the vital itself which consists of physical desires. Descending into the vital plane means that he should closely observe the vital movements of desire and egoism and stand aside, thus attaining calm and keeping an attitude of aspiration to the higher truth.

Disciple: What about his feeling that he should give up all activities of the world and select a retired place for sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should I say anything about that? He must decide that for himself.

Disciple: What is the value of the shrāddha ceremony and offering on pindodak?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a very old superstition.

Disciple: Arjuna refers to gupta pindodak kriyā.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that is nothing but a social superstition.

Disciple: Cannot persons in the other world be helped by men living in this world?

Sri Aurobindo: Cannot persons in this world be helped by others to pass from one stage to another?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: Similarly, persons in the other world can be helped in their passage to the place of rest. But I am sure that help cannot be given by pindas.

Disciple: How can that help be given?

Sri Aurobindo: By the power of tapasya you can create a force which may help the departed.

Disciple: When a lover commits suicide expecting to get her love –

Sri Aurobindo: That will be a stupid attempt.

Disciple: Tell us what happens in the next world.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think you can learn everything simply by putting questions to me?

Disciple: But you encourage us to put questions?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I can give you only those answers which your mind will be able to understand to a certain extent.

Disciple: What do you mean by a place of rest?

Sri Aurobindo: It is supposed that after death, men have to pass through different planes of consciousness, called *lokas*, according to their activities in life; here they have to work out their desires, attachments; after that they find a place of rest where they sleep for sometime and assimilate past experiences and prepare for a new birth.

Disciple: Do all persons go to sleep in that manner?

Sri Aurobindo: Those who are more developed need not go to sleep – they come directly to a fresh birth.

Disciple: Those who are less developed have very little to assimilate and thus may come down very soon.

Sri Aurobindo: On the other hand, less developed persons may take greater time to assimilate whatever experiences they might have gathered.

Disciple: Can persons below in any way impede the progress of the departed soul?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, by weeping and sorrowing, relatives and friends of the departed soul can make his passage to his abode of rest difficult.

Disciple: What is the distinction between heaven and hell?

Sri Aurobindo: People enjoy or suffer there according to their activities in this life. If they had unrest in this life, that continues after death. This is the origin of those fanciful stories about heaven and hell.

Disciple: Can any person on this earth, by the force of his love call

any departed soul from his place of rest to take a fresh birth?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not think that such a force can be exerted. But a part of his being may be brought down into some other person.

Disciple: A case happened where a mother had eager desire that a dead son should again take birth in her family. After a lapse of time the mother had dreams that the son was coming; she conceived and gave birth to a child which in features and formation was very like that departed son.

Sri Aurobindo: That proves nothing. The dream might have been due to the great mental activity of the mother and the similar features might have been produced as the mother was too much full of thought of her departed son.

Disciple: Do two souls unite life after life?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, such a phenomenon often occurs.

Disciple: It is not with every husband and wife (laughter).

Sri Aurobindo: Then too many life would be an eternal torture.

Disciple: Do men become women and vice versa when they change their birth?

Sri Aurobindo: This may happen, but so far as my knowledge goes, the tendency is to continue in the same sex.

Disciple: Do human being always take birth as human beings?

Sri Aurobindo: They may become cats and dogs and any other animal. But generally human beings become human beings. Some part of their being may be born in animals, but the human soul does not go back to an animal birth.

Disciple: If one practises Yoga in this life, will it be possible for him to take up Yoga early in next life?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends upon the progress achieved. No general rule can be laid down. If the higher truth came down and partly transformed the lower being, in the next life that will certainly be a help. But the Yoga will not be necessarily taken up at once. The call will come easily and when the Yoga is taken up, the former personalities touched by Yoga may come to the front and pursue further development. Or the

crude parts may come to the surface and the whole of the next life may be taken up in working these out, and Yoga may not be taken at all. All sorts of things may happen according to individual conditions.

***Disciple:** Is there any tendency that Indians will be born in India, Europeans in Europe and so forth?*

Sri Aurobindo: There is no such law. As a matter of fact, there are very few here who have not the stamp of a foreign birth. You were a professor at Heidelberg (*laughter*). A in a previous birth lived at the foot of one of the pyramids of Egypt. B must have been a Japanese. C might have been a Slav, I know not of what country. D was a Gaul, E might have been a Turk or a Persian.

26 July 1926 (Evening)

X described how some Japanese crew had saved many shipwrecked Englishmen at the risk of their own lives.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite like the Japanese. They would rather perish than neglect their duty.

Disciple: What has made the Japanese so dutiful?

Sri Aurobindo: It is their ancient culture – the splendid organization and the discipline of the Samurai which has reached the whole people. That discipline consists in great self-restraint and sacrifice at the call of duty. A Japanese lives for the sake of the Mikado or the country; there cannot be a traitor in Japan; then they show extraordinary powers of endurance; there is no shouting and screaming anywhere; if they are angry, they may kill their enemy but will not give vent to their anger in any other way. Whatever you have to do, do it without speaking or bragging about it. During the last big fire, forty thousand people met death but surrounded by flames they showed no impatience – they sang hymns and calmly met death, all those forty thousand! If anybody dies no one will weep. In face of duty they either accomplish it or commit suicide.

In all this they are conscious of the support of their ancestors. All this discipline is due to organization in the mental, the vital and the physical plane. But their rigid discipline has made them rigid – they have no plasticity; a Japanese never does well if taken away from his own proper environment. Also, the soul cannot develop spiritually under such rigid conditions. Thus the Japanese have never been spiritual. Whatever spiritualism appears there is chiefly intellectual. But, apart from spiritualism, this rigid discipline of the race has been of great help to them in all other spheres of life. The Russians were absolutely no match for them in the last war. They were prepared to give any number of lives to win their cause. With their splendid organization and spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the country, they carried everything before them.

The want of plasticity in their nature accounts for the fact that the Japanese can think of only one thing at a time and cannot co-ordinate their attention on several things together. Thus they have not been a success in aircraft.

Disciple: The Kshatriyas of India had a similar discipline as the Samurais of Japan.

Sri Aurobindo: The Indian discipline was more psychic and more plastic; the Japanese is confined to the moral and mental sphere and is ex-

tremely rigid. If the Indians had such discipline, no one would have been able to touch India.

Disciple: The Japanese have kept up their ancient discipline, but how did the Indians lose theirs?

Sri Aurobindo: They allowed foreign people to enter into their land and also they were very individualistic.

Disciple: Japan is not a vast country like India – it is an isolated island and so it was possible for the Japanese to discipline and organize themselves in that manner.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not the case – there are many other islands in isolated position without the discipline of Japan; it is something peculiar in their race. They are not Mongolians – they are a race apart.

Disciple: England can compare with Japan.

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly not. The manufacturers of arms in England sell them to those who used them against England. Of course, the English are more disciplined than the Indians; and they have the political instinct. The French have less and the German greater discipline than the English, but in political instinct Germany is inferior to England.

Disciple: Is there anything in the nature of the Indians which makes it impossible for them to have the Japanese discipline?

Sri Aurobindo: The Indians are capable of a good deal of discipline. But they are too plastic – they have tried to assimilate everything that comes from outside.

Then, Japan is perhaps the only country where the Government is really for the people. There is a parliament in name, but still the word of the Mikado is a law to the Japanese. But the Mikado stands for the country and the people. This popular nature of the government is maintained as the people will at once throw away anybody who will go against the people.

Disciple: Has Buddhism done anything to build up the unique discipline of the Japanese people?

Sri Aurobindo: Buddhist discipline might have contributed something – but their main characteristics were derived from their own ancient religion, Shintoism.

Disciple: *As a people the Japanese are very aesthetic.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: *What has made them so aesthetic?*

Sri Aurobindo: That is in the race. What made the Greeks or the Italians so aesthetic?

Disciple: *I mean, whether there is any connection between the discipline of the Japanese race and their aesthetic sense?*

Sri Aurobindo: *(No answer recorded here).*

Disciple: *The Indian people have lost all aesthetic sense.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is mainly due to the influence of the English with their utilitarian outlook and their puritanism.

Disciple: *The Brahmos of Bengal have saved music in Bengal.*

Sri Aurobindo: Nonsense; they made it as ugly as possible. Music and art have survived through other agencies.

Disciple: *The Tagore family has done much.*

Sri Aurobindo: But the Tagores are not Brahmos, they are half-Hindus; the Keshabites are the real Brahmos.

*

Disciple: *The rigid organization of the Japanese is bound to disintegrate in the course of time.*

Sri Aurobindo: Why?

Disciple: *Because this is a hindrance to their spiritual development.*

Sri Aurobindo: They may not seek spiritual development.

Disciple: *But their souls must seek.*

Sri Aurobindo: Their souls also may not seek that development in Japan; for that purpose they may migrate to some other country as the soul of X has taken birth in India (*laughter*).

The Western influence has to a certain extent affected the ancient

discipline of the Japanese.

*

There was some talk about X – how he is starving, how can money be found for his passage home and so forth.

Sri Aurobindo: Let us pass on to some other subject.

Disciple: You said yesterday that in the progress of the soul, there is a tendency to keep to the same sex-line. What is it that determines the sex? Is it something in the vital?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not in the vital – the distinction is from the beginning; sex has its origin in the fundamental distinction between Purusha and Prakriti. The words ‘male’ and ‘female’ refer to the distinction in the physical plane, but that does not express the whole distinction. There are such phrases as active and passive elements; none of these adequately express the relation.

Disciple: But Purusha is passive; how can it correspond to the male sex, which is rather active as distinguished from the female sex?

Sri Aurobindo: Purusha is passive according to the Sankhya; Purusha as described by the Gita is *sāksī* and *īśvara* – it sees all the workings of nature as well as is the lord of all; Prakriti only works out the will of the Purusha, hence it is called Shakti.

Disciple: It is said that on the physical plane, the man is active and the woman is passive – but on the higher planes, the man is passive and receptive while the woman inspires.

Sri Aurobindo: In the physical plane the woman is more active than the man. The woman is more practical – when the man beats about the bush as to what is to be done in a certain crisis, the woman instinctively perceives the right course and runs directly to it. Thus the male politicians are knocking their head about whether they should carry on co-operation, responsive-cooperation or obstruction – a woman in such a case would have found out something by intuition and gone directly to practical work.

Disciple: It is hoped that women will be more successful in politics.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes that is quite likely.

Disciple: *But women have never been creators – there never have been great female poets or artists and so forth.*

Sri Aurobindo: They have not got full opportunities – they have had to live in an atmosphere where they could not receive any push to do the best things they are capable of. So you cannot judge women from their past as to what they can do or cannot do. Let them have the open field for generations, and then it will be proper to judge them.

So far as can be seen, the women are more developed in the psychical being and the man in the mental.

Women can be great poets, but they cannot be philosophers – as they are not capable of high generalization and abstractions.

*

The instances that have been known show that a uniform sex-line is continued through various births. But a change of sex does not seem to be impossible – for each sex has to a certain extent the characteristics of the other sex. There is a classical example, how Sikhandi was a woman in the previous birth, who practised *tapasyā* so that she might become a man and kill Bhisma.

*

The theory of the evolutionists is very plausible, that there has been an upward evolution from the animal to the man – there may be inaccuracies in the details described by them, but on the whole it seems to be correct. The ancient Indians through their Yogic insight formed the idea of similar evolution, which the modern scientists are finding out by observation and research. In the Tantras this kind of evolution has been described in detail. Even they enumerate the exact number of births through which one has to pass in order to become a man. (“Travelling through eighty lac births, I have attained human birth.”)

Disciple: *But that refers to different births and not to hereditary evolution.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is a manner of expressing the same truth. The hereditary principle was very strongly emphasized by the Indians.

The Indian theory of evolution is: the Inconscient is gradually manifesting what is involved in it – there is first the material principle, then comes the vital, then the mental. The Upanishads speak of animals

as the tamasic *sarga* out of which men have evolved.

Disciple: *All this evolution is in the lower Prakriti?*

Sri Aurobindo: What is lower? That is in the course of evolution of Prakriti.

Disciple: *I refer to the distinction between aparā and parā – how does the one pass on to the other? We speak of the higher consciousness coming from the above – that is not involved in the lower Prakriti?*

Sri Aurobindo: The mental and vital also have come from above. It is the pressure from above which brings forth these developments, these progressive manifestations. The material principle need not have changed – it would have continued but for the pressure from above, which evolved the vital in it. When the highest consciousness comes forth, it is not called a manifestation or evolution – it is always there, the same.

Disciple: *It is not possible for the intellect to grasp all things.*

Sri Aurobindo: The intellect cannot even grasp physical phenomena unless there is experience. You cannot grasp anything before having experiences.

*

We speak of the evil forces in the vital plane but we must remember that there are many things in the vital which open themselves to the higher forces.

Disciple: *Are the vital forces – Rakshasas etc. – evolved from the physical principle?*

Sri Aurobindo: No, these have no evolution.

Disciple: *What then is their origin?*

Sri Aurobindo: They come from the universal.

*

Disciple: *There is a view that the sex-impulse contains in it a great creative power.*

Sri Aurobindo: Sex-impulse is certainly the greatest force in the vital plane; if it can be sublimated and turned upwards, *ojas* is created which is a great help to the attainment of higher consciousness.

Disciple: The very term *Brahmacharya* implies that.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but mere restraint is not sufficient.

27 July 1926 (Evening)

X was despatched to Bengal this evening. Starvation had made him quite sane – at least temporarily.

Sri Aurobindo remarked that the force which possessed him did not evidently enjoy the starvation, so it withdrew.

Disciple: We hope his cure will be permanent.

Sri Aurobindo: Let us not hope anything.

When his money was not forthcoming and he could not be sent back, I was thinking of placing him in charge of somebody who would starve him as long as he talked about psychic manifestations; then an association might have been formed between hunger and these manifestations and he could have a chance of getting rid of them, thereby getting rid of the possession also.

*

Y referred to the possibility of a sixth sense possessed by the plant, as J. C. Bose had suggested in a recent lecture that “some of his records showed a characteristic modification due to the presence of certain persons, a modification persisting even after the exclusion of the factor of radiation from the human body.”

Sri Aurobindo: This emotional reaction in plants can be felt if one can enter into the right consciousness, but it may not be possible to prove this scientifically; as for instance, our system of Yoga, we cannot prove the truth of it – Yoga is to be done and not proved.

The ancient Indians long ago had the idea of consciousness and feeling in plants.

Disciple: Is there consciousness and feeling in minerals?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but very much in the background; in the plant it is much nearer the surface. Every individual plant has a being behind it, which the Greeks called the Dryads, which takes pleasure in the life of the plant.

(A boy was going singing through the street.)

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think it is the body only who is enjoying that song?

Disciple: Then, human beings are nothing but playthings – mere

stages where other forces enjoy themselves.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the human beings? The physical, the vital, the mental – these are certainly stages where all sorts of forces have their play.

Disciple: *How can one protect himself from these forces?*

Sri Aurobindo: By being careful – by establishing a harmony in your nature. You have to reach your central being from where you can take the help of whatever forces you like or throw away others.

Disciple: *Have these forces no other serious business than amusing themselves by committing mischief on us? For example, do they not quarrel among themselves as the Hindus and the Mahomedans are quarrelling?*

Sri Aurobindo: Don't you think that there are other than human forces who enjoy these riots? Some goad on the Hindus, others incite the Mahomedans and thus they are having a good fight.

Disciple: *Do they fight among themselves?*

Sri Aurobindo: Why are you thinking of fighting only? They may cooperate and combine.

*

Sri Aurobindo: When something falls on you – say a pencil or pen – do you think it is quite mechanical? No, there is some being behind which pushes it upon you – the mechanical portion is only the portion you see. I sometimes have felt a push – without there being anything material.

Disciple: *What is the purpose of such a push?*

Sri Aurobindo: Amusement or enjoyment by some being. These beings are small – of very little power.

*

Referring to a recent statement of B, Sri Aurobindo said that whenever he likes he can be as stupid as anything. He has a sort of ingenious intellect and gives reasons for things, which constantly change. He has no courage, no stamina, absolutely no practical insight, so he has never been a leader. When in Calcutta Tilak was struggling against the Moder-

ates like Pherozechah Mehta, he had to do everything himself, B being of no use. I was then not in politics. B was contemplating to start his *Bande Mataram* – a daily paper, with Rs. 500 only as his capital – the thing could not have lasted for more than 20 days. When I came over to Bengal, I found the people had no practical ideas, absolutely no political programme. We had to destroy the prestige of the Moderate Party and establish a popular party – so I began to criticize Surendranath. B was then in the mofussil – doing propaganda for us that Tilak should be made the president of the Congress that year, which was eventually presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji. B complained of my attacks on Surendranath – but of course I did not mind that. Once we went to tour in eastern Bengal – B, Saroj Sen and myself; we wanted to know first hand what sort of people were they over whom Sir Bamfield Fuller ruled. At Comilla B gave a fiery speech – hinting at bullets and cannons and so forth. Our programme was to go to Brahmanberia. The Bengali magistrate there – too enthusiastic in the Government cause – threatened that he would arrest B if he came there to lecture. This unnerved B. He found out an ingenious argument for not going to Brahmanberia. He said we should befool the Government by going to places where they did not expect us and not going to places where they expected us. I said, “We were going nowhere, but to Brahmanberia.” Then B collapsed and consented to go with us.

Mahendra Nandy and others tried their best to make a leader of him. Once there was a riot and he was told to go to the place of occurrence and pacify the people by his speeches. He refused by saying – “I am not going to step in that snare.”

His idea was that the Government had engineered that riot in order to have an occasion to arrest B. In this manner he lost his chance of leadership.

He was touring in South India and had a programme of lectures in different places, but as soon as he heard of deportation he fled to Calcutta leaving his tour unaccomplished.

When he came back from England and made an apology to the Government, he lost all prestige. It is for breaking the prestige of leaders that the Government exact apologies.

Why was B allowed to go to the Assembly?

Disciple: Das had a soft corner for him.

Sri Aurobindo: That old thing. He was all along supported by Das who gave him a lot of money, but he did not feel the least hesitation to turn round against him.

He is extremely selfish, weak and impractical.

Disciple: What about S?

Sri Aurobindo: S is S. He was a good subordinate. In my absence he wrote in the *Bande Mataram* – he somehow managed, but he did not write so well as he himself thought. He imitated my style. At that time he was not so hysterical as he is now. He has great vanity and has been spoiled by the people. This always happens when a person is placed in a position for which he is not fit.

Disciple: What about B. C.? Was he in politics at that time?

Sri Aurobindo: No, he was practising as a lawyer and used to arrange for apologies for his clients. He suggested to me that I could escape by giving an apology. I had no objection, but I was not going to do that. He arranged for the apology of Aswini Kumar and Banerji.

*

Disciple: Why should the communal question be allowed to be mixed up with politics? When we fight with the Government we should keep apart this domestic quarrel.

Sri Aurobindo: There, again, you ignore facts – that is the fault of people who depend only on their mind. The communal question has already been mixed up with politics and if a few of you take a united stand against the Government, of what avail will that be? The mistake was first committed in the Lucknow Pact and then by Gandhi in the Khilafat movement.

28 July 1926 (Evening)

Sjt. Gourhari Some through a letter asked several questions.

Sri Aurobindo: It would require a volume to answer all these questions.

Disciple: You can give short answers.

Sri Aurobindo took the list of questions¹ and went on answering one by one:

Q. 1: How does Vaishnava Sadhana lack in integrality?

Sri Aurobindo: I said that from the standpoint of my own Yoga. Vaishnava Sadhana is based on Bhakti – of course the other principles may be said to be included in Bhakti, but Vaishnavas depend on it directly; in my sadhana, stress is laid on all the principles and they are united in something higher.

Q. 2: In this Iron Age of Kali, is it proper to limit one's sadhana to the repetition of God's Name: "Nothing else but the Name of Hari", harernāmaiva kevalam, as they say.

Sri Aurobindo: This is only one kind of sadhana and is not the only one, and in order to be effective must be done in the proper manner. Mere mechanical repetition of the name of God is useless.

Q. 3: If the declaration "Krishna is God Himself", krsnstu bhagavān svayam, is at all true, what validity can there be in the worship of others than Krishna?

Sri Aurobindo: Krishna is one of many manifestations of God and the only meaning there can be in the phrase is that in Krishna, the manifestation of God was the fullest. When an Avatar comes, he comes to fulfil a certain purpose – and he sets flowing a stream which is to develop in many waves and to continue the worship of the same Avatar in the same form would defeat the purpose of Avatarhood. No Avatar was ever meant to be worshipped for ever.

Then again, worship of different manifestations of God may be suitable to different natures and thus there cannot be any hard and fast rule that the worship of Krishna only is justified.

Q. 4: Why do some men become ardent seekers of Swaraj and not of

1. There were eighteen questions asked by Gourhari. Some of these questions were written in Bengali in the records of Anilbaran. They are reproduced here in English translation.

moksa or liberation?

Sri Aurobindo: The desire for Swaraj is only one of the many desires which sway men in the human plane. When a current comes for the struggle for Swaraj, people are carried by it. The desire for Moksha is the desire to rise above the human plane to a higher life. These two calls are quite distinct and come to men according to the state of development of their soul and personality.

Q. 5: Is the freedom of one's motherland linked in any way with one's personal salvation?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no indispensable connection between spiritual sadhana and patriotic work. A man may seek his individual salvation without thinking anything about his country or one may be a great patriot or a liberator of his country without doing any sadhana for his individual salvation; one can also combine the two – as some of us did before. We did political work in the spirit of Karmayoga, as a sacrifice to God; at least we tried to do political work as a part of our sadhana. Which course a man should follow must be decided by himself according to his needs and inner call.

Q. 6: What is there to prompt a man to belittle his personal salvation and take to the service of his motherland? If divorced from spiritual interest, will it not be well nigh impossible to find people who will genuinely devote themselves to a life-long service of their country?

Sri Aurobindo: As already said, everyone is not actuated by the same desire, same call. While some will be called to the spiritual life, there will always be others to carry on the work for the good of the country: such workers will never be wanting.

Q. 7: Is there any place in one's spiritual sadhana for the effort towards the liberation of one's country?

Sri Aurobindo: As already said, the two things are quite distinct – but one may work for the liberation of his country as a sacrifice to the highest, as Karmayoga. But there is no necessary connection between the two.

Q. 8: Can the sadhaks of the Yoga of Devotion and the Yoga of Knowledge help the process of the country's liberation through some worldly action?

Sri Aurobindo: Yogis generally serve the world – and that is the best way for them – by exerting their Yogic force, which is too subtle to be apparent to all. But if they choose to work in the ordinary field of action, they will do whatever act is necessary for the object in view and will back that act by whatever spiritual force there is in them.

Q. 9: For a servant of the motherland what are the means to be adopted in order to acquire Shakti or Power?

Sri Aurobindo: That must depend on the kind of Shakti he wants – physical, moral or spiritual.

Q. 10: If the dīksā or spiritual initiation is found necessary, should one be guided by one's family tradition? Works may be necessary till the purification of the heart, cittaśuddhi, is effected. Is not patriotic work a botheration after that?

Sri Aurobindo: The two questions seem to be quite different. As to the first question, one should consult his own nature and not be guided by empty conventions; thus if one feels called to the Vaishnavic Sadhana, he should accept that whether that be his family tradition or not.

As regards *cittaśuddhi* and work, my opinion is that no work can be done properly and perfectly unless there is purification or *cittaśuddhi*. Divine work can begin only after the purification of the *ādhāra*.

Q. 11: What programme should be followed at present in the field of patriotic work? Is there any other way apart from the programme of constructive activity as given by Mahatma Gandhi?

Sri Aurobindo: I am not in the political field and cannot answer this question.

Q. 12: So far as religions and political movements are concerned, it is seen that the rise and fall of a country and its people are linked with the advent or otherwise of some great men. How is the rise of India going to be effected in the near future?

Sri Aurobindo: I cannot answer this question.

It is not true that the rise and fall of nations is always accompanied by the rise of great men. There was no *mahāpurusa* (great man) during the Swadeshi movement in Bengal.

Q. 13: Is Sri Aurobindo's sadhana directly received from a Guru? Does Sri Aurobindo consider any Tantric Sadhu of Bengal to be as

his Guru?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Q. 14: “At one time India will conquer and spiritualize the West”: every Indian expects from his heart that it is Sri Aurobindo who will accomplish this task. How is this fulfilment to come?

Sri Aurobindo did not answer this question.

Q. 15: If the sadhana as propounded by Sri Aurobindo is on new lines, should he not come out and publicly propagate it, following the examples of Sri Shankara and Sri Chaitanya?

Sri Aurobindo: I have no intention of going out for doing propaganda work like Shankara or Chaitanya. Moreover, I do not lay down plans for my future work – I depend on the higher consciousness and whenever in that consciousness I know that something is to be done, I do it.

Q. 16: Is there any hope of Sri Aurobindo coming out of his seclusion and participating in some political movement sometime in the future?

Sri Aurobindo: There is very little chance of it.

Q. 17: In which sense did he make this statement: “I possess strength in my feet to uplift this fallen nation.”

Sri Aurobindo: I have said thousands of things and it is not possible for me to explain now what I exactly meant by anything in the past. I think I said “in my body” and not “in my feet”. It must have been a misprint.

Q. 18: “Practise in your own life what you preach to others.” Is this principle of conduct still valid in this Kali Yuga? If so, should one seek to follow in one’s life all that has happened in the life of Sri Aurobindo?

Sri Aurobindo: He should ask himself and not me for an answer to this question.

Generally speaking, Sri Aurobindo said: The questioner is living in a certain plane of consciousness and I have to answer from a higher plane, so that all my answers can neither be intelligible nor useful to him. As regards my own work, I do not make plans but do things as they come to me in the higher consciousness. As regards his seeking after spiritual life, he must himself decide whether he should take to this life and from

what Guru he should take his initiation.

29 July 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *What is the use and significance of celebrating the birth of Krishna, Radha, etc.*

Sri Aurobindo: The same significance as any other religious festival.

Disciple: *Is there any special spiritual possibility on such birthdays?*

Sri Aurobindo: No; in the first place, these birthdays are quite conventional; nobody knows on what day or at what time they were actually born, if born at all. Thus the Christians settled by a conference in the 13th century the day on which they should celebrate the birth of Christ. Secondly, these religious festivals generally give occasion to a great play of the dark vital forces which are not at all helpful to spirituality.

Disciple: *Are not these festivals in any way useful to the spiritual life of a people?*

Sri Aurobindo: They are useful to the religious life (they develop a certain kind of Bhakti), not to the spiritual.

Disciple: *What is the distinction?*

Sri Aurobindo: There is a great distinction between the two – thus animals are sacrificed and the heart offered to the gods and many other similar ceremonies. What have they to do with the manifestation of the spirit or the higher power?

Disciple: *Those are mere forms and ceremonies.*

Sri Aurobindo: Do they not belong to religion?

Disciple: *They are not the whole of it.*

Sri Aurobindo: What else is there?

Disciple: *Some sort of a relation with a higher being is sought to be established.*

Sri Aurobindo: There is no relation to anything spiritual – generally the vital devils are worshipped in these festivals.

Disciple: *But this is only when religion degenerates.*

Sri Aurobindo: It degenerates everywhere. Take the forms of the Roman Catholic religion. What is there but obscurantism and oppression? It

is only a play of the dark vital forces. Of course there are those who are able to perceive the truth behind these festivals.

Disciple: As the Gita says, people worship demons or gods according to their śraddhā.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Thus the religious festivals are nothing more than so many national holidays. What is the national value of festivals?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there are occasions for vital enjoyment.

*

(here we find Aurobindo contradicting the Mother on the significance of one's birthday and then a bit later seemingly contradicting himself)

Disciple: What is the significance of the birthday celebration of a man?

Sri Aurobindo: It is little more than the other celebrations.

Disciple: Is not the birthday of any man of special importance to him?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be so?

Disciple: Because, on that day the jīva takes the body and renews the process of his evolution.

Sri Aurobindo: From that standpoint, not the birthday, but the moment of conception should be of importance. But as that cannot be ascertained, the people have made a sort of convention to celebrate the day on which a person is born. There would be some meaning if the day on which the man gets the higher consciousness is declared.

Disciple: You say that on your birthdays you see a huge change in your consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: I have never said that. As a matter of fact, the first great change in my consciousness occurred in Baroda in the month of January.

Disciple: Then what is the significance of celebrating the 15th August as your birthday?

Sri Aurobindo: That is little more than a convention – a mode of commemorating things. We concentrate on a certain day and thus a condition is created for some higher possibilities. As a matter of fact, I several times got some light on or near about the 15th August.

Disciple: We expect to get some illumination on the 15th.

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the conditions to be created by those who are here. If they can have a widespread calm and a receptive attitude, then higher things may descend. But it does not depend on any particular day, it may occur any day when the proper conditions are created.

For the last two years, I found only dark vital forces playing on the 15th August – there was no spiritual illumination. There was a great disturbance due, firstly to the attention that is given to formalities and the kitchen affair and secondly to the fact that all sorts of men try to come here on that day – they cannot harmonize themselves with the atmosphere and create disturbance for others. I should like that the day should be passed calmly instead of subjecting myself to giving answers to intellectual questions, I should communicate with you in supramental silence.

Disciple: You have no objection to garlanding?

Sri Aurobindo: Very much.

Disciple: Then give us a plan for the 15th August.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not make plans.

30 July 1926

Disciple: What is the significance of trisandhyā?

Sri Aurobindo: These are joining points; at such times you are more open both to hostile forces as well as to higher influences. Especially the evening is the time for the Rakshasas.

Disciple: Why is this so?

Sri Aurobindo: That I cannot say, but it is a fact.

Disciple: Is there any time when we are safe from the attack of the hostile forces?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: There is a view that the śuklapaksa is more favourable for spiritual sadhana, while the krsnapaksa is less.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is truth in that; similar is the case with the Uttarāyana and the Dakṣiṇāyana.

As a matter of fact, at all turning points the forces become very active.

Disciple: You were born at a turning point of time.

Sri Aurobindo: When?

Disciple: Just before sunrise on the last day of the month of śrāvana.

*

Disciple: What is the truth about omens – evil omens and good omens?

Sri Aurobindo: If you believe in these things, then forces are created which cause the events portended.

Disciple: There have been instances in my life when coming events were indicated to the mind beforehand.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite common and is known as premonition. There are innumerable beings – beings of small power – who surround you and take interest in your affairs. Often they help. They know what is

going to happen and often give warnings; if you have the power you can understand these communications. There are persons who are able to read these indications and they often suffer whenever they neglect these indications.

Disciple: There is a theory that the pineal gland in man serves as the receiver in telepathy. These glands are most highly developed in the high class Hindus.

Sri Aurobindo: There is this much truth in such theories that external forces communicate through special parts in the body. Thus the West-erners say that the brain is the seat of the mind, but the fact is that the brain is only the organ of communication between the mind and the body.

Thus fear attacks us at the bowels; if you observe it carefully you will find that it enters at the bowels and then rises upwards.

Disciple: I always felt fear as coming at my back.

Sri Aurobindo: What kind of fear?

Disciple: In my childhood I was afraid only of ghosts.

Sri Aurobindo: But that is nervous fear, and attacks through the back – (the spinal chord?). Vital fear always comes through the bowels.

Disciple: What about modesty of women?

Sri Aurobindo: Modesty is not an emotion – it is something mental.

Disciple: I got rid of the fear of ghosts when I began to understand that ghosts do not break out necks.

Sri Aurobindo: I had fear of ghosts when I did not believe in their existence; but when I came to believe in their existence, the fear of ghosts left me.

Disciple: What is the nature of ghosts? Do they appear with forms and figures – as apparitions?

Sri Aurobindo: Apparitions may arise from various causes.

Disciple: Do ghosts assume forms?

Sri Aurobindo: But you must distinguish between English ghosts and Bengali *bhūta*. Ghost indicates the spirit of a man who is dead; *bhūta* is of a much wider meaning.

31 July 1926 (Evening)

X read a letter of Y in which he had described how for hours together he sat for sadhana, also numerous visions he saw, about which Sri Aurobindo said, “He has a cyclone of visions.”

Disciple: These lead nowhere – people have been known to see these visions for years without making any progress whatsoever. He sees all sorts of changes going on in the ādhāra without there being any actual change anywhere – they are like dramatic representations.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if leaving aside these dramatic representations, he sets to real work, he may hope to achieve something.

Disciple: His visions are just like those of the Chittagong group.

*

Sri Aurobindo was shown certain resolutions passed by the Brahmin Sabha in Calcutta recommending that abducted and raped women can be taken to society after *prāyaścitta* as the body requires purification. If idols are broken, they are to be replaced and this *prāyaścitta* is absolutely essential for well-to-do Hindus.

Sri Aurobindo: Why only well-to-do Hindus?

Disciple: Thus, the Brahmins get something.

*Disciple: What is the utility of *prāyaścitta*?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is a religious ceremony which has nothing to do with the spiritual.

Disciple: What is the religious element here?

Sri Aurobindo: Bathing in the Ganges, feeding the Brahmins – what else are they?

Disciple: What is the purifying effect of the Ganges water?

Sri Aurobindo: No particular sanctity belongs to any water, but the faith a man has in the purifying effect may cause this purification.

*Disciple: Is there not a social element in *prāyaścitta*?*

Sri Aurobindo: What is that?

Disciple: *It helps to maintain order and discipline.*

Sri Aurobindo: But what is the fault of the raped woman herself – that she should be made to undergo a *prāyaścitta*?

Disciple: *Otherwise there will be laxity of morals.*

Sri Aurobindo: But these women are not lax.

Disciple: *As it will be very hard to distinguish between actual lapses or forged outrages, the society is strict on all kinds of bodily impurification.*

Sri Aurobindo: But that will be punishing the innocent, to prevent lapses on the part of others; all that is nonsense.

Disciple: *To uphold these false ideals, people resort to all sorts of falsehood and hypocrisy.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

*

Disciple: *The Karmi Sangha is working to break the Congress.*

Sri Aurobindo: They may only break themselves.

August 1926

1 August 1926 (Evening)

X had come from Bengal and there was some talk about the situation in Bengal. It was remarked that the attempt to placate the Mahomedans was a false diplomacy. Instead of trying to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity directly, if the Hindus had devoted themselves to national work, the Mahomedans would have gradually come of themselves. In Egypt and Turkey the Mahomedans combined with the Christians and placed country before religion. This attempt to patch up with a unity has given too much importance to the Muslims and that has been the root of all these troubles.

Disciple: But no importance was given to the Muslim during the Swadeshi movement – why then was there trouble?

Sri Aurobindo: The trouble was not at all widespread and was easily checked. Thousands of Mahomedans fled before a determined band of twenty Hindu youths – and this led to the establishment of numerous societies.

Disciple: There is very little of religion in the Mahomedans and whatever there is, is Hinduised.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you think of converting all Mahomedans to Hinduism as a remedy of these troubles?

Disciple: I would take it as a big joke.

Sri Aurobindo: What of the idea of converting all America to Hinduism? (*laughter*)

2 August 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo was highly pleased with my article, “Rajniti ke Dharma” (“The Ideal of the Politician”), appearing in the *Atmashakti*. I had told him that my writings were often formed above my mind, without any effort of mind and at the time of writing came quite spontaneously from above. Sri Aurobindo remarked that probably this was one of that kind of writing.

X read a letter from Y, who complained that he was being troubled by desires and felt inclined to do philanthropic work and so forth; he could not keep himself composed under the circumstances and was thinking of going to a favourable atmosphere where it would be possible for him to go on with his sadhana. Sri Aurobindo instructed to reply to him as follows:

He should practise inner quiet and try to establish calm in his inner being. In his external activities, behind his work there should be a will to succeed in the work in hand, with a dependence on the higher power; but he should not be upset even if he fails to achieve his object. As regards the change of place, it is of little avail; if inner quiet is not established, wherever he may go, he will have to meet with troubles.

Another letter was read from Z who was not being able to secure any suitable service anywhere and his present service was precarious. Sri Aurobindo said that if he felt it necessary to secure some service, he should find some persons who might support him, otherwise there was very little chance of success through mere applications.

Sri Aurobindo dictated the following answer to a prepaid telegram: “Concentrate inner change, purify vital.”

Then Sri Aurobindo asked me whether I was intending to answer the critic of my review of Nolini Babu’s *Madhuchhandar*¹. When I explained what I proposed to write, Sri Aurobindo said, “Some direct answer should be given”, and then gave the following hints:

No fanciful meaning was sought to be given to the words Agni and Yajna. Sri Aurobindo accepts the current etymological meaning of the words. But these things are symbols, they stand for an inner meaning and Sri Aurobindo wanted to indicate the inner meaning. Agni means fire and the god of fire – but what do these stand for? In the inner soul of man there is an aspiration towards the Eternal, the supreme Godhead and the flame of Agni represents this inner aspiration.

1. *Madhuchhandar Mantramala*, a book in Bengali written by Nolini Kanta Gupta containing his translation of and commentary on Rishi Madhuchhandas’ hymns in the Rig Veda.

So with Yajna – its etymological meaning of sacrifice is not discarded. But the real sacrifice is not in the external ceremonial rites – the real sacrifice is something inner; when the sadhaka offers his whole being up to the highest power, that is what is the real sacrifice and the external Yajna is only a very expressive symbol of that inner sacrifice. There are other meanings of Yajna in the Vedas, as battle or journey; all these meanings are meant to represent symbolically the inner self-giving, the battle against the lower nature, the upward journey of the soul; all these being the inner meaning behind the external rite of sacrifice. Nolini Babu makes out this as would have been amply clear if the critic had taken the trouble of reading his book.

The etymological and grammatical meaning is not so difficult to find, but the inner meaning, the spiritual significance behind these etymological meanings is difficult to find. The Vedic Rishis themselves found some words in which etymology expresses the two meanings – the outer and the inner. Thus the word *go* means cow as well as *jyoti* or light. But it is well nigh impossible to find out the inner meaning everywhere if we depend on the etymological and grammatical implications of the words.

Then again we must be able to appreciate the central thought, the outlook of the Vedic Rishis which found expression through the mantras, and it is wholly impossible to grasp the central thought by mere grammatical researches. The Vedic Rishis reached the truths through spiritual vision and the core of their teachings can only be revealed to such spiritual insight.

The critic has indicated that the proper way of studying the Vedas is to study all the different commentators, compare their expositions, and then come to a conclusion. This method is hopeless – it will only result in a combination of the blunders made in the past. It will be an abuse of the *nirukta* [Etymological interpretation] Mere scholarship is not sufficient for the interpretation of these ancient scriptures – what is wanted is mental tact and intuition, which most scholars and pundits badly lack.

This is only a negative answer to the critic (who is not himself worth answering) and it is not possible to fully explain the main principles and methods of interpretation followed by Sri Aurobindo; we hope to deal with these things more fully in future.

The first translation that Sri Aurobindo made of the Vedas and the translations given by Nolini are not meant for pundits – they are only intended to bring forward and emphasize the inner meaning and

significance of the Vedic mantras and rites. The recent translations which are being prepared by Sri Aurobindo will literally follow the etymological sense, yet express the inner meaning contained in them. Such a translation requires a master mind and is not very easy of achievement.

Disciple: What was the utility of the external rites of Vedic sacrifice – they were certainly practised at that time.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they were practised. But the external rites were only religious – there being nothing spiritual in them.

Disciple: I cannot clearly understand this distinction between religious and spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo: When the inner meaning of these rites is not lost sight of, then they are a help to spiritual uplift. But when the meaning is lost, it becomes only religion.

Disciple: It comes to this that religion is that which has no meaning behind it (Laughter).

Sri Aurobindo: Religion is generally so meaningless. Either the rites are quite meaningless or the meaning that was behind them has been lost. Those who want to progress spiritually should rather stand back from these rites, though there is no necessity of complaining against these rites.

Disciple: If these rites are impediments, why should we not complain against them?

Sri Aurobindo: Because you have nothing to replace them. They create a sort of religious atmosphere – an atmosphere of bhakti, the sense of a higher power, a higher life, and so forth, which may be taken advantage of by some, though generally this is not done – religion being only a sort of vital enjoyment and calls forth the vital forces. If you abolish these religious rites, you create a dry atmosphere, the lower religious instincts cannot have any play. These religions serve many human purposes – national, social and so forth.

Disciple: They are often a source of consolation.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but there is consolation from Truth, and there is consolation from falsehood.

Disciple: *Still it is consolation. (Laughter)*

Then Sri Aurobindo referred to X's statement that according to the Christians, there is innate inferiority and imperfection in man.

Disciple: *Yes, there are some Christian teachers who say that it is a great temptation to be free from temptation. Virtue consists in being sorely tried by temptation and yet in resisting it.*

Sri Aurobindo: But if a man is above temptation, if the temptation cause no response in him?

Disciple: *A wall is like that.*

Disciple: *Gita speaks of bearing the impact of temptation.*

Sri Aurobindo: But that is at a certain stage. There is the prayer in St. Paul – make us as perfect as the father in Heaven and so forth.

Disciple: *St. Paul is regarded as being much above the other preachers of Christianity.*

*

Sri Aurobindo: Again and again, attempts have been made in the past to revive the true meaning behind religious forms, but all such attempts have been frustrated by the inrush of the vital forces, which have brought down religion to the level of vital satisfaction, depriving it of all spiritual power. Then there is the dogmatic element in all religions which, however, is not so strong in Hinduism, which is more fundamentally tolerant than any other religion in the world.

*

The worship of Kali or recitation of the name “Kali” does not necessarily invoke the highest divine power. Often vital devils are called forth through these worships of the forms of the divine power. Italians bandits before going to commit dacoities used to worship Virgin Mary; the dacoits of Bengal similarly worship Kali. But if done in the right spirit, the right power may come.

Disciple: *I had a picture of Kali in my room, which seemed to call me to the sacrifice of the non-co-operation movement and I had to respond to that call. I felt that I was working as an instrument in the*

hands of a higher power.

Sri Aurobindo: That is quite plain – there was an opening in you and the Shakti behind the movement made an instrument of you.

Disciple: Was that Shakti an individualized being?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, all Shakti is individualized being. What kind of Shakti it is depends upon the nature of the movement.

Disciple: And also on the nature of the leader of the movement.

Sri Aurobindo: All the forces – good or evil – that are working are all ultimately used by the higher power for the achievement of its purpose in the world. But that is a different standpoint.

3 August 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo (*addressing me*): You asked about the use of religion (I had asked about the national value of religious festivals). Religion is as much useful and in the same manner as any other form of culture; e.g., art, science, ethics, etc. All these help the development of man; they prepare the materials which will enrich his higher spiritual life. But religion does this more consciously; religion creates the sense of a higher life, creates an atmosphere of faith and bhakti and these can be of great use for the spiritual uplift of the individual or the race. But as the other departments of culture, aesthetics, morals, science can be abused, so religion also can be abused and in fact is very often abused. And as it is said, when the best thing degenerates it becomes the worst corruption – so it is with religion; when its great possibilities are abused it leads to the worst evils.

Thus the celebration of the birthday of Krishna – if one can take it in the right attitude it can be made of powerful spiritual significance. Then, when large numbers of people combine together in faith, a very favourable atmosphere is created for the development of bhakti.

Disciple: What is the definition of religion?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not possible to define these things. Religion is religion. Like art it can be known and felt but any attempt to define it is bound to lead to mistakes and misunderstandings. Definitions are only of some use in science. Why do you want a definition of religion?

Disciple: So that we may distinguish it from other human activities.

Sri Aurobindo: But it will be useless to attempt a definition of religion.

Disciple: We can at least give some description. Thus in religion we seek the help of some supernatural power.

Sri Aurobindo: Supernatural? Rather, super-physical.

Disciple: I mean some power from above the human plane.

Sri Aurobindo: The power worshipped may be below the human plane, e.g., snakes.

Disciple: It is said that religion is philosophy made practical.

Disciple: Philosophy is based on reason, religion is based on faith.

Sri Aurobindo: Philosophy is not always based on reason.

Disciple: Faith is the essential element in religion.

Sri Aurobindo: But there may be faith in other things – I may have a faith in a certain person, certain business and so forth.

Disciple: In religion we consciously try to raise our life to a higher spiritual level.

Sri Aurobindo: The same may be done in aesthetics, morals etc. – they may be conscious attempts to reach a higher spiritual life.

Disciple: But that is how you yourself distinguished religion from other forms of human culture – religion is a conscious striving after a higher spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: In religion there need not be any aspiration for a higher life, e.g., when persons worship gods for riches, victory in battle and so forth.

Disciple: Then how do you distinguish religion from other forms of culture?

Sri Aurobindo: All culture may be conscious striving after a higher spiritual life – in religion it is professedly so.

Disciple: How does culture help in spiritual life?

Sri Aurobindo: Culture helps the development of man; it is essential if man is to live the highest form of mental life, but it has no essential relation to spiritual life. The spiritual life is something inner – when it is developed it uses the outer cultures for higher purposes by changing them and uplifting them into something higher.

Disciple: Does culture mean growth?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is a cultivation of the mental powers.

Disciple: Is aesthetic mental?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, though it has its origin in the vital.

X referred to various prophesies that there would be a great war in 1927 which would end in 1931.

Sri Aurobindo explained that when something is decided in the higher plane, the decision may be communicated to men who are fit to receive it. Thus when living in Alipur Jail he himself got definite prophecy about the war of 1914. Mirra [the Mother] received such a prophecy about the Chinese revolution. Then he referred to a vision he saw at the time of the last European war. Two eagles were trying to go through a mountain pass and a strong gale was blowing against them and above that scene he saw the words 1931. This was not a definite prophecy as before but Sri Aurobindo interpreted it in this manner: the two eagles obviously referred to Austria and Germany and the whole scene represented a cataclysm of which obviously the European war was the beginning; it would end in 1931 by the dissolution of the British empire and the eventual liberation of India. This was not a definite prophecy but only Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the vision he saw.

*

Religion seeks to raise the other departments of culture to a higher level – thus the fine arts are turned to a religious use as in devotional pictures and songs. The social relations are given a new meaning – thus God is approached as a father, a lover, a friend, a master and so forth.

Ramakrishna advised a woman, who was very fond of her nephew, to regard the child as Balgopal. In similar manner, patriotism etc. can be given a religious significance.

*

***Disciple:** Considering the political situations in the world, what are the chances of a war in the near future?*

Sri Aurobindo: No one can say what may happen any moment. The memory of the last war is still too fresh and that is preventing another war. Also, the powers are not certain as to who will be the ally of whom in the next war.

4 August 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo: (*addressing me*): Have you found out a definition of religion?

Disciple: It is hopeless. Religion is too complex a phenomenon to be defined. The Bengali equivalent of religion – *dharma* – is still more complex.

Sri Aurobindo: *Dharma* is not religion though it has become customary to translate religion by *dharma*. *Dharma* is law – it includes the social and moral laws; also the law of one's own being, one's own nature is said to be *dharma* – *svadharma*.

Disciple: In Gita's *dharmasamsthāpanāya*, *dharma* does not mean religion.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it does not. Again there is, *satyadharma*, *brāhmaṇa dharma* and so forth.

Disciple: Every man has a nature peculiar to his own. In ancient times men were classified according to their nature into four classes and types. But is it not more correct to say that everyone in his individual way may develop all these characteristics of the four types? Every individual has infinite possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but all the possibilities, being infinite, cannot manifest all at once; thus different men may show different characteristics. An individual may have different formulations of his nature at different times. The fourfold classification in ancient times was not something absolutely correct – no classification or definition can be so – but that was of practical use. What is there of the Brahmin or the Kshatriya in Muthu?¹

The ancient classification soon degenerated. Who would observe men and place them under proper classes? Gradually, the classes came to be determined by birth. The Brahmins were most enlightened and spiritual, but their sons and descendants did not necessarily develop the same attributes. So the classes became more conventional than real, though those who were born in a particular class were helped by the tradition and the atmosphere of the family to develop the peculiar characteristics of the class. Then there was the caste distinction – classification not according to characteristics of nature, but according to occupation. This sort of an economic division was useful to society. But

1. Muthu was a pariah servant of Sri Aurobindo.

now-a-days the classification has become quite meaningless. There is no rule that everyone should take up the occupation or the profession of the family.

Disciple: *If this is meaningless, why is it allowed to be continued?*
(Laughter)

Disciple: *Many meaningless things have continued existence.*

Disciple: *Who were the Kshatriyas of Bengal?*

Sri Aurobindo: At what time? Before the advent of Buddhism, there were the four ancient classes in Bengal, though there were some offshoots. Then with the rise of Buddhism, the whole structure collapsed and there was great confusion. When Hinduism came back there were only two castes in Bengal, Brahmins and Shudras – as there is the twofold classification in South India between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Anyone who was not a Brahmin was called a Shudra. Even the Kayasthas were called Shudras.

Disciple: *The agriculturists, carpenters, etc., now assert that they were not Shudras.*

Sri Aurobindo: It is true, they were not Shudras. Shudras were the servile class.

Disciple: *The European idea is that everyone should be given the fullest chance to develop the possibilities in his nature.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is the ideal of democracy, but in practice that is nowhere found. What is called a democracy is only a covering up of the inequalities that really exist. The Indian idea was hierarchy as distinguished from democracy.

Disciple: *What is the distinction?*

Sri Aurobindo: The Hindu recognize different orders – different stages of development; thus there were higher and lower orders and society was organized accordingly.

Disciple: *In mediaeval Europe also there was this sort of hierarchy.*

Disciple: *And that was a failure.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is the vicious circle in which humanity is moving. At first a certain class develops high mental and spiritual characteristics and they occupy the highest place in society. Then that culture gradually spreads downwards – and as it descends, it depreciates. There comes a stage where there is a sort of levelling; at this stage rises the cry of democracy, there is confusion and then society goes back to hierarchy and starts again.

Disciple: What is more congenial to the progress of humanity – hierarchy or democracy?

Sri Aurobindo: Again, what do you mean by progress? Up to this time humanity does not seem to have made any progress – it is moving in a blind circle.

Disciple: There is a goal of humanity, and through all these failures, humanity is moving towards that goal.

Sri Aurobindo: The goal is something on high, and humanity is continually making circles in a lower plane. Man must transcend humanity and become superman if this vicious circle is to be escaped. Up to this time all attempts in this direction have failed – only a few individuals have been able to reach some sort of a higher life.

Disciple: The Theosophists believe that no soul from the animal world is now being allowed to enter into humanity. First the present human race must attain divine height, then will begin another march of humanity from the lowest scale. The lowest class of souls from the moon will be the highest class on the earth and lead the human race.

Sri Aurobindo: I believe Big Boy¹ is going to be a man in his next life. He has no mind to wait. I do not believe that in the moon there lives a higher race – but the different planets may be inhabited by different orders of being.

*

Sri Aurobindo: *Dharma* is only one of the four – *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *moksa*; here, *dharma* is moral ethical laws; *kāma* is enjoyment, the hedonistic aspect of life; *artha* is the economic aspect of life; *moksa* refers to higher life.

Religion = *dharma*; religiosity = *dhārmikatā*; spirituality =

1. Big Boy was Sri Aurobindo's pet cat.

*

Sri Aurobindo: I am not for samadhi which wants to leave this life and enter into a higher consciousness – my object is to transform this life with the help of the higher Truth.

Disciple: *You accepted samadhi as one of vijñāna-catustaya.*¹

Sri Aurobindo: That was quite different – that Samadhi meant the whole inward life, the entering into different planes of consciousness.

1. Refer to Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Volume 27, p. 374.

5 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: You said yesterday that there might be life in other planets but not in the moon. How do you say that – from any experience?

Sri Aurobindo: No, I have no experience of any life there – my memory does not go so far back. I say that as it seems possible and reasonable to me. The moon is not a planet – it is only a planet of the earth and thus the analogy of the other planets does not apply to the moon.

Disciple: Can there be life where the conditions are not the same as on the earth?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? The conditions of terrestrial life may not be the same as those of life in any other planet. Thus, there may be a sort of organization of life which can stand extreme heat.

Disciple: During the middle of the last century it was discovered that the star Sirius is a double star. The larger star is of ordinary density – about 12 times that of water; the smaller star is of density 50,000 times greater than that of water. The two stars revolve round the centre of gravity of the system. If human beings like ourselves were on the smaller star, the force of gravity would have not only pulled them to the ground but flattened them. The human mind cannot form any idea about a thing which is 50,000 times denser than water.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a very common fallacy that nothing can be true unless it agrees with human conditions and can be conceived by the human mind.

Disciple: What about space and time – are they only forms of the mind or have they any real existence?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a very old question discussed in all philosophy, but no final conclusion has yet been arrived at. But what does it matter whether they are absolutely real or not as long as we have to deal with them actually?

Disciple: We cannot think of anything except in the terms of space – thus our talk of different planes has reference to space.

Sri Aurobindo: It need not have that reference – that is only a way of saying things.

Disciple: All life has forms.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the form need not be physical – thus the movement of consciousness has no form.

Disciple: Movement of consciousness is only a figurative way of speaking – movement always implies space.

Sri Aurobindo: That is because our language is of the physical plane. In referring to supraphysical phenomena we have to use a physical language; that does not imply that the things referred to are physical.

Disciple: The mental beings and the vital beings have mental and vital forms.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but they are not bound by the forms as physical beings are – they can easily change the forms. Beings only assume forms when they want to become something.

Disciple: Hegel says Being is equivalent to Non-Being; hence it must be Becoming.

Sri Aurobindo: How does Hegel know that? Has he any experience of Being? How is Being equivalent to Non-Being?

Disciple: Being is mere existence.

Sri Aurobindo: Again you say “mere”. The etymological meaning of ‘mere’ refers to something which is not mixed with anything else. Being is very true and existent – it is only free from the lower forms. One must have experience to understand the reality of Being. Thus the Buddhists say Nirvana or Non-Existence is the only thing real, all else being illusion.

Thus philosophy is only a part of phrases and mental ideas – a mental gymnastics, without any reference to experience. Spiritual knowledge is as much impossible without experience as scientific knowledge.

Indian philosophy also is similarly mental and intellectual. But there is this difference that Indian philosophy takes some of the experienced truths stated in the Upanishads and tries to establish them by ratiocination, by the exercise of reason. The Upanishads are not philosophy – they only present truths in various aspects as they have been directly experienced by spiritual seers. If we regard the Upanishads as philosophy they will appear as very crude and confused.

Shankara might have had some experience of the Brahman himself,

but his philosophy is only an attempt to establish that truth by the help of reasoning and arguments.

*

Disciple: *As regards the distinction between our experiences in the physical plane and the vital plane – how to distinguish them? Thus, how are we to distinguish between physical desires and vital desires?*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by a physical desire? All desires are vital.

Disciple: *Take the distinction of European psychology between sensations and feelings on the one hand and emotions on the other. All emotions are preceded by some sort of thinking – some process of thought.*

Sri Aurobindo: How is it so?

Disciple: *Thus, take fear. We cannot have fear unless we have some idea of the object of fear.*

Sri Aurobindo: On the other hand fear seems to rise from something vague and unknown.

Disciple: *Very well, take some other case – as that of anger. We must think of some wrong done to us by something before we can have anger.*

Disciple: *We rise some morning with a bad temper though we do not know anything about the cause.*

Disciple: *Is that anger?*

Sri Aurobindo: Why not?

*

Sri Aurobindo: The Brahman is beyond space – but if we try to think of it, we must think of something infinite which implies space.

6 August 1926 (Evening)

(I referred to the distinction between elementary feelings and emotions, the latter involving processes of thought.)

Sri Aurobindo: Your distinction is at least 50 years old psychology. New psychology does not make such distinction between feelings and emotions.

Disciple: I do not say that there is any absolute distinction between the two – I only refer to a practical distinction, a distinction which we perceive; thus there are emotions which arise only when we contemplate some ideas and ideals.

Sri Aurobindo: What are these emotions?

Disciple: Take, patriotism. It cannot arise unless our mind is sufficiently developed to consider the interests of the country.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not admit that – even dogs have some sort of patriotism. In the case of men all sorts of ideas are added to this feeling. In most cases patriotism is nothing but a satisfaction of the enlarged ego.

Disciple: The Gita says, “*Dhyāyato visayān pumsah sangastesupajāyate*”¹ – we think of some objects, we get attached to them and then arise the different passions – thus, here it is clearly laid down that passions arise from thinking and contemplation.

Sri Aurobindo: The Gita speaks of a certain kind of passions, it does not say that this is the only way by which emotions and feelings arise. Then *dhyāyato* means not thinking but running after; when the mind runs after something, it gets attached to it.

Disciple: I can raise feelings simply by thinking; thus by thinking of a dead relative or friend I can raise the feeling of grief.

Sri Aurobindo: There was a time when by thinking of an illness I could produce that illness in my body. That does not mean that thinking produces that illness. Our feelings are associated with certain ideas and by bringing those ideas we can recall those feelings. That is the difference between animals and men – they have the same vital feelings, but man imposes his mind of these feelings and tries to raise them up to the mental plane.

1. See the Gita, II, 62. “In him whose mind dwells on the objects of sense with absorbing interest, attachment to them is formed.” Translation from *The Message of the Gita*, edited by Anilbaran.

Disciple: I raised the question in order to understand the relation between the different planes – the mental, the vital, the physical.

Sri Aurobindo: But why do you raise that question in that way? All the emotions belong to the vital. I make a distinction between the vital proper and the mental vital. The vital proper is concerned directly with life – all the feelings there centre round desire which is a means of effectuating life – desire for possession, ambition, lust and all the six passions – *sad-ripu*. Then these vital feelings may be raised to the mental plane and there associated with other emotions of the heart; here may also appear psychic feelings; thus lust here turns into what we ordinarily call love.

Disciple: What is the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you understand by the physical?

Disciple: By the physical we mean material objects without life and mind.

Sri Aurobindo: The human body is material – but there is life and mind involved in it. If one can properly observe, he will find a sort of life and mind in the cells of the body – the life is not organized life as we generally see, nor the mind similar to what we ordinarily call mind. In the physical plane all action is mechanical. Even if the life and the mind depart, it may continue its habituated action.

We speak of the physical mind, the mind which sees only the physical or material aspect of things – it does not see the life or mind beyond it.

Disciple: That is the ordinary mind.

Sri Aurobindo: Most mind is nothing more than that. Those who want to raise themselves must first know the truth – the true nature of their being. But the mind cannot do that – it cannot raise the subconscious into the conscious – it cannot discern the different forces that are at play. Hence, light is to be sought from above and, with the help of that, all the processes of our being are to be observed and placed in their proper place. Thus, analyzing the vital feelings we shall find what they really mean, what is the truth behind each and we can deal with those feelings and processes according to that truth.

Disciple: Is the transformation of our being performed by the light of the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the light of Truth is accompanied by power in the Supramental, while in the mind the light is not always accompanied with the power; simply knowing by the mind does not help us to transform our being; hence, it is that the silent will is to be exerted, so that the necessary change may be accomplished.

Disciple: How is it that though the mind has the knowledge, yet the necessary change cannot be accomplished?

Sri Aurobindo: Because the mind has not sufficient power over the vital. Will is mostly vital and if the vital does not take interest in what the mind says, nothing can be accomplished. In most cases of discipline of sadhana the vital is lulled to sleep or allows the mind to have its own way to a certain point; at any moment the vital may rush in and upset the whole or may secretly guide the mind, though the person may not be aware of it.

Disciple: Thus, until we can effect the desired change we must keep the vital under check by the mental control.

Sri Aurobindo: I do not believe in such control – it only mutilates the vital functions; thus those who suppress the vital impulses – the sex impulse for instance – either destroy the higher possibilities of the impulse or allow it to run in a narrow channel, where they indulge in it too freely thinking it to be quite moral. Hence it is that I do not believe in morality, though, of course, I do not preach what you call immoral.

Disciple: Then, how are we to deal with these impulses?

Sri Aurobindo: Whatever be the proper way of dealing with them, the forcible suppression is certainly not the way.

Disciple: You are preaching most dangerous doctrines.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you ought not to have come here if you were afraid of dangers – this place is too full of them.

Disciple: You must release the mental control sometime – otherwise how will you see the things in their true light?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in order to have freedom and mastery over a thing, you must have full knowledge about the thing. The sex-impulse in man is connected with many other things, then it has its function – all these have to be found out and assigned their proper place in life.

At a certain period of my life I thought that I had acquired complete

mental control over the vital.

*

In order to be able to rise to a higher life we must be in search of truths; for this we must have on the one hand a solvent critical reason, almost cynical, which will not be satisfied with the appearance of things, and must reject falsities; on the other hand, there must be a receptive attitude, an opening for the true light from above.

*

There is evolution in Nature – from the physical to the vital, from the vital to the mental – but in Yoga the process of evolution is quite different; it is a conscious process, the whole being is consciously transformed with the help of the higher light and power of the supramental from above. There is the latent supramental everywhere in Nature.

Disciple: What is the latent supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: It is behind the mind, the vital, the physical – behind everything. From this latent supramental, truths are coming into the mind – the mind confuses these truths in its own way and produces something quite different. So there are true impulses coming from the supramental into the vital, but these are mixed up with all sorts of impurities in the vital. Hence it is that at one time, I did not reject the ideas and thoughts that used to rise in my mind; I sought to find out the truth that was hidden within those suggestions and ideas. In the same manner, I try to find out the real truth even in nonsensical questions.

Disciple: Then there is nothing nonsensical.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, except the forms given by the mind.

Disciple: The latent supramental helps the process of evolution.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that makes evolution possible, makes existence possible.

7 August 1926 (Evening)

(Reference was made to the national union suggested by Motilal and Abul Kalam as a practical method for dealing with communal troubles.)

Sri Aurobindo: What they propose to do, I do not understand.

Disciple: Perhaps they think that politics is at the root of this trouble – the communal passions are being fanned by selfish politicians. The national union proposes to deal with this side of the question.

Sri Aurobindo: But the root is the fanatical mentality, politics only serves as watering.

Disciple: The Mahomedans are now suffering great hardship in Pabna.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: More than a thousand Mahomedans have been arrested; many villages are without any male inhabitants – they having fled from the police, leaving their home, their women and children behind. Cultivation is suffering, business is greatly hampered. In some places the people are made to pay for the punitive police imposed upon them by the Government.

Disciple: These sufferings will make the Mahomedans more vindictive.

Disciple: But unless they undergo some suffering, they will continue rowdyism.

(Reference was made to the ultimatum given by the Government to the Nizam of Hyderabad.)

Sri Aurobindo: The Nizam is half-mad – he has been openly aggressive, asserting his independent sovereignty. The British Government were fully informed about what was going on in the state, but they waited for a proper occasion to take steps. Now, many complaints have accumulated and they are taking action. Holker was similarly mad to give excuses to the British Government to turn against him.

Disciple: Can the British Government get accurate information of what is going on in the different states?

Sri Aurobindo: They have an efficient system of espionage which has not yet been surpassed. Of course, they often get wrong information, but they also get at the truth. Thus they know everything about the secret societies.

Disciple: What do you think of the Pan-Asiatic movement in Japan? Will it be able to do something?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends upon the persons who are behind the movement. The present does not seem an opportune time for such a movement. The Japanese people are under the thumb of the police. The Government there cannot now afford to offend the English or the Americans.

Disciple: What is their difficulty?

Sri Aurobindo: Japan is isolated. It is the only Asiatic power and it cannot stand against any European combination. America is not over-friendly to Japan. The Japanese are too diplomatic to run risks; they feel their way before they proceed to do anything. When they find all the circumstances in their favour, and there is every chance of success, only then they take any action. If necessary, they can wait for half-a-century to get such a favourable occasion.

Disciple: What are the characteristics of Indian politicians?

Sri Aurobindo: They never do a thing at the right time and whatever they do, they do badly. (*Laughter*). They have no touch with reality – they see what the English people are doing in England and try to apply that to this country, though that may be quite unsuitable here. They take all political cant and catch-phrases and they adopt them in their talk, not in work. They have too much mental activity – have all sorts of ideas and forms in their brain, which have very little practical value.

Disciple: Why is this so?

Sri Aurobindo: That is all due to Mayavada – our men have become too subtle in their minds and all our politicians are drawn from that class. Then the system of education is greatly responsible for this state of things.

Disciple: Is the system in England different from that introduced in India?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they want only clerks and the education is intended for nothing else. But the difficulties and troubles experienced by our politicians serve as a sort of training for them.

There are many men in India who can be good administrators; but politics is a different thing.

Disciple: Macaulay said there never perhaps existed such a nation as the Bengalees who are naturally fitted for a foreign yoke.

Sri Aurobindo: The Bengalees were certainly bad at that time, though Macaulay was used to rhetorics. But the Bengalees are not worse than other subject-races – thus the Greeks under a foreign rule were not better than the Bengalees.

Disciple: Gokhale said that the greatest sacrifice our country demands of us is that we must submit to a foreign rule.

Sri Aurobindo: He was quite capable of saying such things – he was of a mean sort without any greatness or nobility in him.

Disciple: He had great talents.

Sri Aurobindo: What talents? He could only make good speeches and was a political economist.

Disciple: What about Lajpat Rai?

Sri Aurobindo: He is a well-meaning man but has no driving power.

*

Sri Aurobindo: Politics, as I was saying, is a very dirty affair – it is like marriage, an unfortunate necessity.

Disciple: He (referring to me) does not seem to swallow it.

Sri Aurobindo: It is for that reason that I am giving him long doses.

Disciple: Tilak used to say like that – he said he would have preferred to be a professor of Mathematics, but he was compelled to take to politics as there was no one else doing it.

Sri Aurobindo: Tilak was cut out for politics. What he said about not liking politics came from his mind, but his vital being required politics. I myself could have said with more truth than Tilak that I unwillingly took

to politics; I would have preferred not to be a professor but to devote myself to poetry and intellectual pursuits. But even in my case that would not have been wholly true – for my vital being took interest in politics which gives vital enjoyment and satisfaction.

8 August 1926 (Evening)

(There was some talk about the incorrigible dirty habits of the Pariahs. Even conversion to Christianity has not in any way improved their habits and morals.)

Sri Aurobindo: There you have some experience of the untouchables you want to raise. If they are given help and decent surroundings, it will take at least 15 generations to raise them.

(I related my experience about the Chotta Nagpur Hindus – how the conversion to Christianity has improved their habits, made them neat and clean and decent-looking men.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is all polish and nothing more. These Hindus are the worst sort of aborigines.

(X referred to the battle habits of the Bhils.)

Sri Aurobindo: They had come into contact with Rajput culture.

(There was some talk how these Pariahs often worship all sorts of Gods – Mahomedan, Hindu and Christian.)

Sri Aurobindo: There you see a synthesis of religion!

Disciple: Do those who practise the supramental Yoga help in any way the spiritual life of other people?

Sri Aurobindo: Of humanity, you mean?

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: Humanity has yet no spiritual life.

Disciple: But they may be brought towards spirituality.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course if we can succeed in bringing down the supramental, we shall bring down a new principle which will help to raise humanity. A spiritual atmosphere is created by our sadhana which may draw in people towards spirituality.

Disciple: The people who are fit?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh no, fit persons are not always drawn to this life. People in such distant places as America are getting ideas of our new Yoga.

Disciple: In reference to the awakening of the Hindus you said that a spiritual movement was necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but the present Hindu Sangathan movement is not spiritual; it aims at preserving Hindu culture which is at present beset with great dangers; behind the forms it still contains the ancient truth and there is no reason why this should be driven from its one stronghold. There is the whole of Africa and the whole of Western Asia to be taken into their fold by the Mahomedans. Why should Abdur Rahim and others be allowed to destroy Hindu culture? Then there is the European mentality which has made great inroads in Hinduism. During the Swadeshi movement attempts were made to fight this European mentality and to revive Indian mentality, of course with new forms.

Disciple: Which is the greater danger?

Sri Aurobindo: Mahomedanism is certainly more dangerous than Christianity.

Disciple: But they are in a minority – how can they harm the Hindus?

Sri Aurobindo: The Christians were in minority when they overran Europe.

Disciple: But they brought light¹ with them.

Sri Aurobindo: The Greeks had more light than the Christians who converted them; at that time there was Gnosticism in Greece, and they were developing agnosticism and so forth. The Christians brought darkness rather than light. Afterwards the Arabs brought life to Europe.

That has always been the case with aggressive religions – they tend to overrun the earth. Hinduism on the other hand is passive and therein lies its danger.

Disciple: How can this passivity of the Hindus be cured?

Sri Aurobindo: By movement and activity.

Disciple: What sort of movement?

Sri Aurobindo: Any movement. Of course the Hindu Sangathan movement we can help by exerting Yogic force and that is far superior to the method of platform speeches and newspaper articles.

Disciple: Is spiritual movement necessary for the awakening of the

1. In Anilbaran's note this word is written as "life". But, judging from Sri Aurobindo's reply that follows, it should certainly be "light".

Hindus and not for others?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, different peoples have different characteristics.

Disciple: What is this spiritual movement required for the Hindus and how is that going to be brought about?

Sri Aurobindo: Have you read the history of India? Take the case of Shivaji in Maharashtra, of Pratapaditya in Bengal. During the Swadeshi movement all the leaders were influenced by some Guru or spiritual men. We were influenced more by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda than by Dadabhai Navroji [Naoroji] and others.

Disciple: There is a marked difference between the national workers of the Swadeshi period and those at the present time. The former workers drew their inspiration from the Gita; the present workers have discarded the Gita, they laugh at spirituality, they draw their inspiration from Bolshevists or similar other European movements.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the reason why they have degenerated and cannot do anything. They only take the forms adopted in the previous movement without realizing the changed circumstances and fresh requirements of the time.

Disciple: Most of our workers and leaders at the present time are without any spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: I cannot say anything about individuals. But the central thing in Hinduism is spirituality and there cannot be any big movement without any spirituality behind it.

*

The idea of establishing hospital for the people did not come from Christian missionaries. They themselves got it from the Buddhists.

9 August 1926 (Evening)

(X referred to a theory that after death man becomes a being of the vital world.)

Sri Aurobindo: He does not become a being of the vital plane, but on his way to his place of rest he passes through the vital plane of consciousness or what you call the vital world.

***Disciple:** Does he at that time come to know everything about the vital world?*

Sri Aurobindo: No.

(There was some talk on the Greek and Egyptian theories about the experiences after death. The ancient Greeks believed that after death men to a lower world and move there as shadows. This theory was subsequently modified.

The Egyptians thought that after death man remains in a vital body and they preserved the physical body hoping that the departed man might again return and enter into that body.

The pyramids of the Egyptians were connected with their religion, their occultism, and their theory of what happens after death.

X mentioned how future events are prophesied by an investigation into the structure of the pyramids. Thus the beginning of the great war in 1914 was accurately prophesied. In the same manner it has been prophesied that a war will break out in 1927 which will end in 1931.)

10 August 1926 (Evening)

(I read a letter from Satyendra Mitra who is at present in Mandalay Jail. He had distinguished between Jnanayoga and Karmayoga and hinted that Karmayoga was better than Jnanayoga.)

Sri Aurobindo: My yoga is not merely Jnanayoga – it contains also the other elements. Neither is it true that there cannot be any work in the beginning of this yoga. Action is compatible with the first stage of this yoga; but the purpose of this action is to come in contact with the light above. Instead of acting in the way as men ordinarily do, one seeks to dwell in the higher consciousness and executes with faith (*śraddhā*) and concentrated will (*nisthā*) any action for which the call will come from within – this is possible in the first stage of the yoga. After that, in the intermediate stage, a special stress has to be laid on the inner change. At this stage, it is not advisable to undertake any action that may hamper the inward-oriented sadhana. It is not possible to effectuate the inner transformation while being engaged in any activity that demands the total absorption of the mind and the heart. Political activity is not compatible with this stage and this is so because of two reasons. Firstly, it will not do to engage in political activity half-heartedly; those who have been acting for the liberation of India have perforce to pour all their heart and mind in that activity; in that case, how can they concentrate on sadhana? Secondly, political activity belongs to the lower plane of consciousness; in this field, one has to act remaining in contact with forces which do not allow the sadhak to rise upward; they keep him tied down below.

As a result of the practice of yoga, when the inner change has been effected, when the sadhak has been established in the higher consciousness and the higher light, then, there is no harm in doing any action from there. But this action does not take the form of a blind stumbling as do the actions of the lower life. The yogi turns his transformed nature into an instrument of the divine Shakti, and the divine will gets infallibly effectuated through him. Behind this action reign an immutable peace, a true vision and a divine delight.

There is a great and profound purpose behind this yoga. It is not solely for India, it is for the whole world – although, India may be its starting-point. But, it is no use speaking of that now, the world is not yet ready for that.¹

1. The whole of this reply by Sri Aurobindo, with the exception of the first sentence, is written in Bengali in the notebook of Anilbaran. Two more sentences that follow this reply are written in Bengali as well. All these are reproduced here in English translation.

(Satyen had written: “At times the futility of worldly life strikes my mind very much.”)

Sri Aurobindo: In our yoga the worldly life is not considered to be vain; only that must be lived as a help to the growth of the spirit. Satyen must look into himself and find out the nature and cause of his *virāga* or dissatisfaction with life. He should understand what is the call in him. If he feels called towards political work or any other kind of work let him do it heart and soul. If he feels a call towards spiritual life, let him describe the nature of his call and I can help him. If he feels both these calls – call to political life as well as to spirituality – it is quite possible to combine the two in Karmayoga and I can give him necessary instructions. He must find for himself the nature of his objection – the cause of his dissatisfaction with *vyavahārik jīvan* (worldly life). Is it due only to confinement and forced idleness or is it due to any deeper need in his nature? Let him look into his mind carefully and try to answer these questions. It is no use talking of spiritual life unless one is really ready for it and feels a real call towards it.

Disciple: What about your making a greater India? (I had referred to this in my last letter to Satyen.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is Anilbaran’s contribution.

Disciple: I only quoted that from Nolini Kanta.

Disciple: You said that yourself 7 years ago.

Sri Aurobindo: But why should you look backward rather than looking forward? Who has “made” India that I should “make” it greater? People do not make a country – all their thoughts and acts are only processes in the making of the country. We are only trying to bring the Truth down. If the truth makes a greater India, that will be not our making. The Truth is higher than us – we are only instruments in its hands.

11 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *Are the hostile forces in any way afraid of men?*

Sri Aurobindo: Why should they be afraid? They can act on men only when men consent to their action.

(I referred to the Baidya Brahmin Society in Bengal which is trying to prove that the Vaidyas are really Brahmins.)

Sri Aurobindo: This is not a new attempt.

Disciple: *But at this time when the caste-system is crumbling down, it is strange that people should carry on such a movement.*

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? In ancient times they labelled down, now they are labelling up.

Disciple: *Whither is the caste-system tending?*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you think?

Disciple: *I have no idea. It is apparent that the caste-system has become meaningless and it cannot last long. The whole thing may come down in a crash, though I have no idea as to the new forms that will rise.*

Disciple: *First break down the present forms, then you will think of new forms.*

Sri Aurobindo: Mere inter-dining and so forth cannot affect the caste-system. Unless there is inter-marriage, caste-system cannot be said to have disappeared.

Disciple: *There are some who think even now that the Brahmins will lead and bring necessary reforms to society.*

Disciple: *That is true. Rammohan Ray, Vidyasagar, they were all Brahmins.*

Sri Aurobindo: Which class of Brahmin will lead, you say? The Pundits?

Disciple: *In reference to the recent resolutions regarding outraged women passed by the Brahmin Sabha, some newspapers commented that the Brahmins were taking the lead.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is not leading, but limping.

(Y referred to a recent inter-caste marriage effected by the Prabartak Sangha. I said that I was much impressed by the Sangha when I visited it once for a few hours.)

Disciple: All persons are so impressed.

Sri Aurobindo: Pearson was not well impressed – he said that the whole thing was commercialized.

*

Disciple: You referred to the making of greater India when the Truth comes down.

Sri Aurobindo: That was not my saying but of X or Y.

Disciple: In that connection you said that India would be the starting-point. Are you sure of that?

Sri Aurobindo: Well, I do not make any prophecy. The conditions are favourable here – spiritualism is embedded in the race and there is every likelihood that India will be the starting-point. But if India neglects this chance, if she follows X to the legislative council or the Sharmas, the Devasharmas (referring obviously to the Brahmin Pundits), then India's chance will be lost and some other country may take it up. But our ambition is that the Truth will be brought down by us and thus we shall be the starting-point.

Disciple: Is the present time favourable for the coming down of the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, very favourable; though at the same time there are very unfavourable conditions and it is always so. When the Truth seeks to come down, the hostile forces also become very active.

Disciple: What are the favourable and the unfavourable conditions?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a searching everywhere – not in any particular department, but everywhere the old order is changing and people are looking for something newer and better. At such critical periods the Truth tends to come down, or rather these periods are created by the coming Truth itself – it is only a way of saying that the conditions are favourable.

Different peoples in different ways have premonitions of the coming Truth. Thus the Theosophists speak of a coming World-Teacher, though they give a very crude form, a very distorted interpretation.

Disciple: What are the unfavourable conditions?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital forces have become very active throughout the world. In the past they have again and again frustrated the coming of the Truth, as was the case with Christianity. The acceptance of the Truth always involves great difficulties. If you accept the vital forces you can easily convert the whole world – but not so with the Truth.

Disciple: You spoke of vital forces being specially active in India.

Sri Aurobindo: In what connection?

Disciple: Speaking of Indian art, music, theatres, politics.

Sri Aurobindo: That was in a different connection. So far as the coming down of the Truth is concerned, the vital forces are active over the whole earth.

*

There are no hostile forces in the supramental plane.

12 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *You did not finish the subject of caste-system yesterday.*

Sri Aurobindo: X finished the caste-system; he said, it could not last.

Disciple: *Yes, I am sure it cannot last – but how is it going to end?*

Disciple: *How do forms persist even when they have become meaningless?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is the *samskāra* of the Hindus. There is something in the brain which pricks – the caste-system is associated with religion. The Brahmin Sabha holds fastly to it. The caste-system has been discarded in every other respect except in the matter of marriage. People take no account of caste until they come to marriage, when they keep strictly to the caste. Are you ready to marry the daughter of *Chelu* (a pariah servant)?

Disciple: *No.*

Sri Aurobindo: There is the secret of the caste-system. People seek to marry within their own class – having the same customs and manners, same degree of culture and development.

Disciple: *There is caste even among the Europeans.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but there it is quite different; there are clearly defined classes and people marry within the same class. But here, what is the difference between a Brahmin, a Vaidya, a Kayestha? Of course, the pariahs form a distinct class.

The original purpose of the caste-system has been lost. In ancient times there was the distinction of caste with a clear purpose. It was sought to develop different types and marriage within the same caste was intended to help this system. The Brahmins sought to develop certain intellectual powers, to make their minds subtle for the consideration of higher things. The Kshatriyas sought to develop character which was all important for the functions of that class. The Vaishyas also sought to develop a particular kind of intellectual powers which could be of help to them in the matter of business.

This fourfold distinction could not be adhered to when there occurred the mixture of races. Gradually the whole thing has become meaningless and the classification into castes serves no purpose – still the religious *samskāra* acts against its abolition. It is said that instead of abolishing the caste the proper course would be to restore it to reality. But that is

not possible. There are Vaidyas who show natural fitness for Shastras, there are Brahmins who show no aptitude for Brahmins. The ancestors of Bepin Chandra Pal, I heard, were wine-sellers.

Disciple: Brajendranath Seal is a barber by caste.

Sri Aurobindo: Thus if we have to go back to reality, Seal must give up philosophy and take to shaving.

(There was some talk about the ugly appearance of Dr. Brajendranath Seal. X suggested that perhaps his appearance was a contribution of his caste.)

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the caste leaves a certain stamp. But individuals differ in their capacities and they need not be confined to their caste-stamp.

Disciple: Brajendranath is said to have a versatile genius.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he has great powers of the brain and we must recognize whatever talents a man may possess – different men may possess great merits in their own way.

Disciple: Is the physical appearance of a child contributed wholly by his parents?

Sri Aurobindo: No, there are many other elements which enter into the making of a body.

Disciple: The child himself contributes something.

Sri Aurobindo: That is from another point of view – the fact of reincarnating – the soul makes its own body.

Disciple: Has beauty any connection with personal evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: No.

Disciple: Beauty implies harmony and this is a sign of the development of the soul.

Sri Aurobindo: Physical beauty is the result of some vital glow – it has no connection with spiritual development. Psychic beauty is not of the body – it is something subtle, independent of the physical formation. Excessive beauty is always dangerous as it is the result of something in the vital.

Disciple: *Different people have different standards of beauty – thus a Japanese and a European will not agree as to the beauty of a woman.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the aesthetic sense belongs to the mental plane – the vital mental.

Disciple: *There may be difference in tastes – but there is some general, absolute standard of beauty.*

Sri Aurobindo: How is that?

Disciple: *Take the rose – it will be regarded as beautiful by everybody.*

Sri Aurobindo: A cat does not regard the rose as beautiful.

Disciple: *I am speaking of human beings.*

Disciple: *All human beings do not appreciate the beauty of the rose.*

Disciple: *Some culture is required to appreciate beauty.*

Sri Aurobindo: Thus the sense of beauty depends upon the cultivation of the mind. People have formed some ideas and notions of beauty and they appreciate things according to those ideals.

Disciple: *Whatever Nature does is beautiful – it is only in the creations of men that we see ugly things.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is not true. There are many ugly things in Nature, e.g., the insect world. People regard the physical world with a certain attitude of mind which makes natural things appear beautiful; when they consider the creations of men they adopt a different attitude.

Disciple: *Is there any beauty actually in Nature? Is it not wholly a creation of our own mind? The beauty we see in Nature is mostly a play of light and the difference in light lies only in the difference in the vibrations. Only when the mind interprets the vibrations, then we have the sensations of light and colour.*

Sri Aurobindo: But that applies to the whole Nature – that is what we mean by Nature; not things as they are, but things as they appear to us constitute the natural world to us. Thus X is to me what I create him to

be in my mind – a seeker after Truth; but what the real X is that I do not know.

Disciple: Is there nothing objective?

Sri Aurobindo: That is the objective world – the world as it appears to our mind.

Disciple: Is there nothing outside the impressions of the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, there is the world outside my mind – but everything is within the consciousness of God; there is nothing but impressions.

*

The real beauty is something above the mind – it is in the Ananda plane. In everything there is the essence, then there is the *guna* of the thing and there is the expression – the knowledge of the adaptation of the essence and the *guna* to the expression gives rise to a satisfaction, a delight which is the real element of beauty.

*

We are living here apart from society. If we assume social relations, then the caste-system and other Sanskaras will overtake us.

*

Disciple: At a certain stage of his sadhana, Ramakrishna became exceedingly beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo: A light came out of his body, he had to wear a thick coat in order to hide that; but that was not physical beauty.

Disciple: Ramakrishna, according to the description of his followers, was of beautiful physical appearance.

Sri Aurobindo: You cannot depend upon the description of followers.

Disciple: He had a fair complexion.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you call that beauty?

13 August 1926 (Evening)

(X wanted to know the different characteristics of the different parts of the mental, the vital and the physical.)

Sri Aurobindo: They are all connected constituting one whole, but for the purpose of analysis they may be mentioned separately.

The mind proper is concerned with reasoning, creations of mental forms, the activity of the will (dynamic mind). This is called Buddhi (intelligence and will), for distinction from the other part of mind which is generally called Manas.

The emotions and the sensations belong to the vital part of mind, which I call the *mental vital*, others call simply the vital. These are the things of the vital plane which pressing upon the mind produce mental forms there. These mental forms (presentiments about coming events belong to this plane) are not created by the mind itself.

The physical part of mind consists in its mechanical action. Thus when there is neither the vital urge, nor any (creative) activity of mind proper, the physical part continues its movement mechanically.

Disciple: *What is the supramental part of the mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: Intuition.

The central characteristic of the vital is desire. In the vital proper the life-force seeks to realize itself, to possess materials and to put its stamp upon them, but in its crude form this vital urge appears as lust, ambition, desire for possession, for money, for enjoyment of all kinds.

The mind in the vital is the mental activity which accompanies the vital desires, knows them and expresses them in mental forms and speech. Thus, when Mussolini says, "Italy must have a place under the sun", it is not the result of thinking or reasoning; the desire rises from the vital being, though it may be sought to be supported by the reasoning of the Buddhi.

The physical part of the vital is that which is necessary to realize the vital impulses in the actual world. There may be the urge, but the physical part may not be equal to the task. There are many poets who cannot express themselves well as the vital physical in them is not strong. The physical vital wants to move in grooves and fixed forms, e.g., habits and instincts.

Disciple: *What is the supramental in the vital?*

Sri Aurobindo: Vital intuitions. There are persons (even not Yogis) who, without reasoning or thinking, at once find out the right act to be done, the right course to be followed. Aesthetics and art belong to this plane.

The mind in the physical is very small, it does not go very far, but it is the thin end which is necessary for the work of the mental and the physical. When I have a pen in my hand and a paper before me, without knowing, without thinking about anything I may write some word or name on the paper – this is an action of the physical mind.

The vital part of the physical is very important – it gives health and strength to the body. This works through the nervous system. It knows what is beneficial or what is injurious to the system. If left to itself, it would have been the safest guide as regards health. But in civilized persons it is seldom left unimpaired – the activity of the mind has created great confusion.

Disciple: What is the supramental part of the physical?

Sri Aurobindo: That is at present very involved. Still there are persons who have a sort of physical intuition; thus catching hold of a thing they can at once say its weight.

All these processes in man are mixed up with one another; there is a sort of continuity from the one end to the other. But for the purpose of analysis, they may thus be distinguished.

Disciple: What is signified by the term Chitta?

Sri Aurobindo: The term is used in various senses. It properly means the basic consciousness – as there is the *cit* above, so there is the *citta* below – there is *cit-ākāśa* and there is *citta-ākāśa*.

Disciple: Does this twelvefold classification (the mental, the vital, the physical, each consisting of four parts – supramental, mental, vital, physical) correspond to the twelve signs of the Zodiac?

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know whether there is any such correspondence.

*

The vital desires are regardless of consequences – they will demand satisfaction, even if it leads to destruction.

*

Disciple: These movements – the mental, the vital, the physical – do they exist in the universal?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, otherwise they would not have appeared in the human being.

Disciple: Then there may be some correspondence with the twelve signs of the Zodiac described by the astrologer.

Sri Aurobindo: That is not impossible.

*

Disciple: How does the mind act in the animal?

Sri Aurobindo: The activities of the animal are wholly determined by the vital impulses – the mind only records the activities.

Disciple: Where is the place of memory?

Sri Aurobindo: All the planes, the mental, the vital, the physical have memory.

(Sri Aurobindo related a story how a French maid-servant, when she was suffering from a certain illness, mechanically reproduced whole passages from Hebrew books, though she knew nothing of Hebrew. Her master used to read Hebrew books loudly; the servant when moving about in the course of her domestic work had unconsciously registered the whole thing in her subliminal mind.)

*

(X referred to the action of certain poisons which acted instantaneously.)

Sri Aurobindo: These poisons attack directly the life principle itself.

*

Disciple: What is the difference between the vital mind and the dynamic mind?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital mind is the desire-mind. It desires by the vital urge without any thought or reasoning, though it may be sought to justify or support it by the help of reasoning. The dynamic mind on the other hand is the will; the mind proper decides some course of action by reasoning and seeks to effectuate it.

14 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Is there any relation between the aesthetic being and the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a sense of beauty in the aesthetic being, there is a sense of beauty in the psychic being – beyond that, there is no necessary relation between the two.

The aesthetic being belongs to the vital; it sees beauty of life, of form, of expression; the psychic being sees the charm of the soul.

Disciple: Is the psychic beauty in the form, the colour, the smell, say, of a flower?

Sri Aurobindo: Psychic beauty does not consist in form, smell or colour like aesthetic beauty, it is something quite apart from these, but may be conveyed through these.

All flowers have not psychic beauty. Thus the rose is strongly vital; there is psychic beauty in jasmine; the lotus is greatly psychic, it is a mystic flower.

Disciple: The lotus is a very delicate flower.

Sri Aurobindo: But the psychic beauty does not consist in the delicacy – it has an indescribable charm which is felt as psychic.

Disciple: There are paintings which possess psychic beauty.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, as that picture of Nandalal depicting a cow lost in the wood.

Disciple: You remarked sometime ago that the Maya-Mriga of Abanindranath Tagore possesses psychic beauty.

Sri Aurobindo: May be, but Abanindra generally draws vital pictures.

*

Sri Aurobindo: There may be beauty in ideas; thus when we find any good passage in a writing we exclaim, “how nice!” Again, a face may show beauty of intelligence. In Indian art there is the beauty of spiritual conception.

Disciple: Can a person appreciate psychic beauty unless the psychic being is developed in him?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the psychic being developed? There is the psychic being in everybody.

Disciple: I mean, where it is not strong.

Sri Aurobindo: The psychic being may not be strong enough to impress itself upon the mind or the vital being, but yet it may have psychic feelings. There are many persons with psychic feelings which have no influence on their life and character.

Disciple: How do things of beauty help the spiritual development of men?

Sri Aurobindo: What again do you mean by spiritual development? When there is opening to the influence of the spirit, there occurs spiritual transformation. Cultivation of the sense of beauty brings a refinement which makes spiritual transformation easier, where there is the necessary opening. There is the aspect of beauty in God and it is easy to approach Him through beauty; this is ignored by persons like your Mahatma Gandhi.

*

Disciple: The psychic beauty in a flower – is it an expression of a psychic being behind?

Sri Aurobindo: It is an expression of the soul of the flower.

Disciple: The soul of the flower!

Sri Aurobindo: I knew, you would be astounded. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Then there are flowers which are superior to men!

Sri Aurobindo: There are animals who are more psychic than many men. Even in the love-making of cats there may be something psychic; Big boy (Sri Aurobindo's cat), when it makes love to one cat is vital, to another it is psychic.

Disciple: Then, how is it that man is said to be the highest creature in the order of evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: Because man has developed a mind. Everywhere else the evolution goes on unconsciously; in man it is conscious. But on ac-

count of his mind man is also worse than any other thing. He can be more devilish than any other creature.

*

It is only the egoism of man which makes him think that he is the most mysterious creature living on earth.

*

There is no great difference in the formation of bodies between man and animals – there are very small changes in detail, but they are very important.

***Disciple:** You once said that a superman would always look like a man of 18 years of age.*

Sri Aurobindo: A superman will give no impression of his age – he will be beyond age.

***Disciple:** Is it possible for a superman to grow a tooth which has fallen?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; in old age all the fallen teeth begin to rise again. As a superman can live as long as he likes, he can have new teeth.

(There was some talk about Yogis who live for hundreds of years.)

***Disciple:** But in genuine cases, the Yogis do not say anything about their age.*

***Disciple:** How can the truth be ascertained then?*

Sri Aurobindo: From casual remarks. Thus a disciple of Brahmananda came to know from a casual remark of his that he must have lived for several centuries.

15 August 1926

Today is Sri Aurobindo's birthday. He completes his fifty-fourth year, having been born in 1872. It has been a long custom to celebrate this event of his physical birth. Formerly the celebration was in a vital manner. From 1923 it is being observed as it should be in keeping with the truth it symbolizes.

The whole house was thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed; today it is bedecked with fresh leaves and flowers. All the attached houses have been cleaned and washed and everybody puts up a smart appearance. There have been some new-comers. A special attempt – a joint attempt – is to be made today to bring down the Truth. Individually this day is for stock-taking in sadhana, laying out a programme for the future. This day is to be a landmark, a turning-point as Sri Aurobindo fully explained in the afternoon.

Sri Aurobindo came out at about 11 a.m. and one by one the sadhaks went up (there were only two pairs – husband and wife), and offered their pranams and asked his blessing. When I went up I saw Sri Aurobindo – an embodiment of the Truth he is trying to bring down for us. To me it seemed that his appearance was that of *barābhaya* [bestower of boon and protection]. I worshipped his feet with a few roses and placed a small sum of money (Rs. 5) at his feet. He touched my head. I sat down at his feet, meditated for a minute and then said, “Many kinds of hostile forces are trying to distract me. May I be able to surrender myself completely to you.”¹ He blessed me with a nod of his head, then with the palm of his hand pressed on my head; I felt as if I had got the truth, my whole being became filled with hope and faith, with force and light. I came down after touching his feet and getting his touch again.

Then I went up to Mirra [the Mother] and for the first time entered into Sri Aurobindo's room, his place of sadhana and rest. I went through the same ceremony before Mirra – but sitting at her feet I meditated for a longer time, about 5 minutes.

From the morning a great calm has descended on me. I can easily surrender myself and open myself to the Higher Truth. This has been a day of consecration for me. I have got my programme of sadhana. Henceforth, I am to give up the ordinary human standpoint and live from the standpoint of the higher light.

The vital forces are trying to seduce me – they seem to say, “Follow

1. These two sentences are written mostly in Bengali. They are reproduced here in English translation.

us and we give you intense enjoyment.” With the help of the blessings of Gurudev, I expect to know their tricks and withdraw my consent from their play.

At 5 p.m. Sri Aurobindo again came out and sat on his chair; Mirra also came with him and sat by his left side beneath the chair. We were altogether 20 sadhaks present including several ladies. Sri Aurobindo spoke for half an hour about the significance of the 15th August; the speech has been fully recorded by Purani. Then there was group meditation for about half an hour after which Sri Aurobindo and Mirra went inside.

During the course of the meditation, I felt a fundamental calm – the mechanical and habitual thoughts, which disturb me at other times, could not enter into my mind and I intimately felt the light above and a flaming aspiration towards it. It was such a delightful experience that I felt shocked when the group was dissolved abruptly.

Sitting silently in my place, I drew up the following programme for my future sadhana.

The fundamental principle to be followed in life is to give up the ordinary way of living from the standpoint of the ordinary human being. I have to take my stand on the higher Truth and shape my life according to the light received from above.

As to the mind: The mechanical and habitual thoughts are to be discarded or thrown outside. The action of the Buddhi to go on – to receive and interpret the light from above and regulate the acts of life accordingly.

As to the vital: Give up all acts which involve a violent interchange with the vital forces. Observe the play of the vital impulses and the vital forces. See that the lower movement “is coming from below and then withdraw your consent from it and wait keeping yourself open to the higher power to work. It knows better than you what is your need and how to eliminate and transform your nature.”

Cease to act from desire: See your needs with the help of the higher light and exert your will to fulfil them, always depending on, and leaving the consequences to, the higher power.

As to the physical: Try to keep the body in health and fit to carry out any work that may be required of it.

Establish the higher calm throughout the *ādhāra* and for this stand on the Purusha-Prakriti attitude of the Gita.

Take Sri Aurobindo as the representative of the higher Truth, the

higher power and surrender yourself wholly to him as to the higher Truth.

Have a constant aspiration towards the higher Truth.

Go on with zeal and resolution but be not impatient or hasty.

15 August 1926 (Evening)

(In the evening Sri Aurobindo came out at 7.45 p.m. The following is the substance of some of the talks. X raised the question whether this year Sri Aurobindo was more sure than before about the success of the attempt at divine life.)

Sri Aurobindo: I am both sure and not sure. I am sure morally, I am not sure practically. Morally sure because the Truth is coming more and more. Practically not sure because the material world is still unrepentent.

Disciple: What do you mean by “unrepentent”?

Sri Aurobindo: The material world does not believe in the possibility of divine life. The European mentality is a great obstacle, though there are other obstacles.

Disciple: Is that obstacle insuperable?

Sri Aurobindo: If it does not change but continues to remain as it is, it will be an insuperable obstacle.

Disciple: How can the change be brought about?

Sri Aurobindo: You will not understand if I say.

Disciple: We shall try – let us hear the answer.

Sri Aurobindo: It will begin to change when it has open connection with the world of Gods.

Disciple: We do not understand unless you explain every word.

Sri Aurobindo: So I said. In Europe those who have not the European mentality, go to the opposite extreme; instead of opening themselves to the Gods, they resort to the vital forces.

Disciple: What is exactly meant by saying that European science is materialistic?

Sri Aurobindo: That is what I have been so long explaining. They regard matter as wholly inconscient or without consciousness of any kind and they do not believe that matter can be made to become conscious. They do not believe that the laws of matter can be changed. They accept the miracles that have been accomplished but they do not believe that miracles may happen in the future. Matter by itself could never have changed. It is the vital and the mental principle pressing from above

which has made possible life and mind in the material world. Now, it is the turn of the supramental pressing from above and transforming the very nature of matter.

Disciple: If the laws of matter are changed, will not matter cease to be matter?

Sri Aurobindo: Why?

Disciple: Because, the laws define the nature of matter.

Sri Aurobindo: The laws are only statements of the habits of things, and a thing may change its habits without ceasing to be itself. If you change your habits, you will still be X.

Disciple: Can a few persons by their sadhana change the laws of the material world?

Sri Aurobindo: We do not mean that the whole universe is going to be changed. Only the capacities of matter can be proved in certain cases.

*

When I speak of the resistance of the material world, I do not mean the external material world, but the subtle material world. The cells of the material body possess a consciousness. That consciousness has to open itself to the higher Truth before the real transformation can take place. It is the material mind which does not believe in divine possibilities and does not care for it.

*

Disciple: What is the difference between the physical and the material?

Sri Aurobindo: As I explained before, in the physical plane there is the mental, the vital and the material. (To Y) Do you remember what I said about the physical mind?

Disciple: It is the mind which presses upon the material plane and organizes it.

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not that. It is the end which comes into contact with the physical world and sees only the physical aspects of things and

nothing beyond it; it takes matter as being simply matter and nothing more – it does not see the consciousness inherent in matter. It depends on the material structure of the body and is confined to it, to the material brain.

Similarly, the vital in the physical plane is the life which is bound with matter, with the nervous system; it cannot exist apart from a material body. But the vital proper is quite independent of matter, it is a universal force. There is force in matter, but that force is not life-force. The real life-force is something quite apart from the material world, it exists for its own sake and its possibilities are not bound down by material conditions. When Napoleon said that there was nothing impossible, the term “impossible” was to be erased from the dictionary, it was the vital which was speaking through Napoleon; to the vital nothing seems impossible.

Then the material in the physical is the pure material part of it which is the basis of the rest.

*

***Disciple:** The vital plane, the vital being, the vital Prakriti – these are the three things and they all have to open themselves to the higher power?*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the vital being? If by it you mean the vital Purusha – it is there supporting the universal vital Prakriti. Apart from the Purusha, there is a vital personality – which may be the combination of many personalities – and this personality is to be changed. This personality is under the influence of the various forces coming from the universal vital Prakriti; it has to be opened to the higher power and thus transformed.

16 August 1926 (Evening)

(Sri Aurobindo referred to a newspaper report that a boy, 6 years old, in Punjab described in detail the incidents of his past birth and his statements after verification have been found to be true.)

Disciple: Taking the case to be genuine, what is the explanation?

Sri Aurobindo: The only explanation which seems probable to me is that some vital being is strongly associated with the boy and it is that being which is enabling him to recall and describe his past births.

Disciple: How could the vital being retain its association even after the death of the person?

Sri Aurobindo: Perhaps the person after death did not go beyond the vital plane; he did not go to the place of his rest as he had very little experience to assimilate.

(X referred to a case of a child dying and very soon afterwards taking birth again in the womb of its mother.)

Sri Aurobindo: As the child died early and had little experience to assimilate it was quite possible for it to come back very soon. There are various things which pull a person to take birth. But men do not leave one body and at once take birth into another; it is possible only in the case of insects.

At the place of rest the departed soul does not only assimilate the experiences of its immediate previous birth; all the experiences of all its past births together determine the kind of birth it is next going to take.

*

Disciple: As regards the theory of Karma, are all our sufferings determined by our past actions?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by your question? In a sense everything in our life is determined by our past.

Disciple: I refer to the ordinary view of karmabhoga that if a man causes some suffering or loss to somebody, he will himself have to undergo similar suffering or loss.

Sri Aurobindo: You have eaten many fishes – will you have to become a fish and be eaten by the fish you are?

Disciple: The popular view is something like that.

Sri Aurobindo: That is popular nonsense.

(Some stories were told how persons are supposed to get reward and punishment appropriate to their past acts.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is the Theosophist view. The idea of reward and punishment is human nonsense. What happens is that whenever any act is done, some energy is thrown out and there is a reaction on the doer. If a person does his works in the proper attitude – without attachment, as described in the Gita – allowing Nature to do her work without allowing oneself to be identified with that, then there is no reaction.

It is the works done from the vital plane from desire which recoil on the doer. If one wants to develop his ethical being, he must follow the ethical laws and similarly with other beings. There is no question of reward and punishment. The soul gathers experience through all sorts of conditions of life. It is not only the “sinful” that suffer, but the fools also, however innocent, suffer. One must be able to take into account the forces that are at work and learn to shape his life accordingly. When he cannot adjust himself to these forces, he suffers and these sufferings constitute the experience of the soul in its upward path.

*

(There was some talk about the sufferings of death.)

Disciple: J. C. Bose has said that the moment of death is pleasurable.

Sri Aurobindo: In most cases death follows a protracted disease and that disease is of course painful. But if the passing of the soul is considered, that is certainly peaceful; as a matter of fact, sometime before death the soul gets detached from the body and there is an atmosphere of calm and peace.

Disciple: The vital being gets detached from the body.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you may say the vital-physical being gets detached.

*

(There was some talk of the necessity of a Guru for the sadhak.)

Sri Aurobindo: Though generally a touch from the Guru is necessary, it is not indispensable. In my case there was no touch from a Guru. I got an inner touch and practised Yoga. At a certain stage, when I could not proceed any further, Lele gave me some help. When I came to Pondicherry I got from within a programme of my sadhana. I did it myself but I could not make any progress as to how to help others. Then came Mirra; I found it out with her help.

Disciple: May I ask one audacious question?

Sri Aurobindo: What is it?

Disciple: What is Mirra's contribution to this Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: You can ask that question but I am not going to answer it as you will not be able to understand.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The impersonal attitude is not sufficient.

Disciple: The impersonal attitude does not help?

Sri Aurobindo: There, you rush to draw a conclusion. The impersonal attitude is helpful, but it is not all. It gives the necessary calm, equality, universality, infinity. It ensures safety as compared with the life in the mental plane. But the results of the impersonal attitude are limited.

17 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: *Yesterday you were speaking about the insufficiency of the impersonal attitude.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I finished that subject.

Disciple: *You said something about the mind in this respect, which I could not catch.*

(No one could remember that, so the subject was allowed to lapse. Sri Aurobindo only remarked that with the impersonal attitude, the mind as well as any other part cannot have perfect transformation, though they may be spiritualized to a certain extent.)

Disciple: *You spoke of opening a direct connection with the gods – how can that be done?*

Sri Aurobindo: I knew you would ask that question. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: *Give us some idea.*

Sri Aurobindo: It is quite futile to answer this question – it will not help you.

(Somebody remarked. “Knock at the gates and they will be opened.”)

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, knock.

Disciple: *But where to knock?*

Sri Aurobindo: Knock everywhere.

Disciple: *He wants the key.*

Sri Aurobindo: The key is on the other side.

I can point out to you one method – just find out your own highest divine self which is quite apart from and above your ego. Those who have not got rid of egoism cannot approach the gods. There are gods who, when worshipped, fulfil the egoistic desires of men, but these gods are not the true gods, they belong to the vital plane.

Disciple: *Asuras also, when worshipped, give us wealth, success, prosperity and so forth.*

Sri Aurobindo: No, Asuras only use you, exploit you for their purposes and then throw you away.

Disciple: Do the vital gods help us to rise to the higher truth?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but their help is always conditional – you must fulfil certain conditions, before you can expect their help. Then, they will seek to prevent you when you try to overpass them.

Disciple: Do the gods obstruct us in our upward path?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, otherwise what is the significance of Indra sending his *apsarās* to seduce the sadhaks?

Disciple: That is all fable.

Sri Aurobindo: There appears your European mentality. The forms given may be fables – certainly it never happened that Indra sent his *apsarās* to seduce Viswamitra. But the significance is quite true.

Disciple: Where is the plane where the true gods live?

Sri Aurobindo: They live in the supramental plane as also in the higher planes.

Disciple: Beyond the supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, do you think that the supramental is the highest plane?

*

X referred to the Christian theory that below the Trinity and above man there are seven gods who help to raise men.

Disciple: What are these gods?

Disciple: They represent the higher self of man.

Sri Aurobindo: But the self of man is not good.

Disciple: Perhaps the seven gods refer to the seven lights contained within the white light.

Sri Aurobindo: But the seven lights are only those which we can see. There are other lights. Why should there be only seven gods?

Disciple: *There may be ultra-violet gods. (Laughter)*

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think it ridiculous that there may be ultra-violet gods? The colour of Sri Krishna is conceived to be blue. The blue light is the base-light on which the higher golden rays play.

Disciple: *What is Krishna as he is conceived by the Vaishnavas?*

Sri Aurobindo: You must be clear as to what you mean by Krishna.

Disciple: *I refer to Krishna as he is conceived by the Vaishnavas. They say that Krishna belongs to the Ananda plane.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the Vaishnava Krishna is of the Ananda plane.

*

Disciple: *Why do the gods seek the worship of men?*

Sri Aurobindo: They do not seek it. If you ask the gods what do they think of their worshippers, they will say that these men are all bores. But when men seek their help by fulfilling the necessary conditions they have to help them – that is a necessary arrangement. All these gods are manifestations of the Supreme Being and they help men to rise at certain stages.

Disciple: *What is the harm if people seek the help of the vital gods when they are in a lower stage of development?*

Sri Aurobindo: They mistake the Asuras for the gods.

Disciple: *What is the conception of the gods as they are worshipped by Hindus?*

Sri Aurobindo: The gods worshipped by the Hindus are quite significant. They represent different aspects of the supreme Divine Being. But this inner significance is often lost sight of.

Disciple: *The Asuras also are manifestations of God.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that is from another standpoint. By opposition they help man in his upward evolution. This is the standpoint from which God is known integrally – *samagram; vāsudevah sarvam* [“The Divine Being is all.” The Gita, VII, 19.]

Disciple: *You spoke of the change of the laws of the material world.*

We can understand that the living cells of the body are susceptible of change. But can the laws of chemistry and physics be changed? For example, can the law of gravitation be changed?

Sri Aurobindo: You can change the conditions and then the operation will change. Take a concrete example, the physical body. External forces cause pain in the body. But conditions in the body can be so changed that those very external forces will cause pleasure instead of pain.

We have not in mind the change of the whole material world. But in certain cases, the conditions can be so changed as to open up new possibilities in material phenomena.

*

(There was some talk about life in physical atoms.)

Sri Aurobindo: Do you believe that there is life in a watch?

Disciple: The children believe that.

Sri Aurobindo: I agree with the children. It is well known that watches behave differently with different persons. They even respond to the thought and will in man.

Disciple: Watches have life!

Sri Aurobindo: I knew you would be astounded.

Disciple: Motor cars have been said to have life.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, and railway engines.

Disciple: It was observed that railway engines when given rest can develop greater speed.

Sri Aurobindo: That is well known.

Disciple: That is only a case of fatigue which is seen in material bodies.

Disciple: But is not fatigue a sign of life?

Disciple: It is only a characteristic of matter. Had there been life, there would have been a feeling and a consciousness of fatigue.

***Disciple:** There you go further and demand mind and consciousness in material bodies.*

Sri Aurobindo: If you go deep you will find that the fatigue shown by material bodies is a sign of life in them. That life may not have ordinary vital and mental characteristics. These ideas of the vital and the mental prevent us from seeing the life that is characteristic of material bodies. There is nothing purely material – there is life everywhere. Material atoms have choice and will peculiar to themselves.

18 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: You said that there would be a hierarchy among supermen. What are the minimum qualifications for being a superman?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a difficult question to answer.

Disciple: Is there anybody here who has attained the minimum?

Sri Aurobindo: No. There are three stages for becoming a superman. Firstly, all the parts of the being from the mental to the physical and even to the most material must be opened to the higher Truth; secondly, the consciousness must be normally seated on the supramental plane; thirdly, all the activities of the mental, the vital and the physical must be fully organized by the higher power. All these need not be one after the other – they help each other but all these must be accomplished before one can be a superman, and there you have the minimum.

Disciple: What is the maximum?

Sri Aurobindo: There is no maximum.

Disciple: When the parts become open, does the struggle with the hostile forces become stronger?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the work done before.

Disciple: The work that is done before the opening – is that conscious?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean? All opening is conscious – as there is progressive consciousness there is opening.

Disciple: What kind of work is done before conscious opening?

Sri Aurobindo: There is the work of the intuitive mind. Intuitions may be of great help in ordinary life, but they are all mental movements. They are glorified guesses – the guesses may be all right, but still they are nothing more than guesses. Then there may be a partial opening and the mind may be partly supramentalized. When the opening is full there appears the modified supermind.

Disciple: What is meant by modified supermind?

Sri Aurobindo: The supramental as it comes down and modifies the mental movements, it itself gets modified – thus it appears differently in

different persons. In the *Arya* I wrote fully about the Intuitive Supermind, the Representative Supermind and the Imperative Supermind.

*

Disciple: You said yesterday that watches have life. We did not quite understand it.

Sri Aurobindo: They respond to your suggestions.

Disciple: What kind of suggestions – mental?

Sri Aurobindo: Your suggestions must be of the right kind and strong enough.

Disciple: What sort of response to they make?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course, they would not jump up if you ask them.

Disciple: Will they go faster or slower?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; and they may stop or start according to your suggestion.

Disciple: If the watch is out of repair, will it start if I give the suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: No, there must be the mechanical basis.

Disciple: Can fire be lighted by the exertion of will power?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different matter.

Disciple: Will the trigger of a gun go off if we can give the proper suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. It may take some time before the response comes, but if it is strong enough there will be a response.

*

Disciple: When there are a few supermen on the earth, what will be their relation to the rest of humanity?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a ticklish question.

Disciple: *Will they have a different language?*

Disciple: *Why a different language? They can convey greater force through ordinary words.*

Sri Aurobindo: Even poets do that.

Disciple: *Our language is mental – the superman cannot have a mere mental language.*

Sri Aurobindo: Language is not mental – it is half mental. Words were not at first associated with ideas. Sounds were the expressions of certain sensations produced in men by external objects. These sounds conveyed the impressions of those sensations and that did not depend on sounds of words but rather on the accent, the intonation which expressed the sensation. Gradually as the mind was developed, these primary intonations developed into a language.

Disciple: *It is said that there was an original language, common to all men, which in course of time was differentiated into different languages.*

Sri Aurobindo: Originally a word expressed many things. When men separated from each other, different groups retained different words and different senses of words. Thus the Greeks retained some words which were forgotten by the Indians and vice versa. Thus arose the different languages.

Disciple: *How does the general mentality of the race, the human race, help or hinder the sadhana of a few individuals?*

Sri Aurobindo: The ideas of the race are in the universal mind and they flow into the minds of the sadhaks and thus disturb them. It is for this reason that sadhaks want to remain separated from other men – so that they may have an atmosphere of their own. Thus we have thrown a wall around us so that the external atmosphere may not stifle our sadhana.

Disciple: *Has nearness in space an effect on the atmosphere?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you converse all day long with rickshawallas, you will certainly be affected by their attitude and thoughts.

First the mind has to be opened. The mechanical play of thought is to cease and the whole mind intuitivized.

19 August 1926 (No conversation because of rains.)

20 August 1926 (Evening)

(While taking my bath in the sea in the morning, I had experienced some difficulty when swimming through the irregular waves. Sri Aurobindo said you should give up such adventures in the future. The sea there is not safe; there is a belief current here that every year the sea there takes the soul of a human life. There is an undercurrent at that place which, if you fall into it, will carry you miles away into the sea. X who had accompanied me to the sea humorously remarked how he was afraid that if I was drowned, Sri Aurobindo would rebuke him. (*Laughter*))

Sri Aurobindo: That was your only fear! You feel responsible to me, but if A gets drowned I shall be responsible to the whole nation.

(In the course of the conversation that followed Sri Aurobindo casually remarked that the purpose of bath can be well served under the tap. What is the pleasure of taking bath in water full of night-soil?)

Disciple: There are two ways of opening ourselves to the higher power – through the mental and through the psychic. Do these respectively correspond with the *purusa* and the *prakrti*?

Sri Aurobindo: It cannot be looked upon in that way. When one approaches the higher truth through the mind, the approach is roundabout, in circles – through mental thinking. But when the psychic opens, the aspiration goes up straight. These two sides cannot be distinguished as *purusa* and *prakrti* sides, but the fact is that men generally go through the mental, and women through the psychic. A distinction can be made in this manner that the mental opening represents the consciousness side and the psychic opening represents the Ananda side.

Disciple: Can one be a superman unless the psychic being in him is opened?

Sri Aurobindo: No. Those in whom the mind is developed and strong find it at first difficult to open the psychic – as the tendency of the mind is to externalize.

(A cyclonic gale began to blow and disturb the conversation.)

Disciple: Are there beings who enjoy these gales and storms?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. There are spirits of fire, of storm and so forth.

Disciple: *Can't these gales be stopped?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you can exert sufficient force. You just try and I shall support you. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: *Is it not more difficult to control the universal forces than to control beings?*

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be more difficult?

Disciple: *A being is something individualized.*

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be more difficult to control forces? If you can throw sufficient force yourself you can control the universal forces. What is most difficult to control is the material part of the universal play of forces.

Disciple: *Are the forces of Nature controlled and organized by psychic forces behind?*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by psychic forces? That is only a manner of describing.

Disciple: *I mean conscious forces which control the material forces of Nature.*

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by material forces?

Disciple: *Electricity, for example.*

Sri Aurobindo: What is electricity?

Disciple: *The energy which produces the phenomena known as electric.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is the standpoint of the scientist. We Yogis regard these things in a different way. They are all phenomena, manifestations of conscious forces behind. Thus electricity is a manifestation of Agni.

Disciple: *Can these forces which manifest the phenomena of Nature be controlled by the exertion of Yogic powers?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, though there is a limit to the exertion of such powers.

Disciple: *There is certainly a purpose behind all these movements of Nature.*

Sri Aurobindo: What purpose?

Disciple: We may not know that purpose, but there must be some purpose. And that purpose sets the limit.

Sri Aurobindo: That is only attributing human ideas to the explanation of universal phenomena – and this is quite useless. A fire attacks this house, I exert a force and the fire diverts itself to another house. What purpose is there in all this?

Disciple: There is a belief that even a leaf does not fall unnoticed by God.

Disciple: That is true in a sense. All the things and events of the world are encompassed within the consciousness of God and it is certainly not impossible for God consciously to determine the smallest detail.

Sri Aurobindo: Thus, when I take three lumps of sugar instead of two for my tea, is it God that determines the choice with me? That is all nonsense – the ways of God are not like that. It is only when the human mind tries to understand things that they apply such mental ideas.

Disciple: Then what do you mean by saying that there is a limit to the influence one can exert on the universal forces?

Sri Aurobindo: The most material things are very difficult to manage. Thus it is easier to control the wind than to turn the water-tap by throwing your Yogic force upon the central part of the forces working behind these phenomena.

*

Sri Aurobindo: It is not very difficult to enter into the consciousness of the universal forces. It is only one step.

Disciple: One step from where?

Sri Aurobindo: From the mental consciousness. It is the mental consciousness which prevents us from entering into the consciousness of the forces which have a consciousness quite different from the mental.

Disciple: When a Yogi wants to control activities in the external world, he does not proceed to take account of the conditions and causes in detail as a scientist would do; he looks to the force behind

the movement and acts upon the centre of the force.

21 August 1926 (Evening)

(I read a letter from X who is detained in Insein Jail. In connection with his reference to *yogah karmasu kauśalam*, Sri Aurobindo remarked: “He seems to think that *kauśalam* is the Yoga; in that case all clever men would be Yogis.” Y put a long and elaborate question which turned upon the question whether Sri Aurobindo had built up a Yoga-Pitha in the higher plane and the supramental plane, as other Yogis are supposed to do in their own way, which has to be brought down to the lower plane – down to the material.)

Sri Aurobindo: No, I have built nothing there and do not know what is built in the supramental plane. The supramental plane is not a plane of constructions. That is a plane of “what is”; it is only on the mental plane that constructions are made. These mental constructions may have some truth behind them – though generally they have no such truth; even when there is some truth behind the constructions of the mind, the mind may mix up many vital and mental elements and the constructions become very imperfect expressions of the truth. Yet they are allowed to persist sometime in order to work out the possibilities; then those constructions are demolished and newer forms are developed. It is for this reason that we do not rush to work; such mental constructions often hinder the expressions of Truth and we are waiting for the Truth to express itself. You perhaps refer to the work at Chandernagore.

Disciple: Yes.

Sri Aurobindo: I had some constructions in mind; I gave them to Z to be worked out by him. Even then I had nothing definite, I knew that the mental construction might not succeed, yet my idea was to see the possibilities. But Z put forth his vital elements into the plan and the vital forces at once proceeded to frustrate it, as they always have done in the past. They also caught hold of Z. I at first tried to withdraw Z from it but did not succeed. Now, I have put the whole thing outside my atmosphere and do not think about it. It will be known as Aurobindo Ghose’s first *garbhaśrāva* [delivery]. The only course now left is that those who are worth ought to come out of it.

Disciple: They at first sought to make it a place for Yogins, then it gradually turned into a Sangha.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I wanted that to consist of Yogins – it might be a Sangha, but a Sangha of Yogins.

Disciple: *You say that Yogins can do some work as a sort of exercise – as a help to the growth of the Truth in them. What are the limits to such work for exercise?*

Sri Aurobindo: The limit is that the work should not be allowed to interfere with Yoga. Suppose you take up a work which leaves no time for Yoga – how will you then carry on Yoga? A work which takes up all your attention and your energy cannot be undertaken by Yogins. Then there are works which have a quite different *dharma*; for example, political work, and that is incompatible with Yoga. Then you must not be attached to any work or mental construction. You must be prepared to give it up when necessary. You must be merciless in rejecting even your own creations. The idea of *kartavyam* [That which must be done] must not be allowed to interfere with your Yoga.

Disciple: *Is it not necessary at a certain stage to give up all work?*

Sri Aurobindo: There cannot be a general rule. One or two – some may have to withdraw from all work at a certain time, but this may not be necessary for all. I myself was doing work in the *Arya*. I gave it up when I found that I was not able to know something which I wanted to know – some things had to be worked out which needed all my energy. The whole responsibility was on me for finding out the path and I had to do it. I also found that I could not do anything definite through the *Arya* – I had to externalize much of my energy which could be better utilized for inward work. Even then I was doing some work – even political work.

Disciple: *Political work! In what sense?*

Sri Aurobindo: That is not a sensible question.

Disciple: *Let us have some idea.*

Sri Aurobindo: I threw out some forces on the different movements. Some forces had to be helped, some had to be combated, and that work was not confined to India. I was not at first very successful. Often the force I threw achieved nothing or even produced results quite different from what I intended. The reason was that at that time I did not fully know the play of the vital forces. I used to put forth something vital from me and that used to confuse the whole thing. Gradually I corrected that; still there was some putting forth of the vital, but that was pure and subtle. All this, however, was done not from the Supramental. I did not know what was going to happen – I simply knew what had to be done

and did it. It would have been quite different in the Supramental where everything is known and decided.

Disciple: How do you come to know what has to be done?

Sri Aurobindo: That comes through the higher mind.

Disciple: Are you working through the Arya Samajists?

Sri Aurobindo: Arya Samajists! Yes, in a way...

Disciple: Did you exert any force during the European war?

Sri Aurobindo: No, neither of the sides had my sympathy. It would have been a greater disaster if Germany had won.

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: With all their music and philosophy the Germans are a barbaric race. When Germany was triumphantly marching towards Paris, I knew that Paris must be saved. At that time I consulted the map and almost saw the very place where the Germans would be stopped. It is curious that often my mind hammered upon something that it must happen. Then when it goes out of my mind, that thing happens though often in an unexpected manner. Thus, at one time I thought that Alsace-Lorraine must go to France. Then it went out of my mind – and see how it has come about!

Disciple: Perhaps when there is desire behind, then your attempts to exert influence do not succeed.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not success that is always intended – attempts are to be made for working out possibilities. There is no cut and dried and exact program – it is all experience and growth.

*

Sri Aurobindo: I threw my force through X and Y. The political movements in India are such that it is not possible to do much through them. They cannot hold any force that is thrown upon them. The enormous tamas that has come upon India frustrates all attempts. The force is split up and disappears.

Disciple: Who has brought this tamas on India?

Sri Aurobindo: It has been the result of various vital movements. Disintegration had begun when the Europeans were coming to India. And when the British-rule became established the whole thing collapsed. If any force is thrown on a movement, there is some jerking, just like the shock of electricity on a lifeless thing – there is some temporary throwing about of hands and feet and then the whole movement comes to a standstill. There must be some awakening before anything effective can be accomplished.

Disciple: Have things come to the worst? Will it now begin to mend?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the worst stage has passed and the various movements are signs of awakening life.

Disciple: Is there a chance of India's breaking up?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if there be four or five more Gandhis. (*Laughter*)

Disciple: Did you ever work through Gandhi?

Sri Aurobindo: I at first did not know what he was about. I thought that it was a resuscitation of the Swadeshi movement. Then gradually I came to know that there was nothing behind the movement and it was going to end in a fiasco. Gandhi was not meant for politics – he could not see the political needs of the situation. He only had some constructions in his mind and wanted to throw them into action.

Disciple: He at first did not take up the idea of Swaraj. His movement was for redressing the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs.

Sri Aurobindo: Gandhi always had something behind what was superficially in his mind. What he says is not always what he means. He had for a long time an idea of fighting against the British rule. He is not for great things. He can do things on a small scale and over a selected group of people he can exert tremendous personal influence. He ends often in a sort of compromise – as he did in South Africa. Nowhere has he achieved any great success.

Disciple: Perhaps he would have succeeded if he had started civil disobedience at Bardoli.

Sri Aurobindo: No, that would have ended in a miserable failure – there would have been huge massacres and the progress of India would have been checked for decades. There Gandhi got the right inspiration when

he stopped that; he felt within himself that he was going beyond his depths.

Disciple: Then it was only a pretence that he stopped civil disobedience at Bardoli?

Sri Aurobindo: It was not a pretence – it was his mind which found out certain justifications, though there was something behind without his knowledge, which really stopped him.

(In reference to X's question at the beginning, Sri Aurobindo said that he had constructed nothing in the Supramental – he himself got the idea of Supramental after ten years of Yoga. It has been a progressive Yoga. What is going on in the Supramental is not allowed to be known beforehand as the hostile forces may frustrate it.)

Disciple: It is not told to us, but you yourself know it.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, no. I know nothing about that. I only see what has to be done and do it.

(There was reference to a vision seen by X – that there was a Yogic circle surrounded by sentinels. Sri Aurobindo and others were within the circle and no one was allowed to enter into it unless he had certain signs and marks. It was sought to smuggle X into the circle. It could be seen, however, that the building of the Yogic circle was not complete.)

Sri Aurobindo: It was a mere vital vision – an indication of what was going on in X himself. In all such visions, the building is seen to be unfinished and incomplete. Such visions do not give any definite or clear knowledge – they only give certain indications about what is going on.

Disciple: Going on where – in the Supramental?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh no; in the vital and the mental.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The creations are all in the lower planes – the Supramental is trying to construct something here below. Many things have to be broken down, many possibilities to be worked out – as is done in the life of the Yogins. The ultimate results are worked out progressively but not known beforehand, as the hostile forces might frustrate them. But in the Supramental, there is no hostile force.

22 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Did you say yesterday that you are working through the Arya Samajists, that is by throwing Yogic force?

Sri Aurobindo: No, why should I help the Arya Samajist movement?

Disciple: As regards the announcement of the world-teacher by the Theosophists is there any truth in that?

Sri Aurobindo: What truth?

Disciple: Do they get any real indication of the Truth that is coming?

Sri Aurobindo: Falsehood may as well come and Z will be a fit receptacle for that.

Disciple: They say a new Truth is coming.

Sri Aurobindo: What truth? An Avatar.

Disciple: An Avatar comes with his own body.

Sri Aurobindo: He may as well use the body of someone else. Was Chaitanya an Avatar?

Disciple: Yes, we take him to be an Avatar.

Sri Aurobindo: Chaitanya's body was occasionally taken hold of by an Avatar.

Disciple: Can Z play such a role?

Sri Aurobindo: Oh no, he is quite a commonplace sort of man and all their visions and glimpses are vital. The Theosophists do not give any new truth; brotherhood and charity and harmony – all these are very old truths.

Disciple: Have they got any glimpse of the Supramental Truth that is coming down?

Sri Aurobindo: The Supramental comes at the end of the Yoga, not at the beginning.

Disciple: You said one day that there are some people in America who have got a glimpse of the Supramental Truth.

Sri Aurobindo: I did not say that they have a glimpse of the Supramental; what they have is similar inner experience.

Disciple: Similar to what?

Sri Aurobindo: Similar to the experiences we have.

(Sri Aurobindo then talked of a Swedish lady in America who is a master of 11 languages and a great educationist. She has inner spiritual experiences – she has been feeling that she was losing herself too much in external work. She has now decided to retire from external work and devote herself to Yoga. She came to a man in America, who has started sacred schools throughout the country for preaching the ideas of the *Arya*. Sri Aurobindo has no idea about what sort of work that man is doing. Through this man that lady has approached Sri Aurobindo for guidance in her Yoga.)

Disciple: What are the spiritual possibilities of the American people?

Sri Aurobindo: They can give us money. (*Laughter*) There is nothing specially spiritual in them.

Disciple: They receive well Indian philosophy and spiritual preachers from India.

Sri Aurobindo: That is for intellectual satisfaction. Various preachers from India have made many disciples there and thus Indian philosophy can easily get a hearing. But the American people are more receptive to new things than any other country in Europe, e.g. England.

(There was some talk about Americans who have adopted Hinduism.)

Disciple: What place do these converts occupy in Hindu society?

Sri Aurobindo: They have not entered Hindu society but have simply adopted Hinduism. Buddhism was adopted by the Chinese and the Japanese – did they enter the fold of Hindu society?

Disciple: In what does then the Hinduism of these new converts consist?

Sri Aurobindo: They believe in Vedanta, in Krishna, in the Hindu Gods and so forth.

Disciple: *What is the difference between Arya Samajism and Hinduism?*

Sri Aurobindo: Difference! The Arya Samajists are a sect of the Hindus. They accept the Vedas, but do not accept the Puranas.

Disciple: *They have no caste system – there are frequent inter-marriages under the auspices of the Arya Samajists.*

Disciple: *The Hindu Sangathan movement is nowadays very popular.*

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know what the Sangathanists are doing. Are they doing any work or simply talking?

Disciple: *They are establishing Hindu Sabhas in different provinces and towns.*

Sri Aurobindo: The Congress movement.

Disciple: *What should be the lines the Sangathan should follow?*

Sri Aurobindo: I am not prepared to answer this question... Sangathan is only a beginning... Sangathan means organization... The Hindus should be first self-conscious.

23 August 1926 (Evening)

Sri Aurobindo (To X): You asked about the forms of the gods. They have fixed forms which indeed express their nature. But one cannot see this form unless he has passed the limit of human consciousness. The forms in which gods appear to men have two elements – first, there is the reflection of their fixed form; the reflection may not be perfect and may vary according to the plane – mental or vital – where it is manifested; secondly, the mind, that is the consciousness of the bhakta may contribute something.

Those who approach through the impersonal attitude see God in the form of man – that is perhaps why God is called Purusha.

(Y referred to the Buddhistic mythology which Sri Aurobindo remarked was very fantastic; specially the Lamaist doctrines.

There was reference to cycles which exactly repeated themselves. Sri Aurobindo remarked that this cannot be true. When in Alipur Jail, he had visions about cycles and *manvantaras*, which at that time he regarded to be very important experiences. There he saw the cycles as not repeating themselves exactly but they were renewed on higher and higher planes.)

Disciple: Are there any worlds where there is no evolution?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: What is the movement there?

Sri Aurobindo: Why should there be any movement?

Disciple: What sort of life is that?

Sri Aurobindo: Very happy life. It is only men who think that there cannot be happiness unless there be conflict and progress, smiles and tears.

(There was some humorous talk about the superstitious beliefs that ancestors are supported in heaven by the *pindas* [the symbolic food offered to one's father and forefathers in funeral rites] offered by their descendants.)

Sri Aurobindo: The curious thing is how they jumble together inconsistent ideas. Thus this theory of *pinda* and *pitrloka*¹ is quite inconsistent

1. The world of the forefathers.

with the doctrine of rebirth in which also these people believe. The explanation is that the *pinda* belief is a relic of past superstitions which has persisted even after the doctrine of rebirth was found.

(There was some talk about superstitious beliefs. Y referred to a case where a marriage contracted between a *rāksasa gana* woman and a *nara gana* man resulted in the premature death of the latter.)

Sri Aurobindo: There is some truth in that. In the sexual act there is very great, rather the most violent interchange of vital forces – some persons draw away the whole vitality from others. The *rāksasa gana* etc. represent the vital beings.

Disciple: As there is some truth in astrology and horoscopes, is it not better that nations should govern their marriages by these instead of marrying freely?

Sri Aurobindo: The difficulty is that true interpreters will not be found. It ought to be investigated what truly is there behind these. But it is not an easy task. Thus life would be intolerable if we begin to interpret the truth behind all omens.

Disciple: Those who believe in omens invite dangers by their very beliefs.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the best thing is to throw away all these superstitions; go straight in your path and overcome difficulties as they arise.

Disciple: Can human beings attain to the status of gods?

Sri Aurobindo: The Puranas say so. It is said there that a man can be Indra... If it be supposed that a man has different beings, and his god-self is in the Supramental, then if one can bring down that god-self, he will become a god. The answer depends on whether man is god or not. According to a theory, a man has four beings; the highest is God, the lowest is man.

Disciple: What are the middle?

Sri Aurobindo: The mental and the vital.

*

Sri Aurobindo: The only objection to this theory of every man having a god-self is that then the world of gods would be too populous.

Disciple: *You said that day that in the supramental plane there are only a few gods – the different personalities of God.*

Sri Aurobindo: Oh, the personalities which rule the universe. That is different – I mean gods in a wider sense.

Disciple: *Is there sex difference among gods?*

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? What is sex here in the human plane – only a sort of difference, like positive and negative poles. Why should there not be such differences among the gods? What after all is the distinction between Purusha and Prakriti?

Disciple: *Two aspects of God.*

Sri Aurobindo: Similarly there may be two aspects among the gods.

24 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is the difference between the unity of India and the unity of Europe?

Sri Aurobindo: The two are quite different. Europe has no definite collective personality as India. The different countries of Europe have different natures – thus England and France have quite different characteristics.

Disciple: Is the difference between the different provinces of India the same as that between the different countries in Europe?

Sri Aurobindo: No. The different provinces in India are related to each other as Scotland, Wales and England are related. The unity of Europe is in formation, but the collective personality of India is already there. India has a super-personality which is evolving the differences in different provinces, while in Europe there are the different countries which are trying to evolve a collective personality.

Disciple: Has the super-personality of India been always there?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, so far as history goes. We do not know anything about the time when the Aryans had not come to India.

Disciple: What is the nature of this super-personality of India?

Sri Aurobindo: That I know as much as you know. You have to look to the characteristics of the Indian people in order to understand the nature of the super-personality.

Disciple: What is then this talk about Europe as a unity?

Sri Aurobindo: That refers to the common culture and the mentality which the Europeans have in common as distinguished from that in any other part of the earth.

Disciple: Some say that a nation cannot have unity unless there is a war with some other nation.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a vital way of achieving unity. Real unity does not come in that way.

(There was some talk about the unity of different peoples. The different parts of Japan are more united than the different parts of Great Britain. Germany and Austria would have been united

but for the interference of France and other countries.)

Disciple: Can individuals uniting together evolve a collective personality?

Sri Aurobindo: That is like the question – whether eggs come first or the hens.

Disciple: But we know how eggs come out of hens and hens out of eggs.

Sri Aurobindo: Do we?

Disciple: A personality consists of two elements – a being and its nature.

Sri Aurobindo: Only two?

Disciple: What more?

Sri Aurobindo: There may be different personalities combining together to form a single personality. Many personalities have mixed together in India.

Disciple: Is the nature of the super-personality of India known as the śakti of India?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes. The super-personality may be a power of God which manifests in the nature of the country. It creates a sort of a *mandala*, a circle, and all those who come under this circle have the same nature, same characteristics.

Disciple: Can this super-personality be called a god?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, though it may not belong to the supramental plane. It may be an emanation from one of these supramental gods.

Disciple: Are there gods beyond the supramental plane?

Sri Aurobindo: We need not trouble about them – it is trouble enough to know the supramental gods.

Disciple: Have the gods personality?

Sri Aurobindo: Certainly.

Disciple: What is the difference between the personality of a god and

that of a human being?

Sri Aurobindo: As your personality differs from that of a lizard.

Disciple: *Then we have chance of one day attaining to the status of gods.*

Disciple: *Are there forms in the world of gods?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is the source of all forms.

(X referred to the Buddhist idea of a formless or *arūpa loka*.)

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there may be a *arūpa loka* – if by loka you mean any extension of consciousness.

(There was some talk about mental abstraction.)

Sri Aurobindo: In mind, idea, beauty, etc. are mere abstractions. Thus to the mind the Supramental is some abstraction but in truth it is much more concrete than anything we can conceive. Our idea of concreteness is something which is very palpable – thus a solid body to us is more concrete than air. When you go beyond the mind and really know the Supramental you find it to be infinitely more concrete than anything else – it is as hard as diamond, at the same time a most subtle fluid. It is for this possibility of confusion that I wrote about ideas realities and powers, not as mere abstractions of the mind.

25 August 1926 (Evening)

(I referred to the conversation or speech of Dr. Seal on the ideals of Indian education.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is all academic.

(I referred to the distinction he has made between *dharma* and *adhikāra*, duties and rights.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is putting modern European ideas into ancient conceptions. The ancient Indians understood *dharma* in a spiritual sense.

(I referred to his statement that stress should not be made only on individual development but the social side also must be developed.)

Sri Aurobindo: But that certainly does not apply to the Indians. They neglected the individual development, laying stress on communal consciousness.

(With reference to the conflict that arose between different groups and communities, Sri Aurobindo remarked that groups following their own *dharma* could not lead to conflict.)

Disciple: *What were the essential characteristics of ancient Indian education?*

Sri Aurobindo: In India education was not the same through all times. In ancient times education turned upon spiritual development and the development of character. It centred round the Vedas. There was also the cultural side. The Guru was a spiritual man through whose personal influence the spiritual side of the students developed. In ancient Greece, stress was laid on the development of intelligence – especially with reference to the arts, and the aesthetics. They did not learn much, but the intelligence was made to grow by creating a suitable atmosphere for it. In the classical period in India, education was very elaborate. You would be astonished to know what elaborate provisions were made for the education of women.

(Somebody remarked that 64 *kalās* or arts were cultivated.)

Disciple: *When was that?*

Sri Aurobindo: During the time of Kalidasa. Then there were the universities of Nalanda and Takshila. They were like the medieval schools of Europe – the education centred round philosophy and discussion. The

ancient methods cannot all be revived. Thus, students were sent by the Guru to tend his cows – is that possible in modern times?

(There was some talk about the style of Brajendranath Seal – someone had compared that to Sri Aurobindo's style.)

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that my style is so dull and heavy?

(Reference was made how few people in India could understand and appreciate the *Arya*.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is due to two reasons. First, to understand the *Arya* requires a good knowledge of English and very few Indians can claim that. Secondly, one must know and feel interested in the subject.

Disciple: Those who are acquainted with the ideas in our sadhana can easily follow the *Arya*.

Sri Aurobindo: No. A good knowledge of English is required. People in America are reading the *Arya* and they do not find any extraordinary difficulty.

Disciple: After reading your writings, I cannot find interest in other writings, which seem to me to be dull.

Disciple: That is because his writings are very full of substance.

Sri Aurobindo: As a matter of fact I wrote the *Arya* not for anybody else but for myself. I wanted to express something that was in me.

Disciple: Your writings have exhausted all my intellectual curiosity.

Sri Aurobindo: That is because you have entered the Yoga.

(I referred to the style of Gandhi as being very good.)

Sri Aurobindo: I find it to be very bad. He seems to have no style at all.

Disciple: I found his writings to be very refreshing.

Sri Aurobindo: I find them to be very depressing, and that for two reasons: first, he exaggerates falsehood to such an extent as to appear like truth; secondly, he raises the mind to a high pitch and then lets it fall; he raises expectations and then falsifies them.

Disciple: He seems to think very clearly.

Sri Aurobindo: I wonder where you find clear thinking in him. He is most illogical whenever he tries to argue. Some of his writings are very

forceful – but they were not his arguments; he wrote them under inspiration. The Europeans like his writings not because there is any style but they seem to see through it some force in the man. Gandhi's reasoning consists of premises and logical conclusions drawn from them but the whole thing contradicts truth and common sense. That sort of subtle logic appeals to a certain class of Indian minds.

Disciple: The little life that was in the non-co-operation movement – what was that due to?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you call that life? That was something like electric dancing.

Disciple: How could then so many men be attracted?

Sri Aurobindo: There was a simple appeal – Charkha, Swaraj within one year and so forth – immense concentration of force on a small point, which easily carried away people for the moment, though the enthusiasm could not last long. Life-movement is not like that – it is a free flow; there is some dynamic truth behind which brings real life and that creates its own organizations which are not merely mechanical and artificial. But Gandhi had no hold of such truth. He had certain ideas in his brain, he threw them with great force, he hammered on with them; there was a certain kind of vital force and it touched the vital part of men and created a temporary enthusiasm which could last for only two or three years. This is quite useful in revolution, but there must be some truth behind, otherwise no fruitful result can be achieved. Gandhi had no such truth.

Disciple: Das, Lajpat Rai and others at first resisted Gandhi, but somehow they afterwards surrendered.

Sri Aurobindo: Das knew, but everybody seemed to have lost his head at that time.

Brajendranath has absorbed many ideas – but does not seem to think things out. So his writings are more or less academic, divorced from the actualities of life.

26 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Can the physical personality of a man be completely got over by Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the physical personality? There is the external personality of man which is predominantly physical but there is also the vital and the mental. The external part of man is only that portion which has come out – there is much more behind. Some portion is very near the surface, ready for expression – other parts are more hidden and may not come out in this life. It is the object of Yoga to harmonize the different parts in the mental being, also in the vital being and in the physical and then the whole is to be given a harmonious expression, and for this the external personality has to be got over and changed. Some of the elements may remain but they are transformed.

Disciple: Which are the elements that remain?

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on individual cases – which elements are to be kept and transformed and which are to be rejected. There is no general rule. In Yoga the external personality is so much changed as to appear as a quite different being. Thus when X is transformed by Yoga, those who have not seen him for 10 years, will find it difficult to recognize him.

Disciple: In the external personality there may be combined different personalities.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in the personality of man there may be mental elements, mental-vital elements (e.g. aesthetic taste) and physical elements. Man's personality is mainly physical – the mental and the vital are there but involved in the physical.

Disciple: Are the different personalities a result of past life?

Sri Aurobindo: There are also other elements – personalities of past lives may be combined with what the man creates in the present life.

But it is difficult to distinguish and separate the personalities in men who are not well-developed. There all the elements are jumbled together, as when we say that a person has no individuality. I call these cases of single personality. But in developed men the personalities can be easily distinguished.

Disciple: Are the apparent contradictions in the character of men to

be accounted for in this manner?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Let us take concrete examples. Robespierre at one time could not pass the sentence of death on a criminal.

Sri Aurobindo: That was in his young age and he got over that.

Disciple: In Das there were many personalities – the lawyer, the poet, the politician.

Sri Aurobindo: In your article you have said that Das's speeches were not logical. But in previous days all his speeches were logical, like those of a lawyer. When he entered into politics, he gave up that habit and that was why he succeeded. The politician in Das was quite different from the lawyer.

Disciple: There have been persons whose private life was very loose, but in public life they were very successful.

Sri Aurobindo: What connection is there between morality and greatness? Most great men were immoral. Looseness in private morality arises from a strong vital being and that leads to success in great works.

Immorality consists in allowing the vital impulses to go out unchecked. That may arise from strength or from weakness. In the case of strength the vital impulses go out by the strength; in the case of weakness, they go out because they cannot be checked.

Self-control or *tapasyā* does not necessarily require a Yogi or a divine man. Asuras exercise control over their vital impulses – to conserve energy for greater enjoyment.

Those who do not give indulgence to their impulses through weakness or fear of society may be respectable, but I cannot call them pure.

The ordinary idea of morality is the observance of social laws. Thus when X cohabited with his pregnant wife, there was nothing immoral in it according to ordinary ideas, but I regard that as immoral.

Most saints have been sinners at the earlier part of their lives, e.g. Bilwamangal.

Disciple: There are exceptions.

Sri Aurobindo: No, the fact is that all do not confess their sins. Das was not moral, but he became great.

Disciple: In his late life he controlled himself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he was always a very strong man.

27 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: You referred to beauty as a power in the higher plane whereas it is a mere abstraction in the mental plane.

Sri Aurobindo: Beauty is the power of God's Ananda and it is a power in every plane.

Disciple: What do you mean by beauty as power?

Sri Aurobindo: But what is beauty? It is God Himself in His Ananda power seeking perfect expression in the world.

Disciple: What is bhakti? What is the place of beauty in it?

Sri Aurobindo: Bhakti contains many things else – e.g., love, faith.

Disciple: Must there be a sense of beauty in bhakti?

Sri Aurobindo: May or may not be. In India, beauty is regarded as a great power through which God can be approached easily. In Europe, beauty is regarded to be something immoral.

Disciple: Beauty is relation – it consists in harmony and proportion in the different elements. A simple thing without any relation cannot be beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo: That is how beauty expresses itself. The essence of beauty does not consist in harmonious form – the form is only a means to express beauty and then again this applies to beauty of form. There may be other kinds of beauty, e.g. beauty of thought, beauty of force, beauty of life.

Disciple: What is the distinction between beauty of life and beauty of form?

Sri Aurobindo: (Taking up a piece of wood) Here there is no life, but there is form. In beauty of life there is form, but there may be form without life.

Disciple: You spoke of art and aesthetics as belonging to the vital plane.

Sri Aurobindo: The first impulse comes from the vital but it can take elements from any other plane.

Disciple: A good artist does not work with the mind; he gets

inspiration from a higher source.

Sri Aurobindo: The higher power acting on the vital creates an impulse and then it rises to the mental to find expression. There is always some play of the intellect. But the best kinds of poetry are produced through the intuitive mind.

The intuitive mind means many things – it implies the play of many forces.

In order to produce good art the physical instrument must be trained. Thus there are men who have great things above but they all become confused when they come to the physical plane.

Disciple: One must know the language before he can write poetry.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, he must know the prosody.

Disciple: The training of the physical mind will also be done by the higher power.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but it is a great advantage if it is already trained.

Disciple: That also applies to the mental and the vital?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: The physical instrument may have been trained in a previous birth?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is generally the case with poets and artists – the instruments are ready, yet they have to be trained.

Disciple: Good art implies limitation and restriction.

Sri Aurobindo: But all good artists break through conventions. They do not guide themselves by conventions; they adopt lines and forms as conditions but these conditions are very elastic. Thus different poets using different metres, make them produce different kinds of beauty – the beauty is not confined to the line and form, it is always something more. This is what makes it difficult for Europeans to appreciate Indian art. Their ideal is the Hellenic ideal – perfection of form.

Disciple: What is it in beauty that produces delight in us?

Sri Aurobindo: Beauty is God expressing himself and the delight is determined by two things: first, the power that is expressing itself; second-

ly, the manner of the expression – more perfect the expression, more beauty there is in it.

Disciple: *Beauty is God himself!*

Disciple: *X is God himself.*

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that X is not beautiful? (*Laughter*)

Disciple: *But when one appreciates beauty he is not conscious that it is an expression of God.*

Sri Aurobindo: Men often appreciate ugly things. Again, when one runs after a beautiful girl, he does not think that he is running after God.

The appreciation of real beauty like everything else requires training.

Disciple: *What are the causes of the deterioration of the aesthetic sense in India?*

Sri Aurobindo: First, there is the decline in the vitality of the people; it began two or three centuries before. There were still some instincts for beauty. But everything collapsed with the European invasion – specially the influence of the English, the most inartistic people in the world. People began to imitate whatever the foreigners called good or what they thought that the foreigners called good. Thus Ravi Varma's pictures are imitations and very bad imitations of European art.

Disciple: *How are we to know that the ancient Indians were a very aesthetic people?*

Sri Aurobindo: That we can know from the descriptions contained in ancient Indian literature. Then many things have still survived and also many customs which show the high aesthetic sense of the Indian people.

Disciple: *When the higher power acts upon the vital being to change and purify it, does it act through the mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: It acts through the mind as well as directly.

Disciple: *Is the mind conscious of the changes that go on in the course of vital transformation?*

Sri Aurobindo: The preparations go on behind, though the mind grows more and more conscious of the changes that take place in the vital.

28 August 1926 (Evening)

(There was some talk about miraculous powers. A certain person had some powers but he fell ill and lost them.)

Sri Aurobindo: That shows that the powers were derived from a vital source. These powers are often great obstacles to a Yogi. Then a Yogi cannot exert them at any time at will. Some force is gathered and then that goes forth in action. It produces exhaustion of power – as is implied by the old phrase *tapah ksaya*. These powers are abused when a vulgar use is made of them as for demonstration, gathering disciples, satisfaction of egoism (of the lower kind). The Yogi properly uses such powers when something has to be done, and he gets an intuition. The vulgar use of these powers is undesirable only for this that it is an affair of the lower plane of consciousness and thus brings the Yogi downwards.

Disciple: Are these powers in the vital plane derived from evil forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily so, though that is in most cases.

Disciple: The tendency to acquire these powers is an obstacle to Yoga?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, when they are sought for their own sake, for the sake of vital satisfaction. But they may come in the course of unfolding the Yogic life.

(There was some talk about Ramkrishna [sic] giving the higher consciousness to a disciple by his touch.)

Sri Aurobindo: There is no use forcing things. Ramkrishna [sic] gave the Brahman consciousness to Hriday, but it did him no good and he had to take that back.

(There was some reference to Vivekananda's giving a premature touch to a disciple.)

Sri Aurobindo: Vivekananda was never effective as a guru. He was too intellectual for that.

Disciple: He made Sister Nivedita a disciple.

Sri Aurobindo: He acted upon her mind – but a guru must act upon something more than the mind. Nivedita got intellectual ideas, her mind was Indianised, she got some spiritual glimpses. When a Yogi takes disciples it involves a great exhaustion of his powers. It is for this that one

should take disciples only after *purna siddhi* [complete realization]. The disciples create obstacles in the guru's own course of sadhana, and he has to overcome these obstacles.

Disciple: Do not the disciples help the guru in some respects?

Sri Aurobindo: Disciples are not helpers. One is a helper from whom the Yogi gets something which he himself has not got. The disciples help by creating obstacles which provide exercise for the powers of the guru.

Disciple: That is a negative help. Is there any positive help?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes there is positive as well as negative help. Thus where there is true aspiration in the disciple in our Yoga, that is a great help. We are all trying to bring down the supramental power – and that creates a surface...[sentence incomplete]

When the disciple is very receptive, the guru has not to spend much of his force – it is then a natural outflow of force from the guru, it is a part of his own movement. Otherwise the guru has to exert special force on the disciple and that involves much expenditure on the part of the guru

29 August 1926 (Evening)

(X referred to an article on birth control in which it has been said that the system is not suitable to India on account of the low vitality there. The idea is that birth control methods involve exhaustion of the vital force. Sri Aurobindo did not seem to accept this view.)

Sri Aurobindo: Scientists and medical men have devised methods by which birth control may be made effective without any injury. The objects are twofold: first, the prevention of too many children; secondly, keeping the woman in good health, so that the few children she gives birth to may be healthy. Of course inner control is better. But can that be expected of the man? Again there is the distinction made between generation and regeneration. But mere control of the outward act is not sufficient for regeneration. When the sexual impulse is there and it is indulged in imagination, the loss is the same as in the outward act. When the inner control extends also to the control of the mind, then there is real regeneration – the whole thing is taken up to build a new life. But mere restraint is not sufficient.

Disciple: Whenever any birth control method is adopted there is some mental interference that hampers the vital act, thereby causing loss of vitality.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should it be so? The sexual act is fully indulged in.

Disciple: I mean the very idea that conception is to be prevented interferes with the normal act.

Sri Aurobindo: Suppose one has in his mind the production of good children – does that interfere in any way with the act?

Disciple: Gandhi has quoted all the doctors who oppose this method.

Sri Aurobindo: But he has not quoted those who support it.

Disciple: One objection is that it will increase license.

Sri Aurobindo: That again is the moralist idea. There are the two extremes – one extreme is inner control, the other is free indulgence; mid-between comes the system of birth control.

(There was some reference to the knowledge about birth control in ancient India. There is a tendency in some persons to find the correspondence of all modern ideas and conceptions with things

that were in ancient India.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is absurd. But there is no reason why the Indians should not speak about their ancient glory. That helps resilience. Mazzini praised the ancient greatness of his country; thereby he removed the depression and made the regeneration of Italy possible.

Disciple: Some person has said that the Indians had no knowledge about perception and conception.

Sri Aurobindo: In philosophy and psychology the ancient Indians knew far more than anybody else; they might have other methods of putting things – that is, they would describe the distinction between perception and conception by the distinction between manas and buddhi. These are elementary things and they went far beyond them. There are the Indian Yogic systems by the side of which the modern experimental psychology is nothing in comparison. Only in science – in physical science – they did not make much progress. It was because the humanity had not yet reached that point when these discoveries of science were possible.

Disciple: In medical science they made great progress.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in that they were the masters of all other people on the earth. They gave the fundamentals which the Greeks took up, and modern medical science has been based upon that.

Disciple: Nowadays there seems to be no advancement.

Sri Aurobindo: Attempts are being made in many places to advance the system. They are studying plants and their properties and so forth.

Disciple: The training the Kavirajas receive is very one-sided and thus they cannot make much progress.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a matter of tradition. Thus in the matter of examining the pulse there are many who are still great experts. Where the tradition is lost, of course there the art has deteriorated. The great inrush of European ideas and systems has swept away all sorts of traditions.

30 August 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: To-night Sri Krishna will be born.

Sri Aurobindo: He was born long ago.

Disciple: One year Janmastami [birthday of Krishna] fell on the 15th August.

Sri Aurobindo: 15th August is specially significant; that is the day of the ascension of the Virgin Mary – that implies that the physical nature is raised to divine nature. Virgin Mary refers to Nature – Jesus is the divine soul born in man; thus he is both the son of God as well as the son of man. The Catholic priests know this inner significance but they do not express that.

Disciple: Do they not believe in the external Christ and his life?

Sri Aurobindo: Some believe, some do not. There is a similar description in the Vedas.

(Sri Aurobindo compared some Homeric hymns with Vedic hymns – how cows were stolen by hostile forces and imprisoned in a mountain cave and how Indra with the help of other Gods released the cows who went up. The cows represent light – radiations from the supramental. *Saramā* is intuition. Mind takes the light and breaks it into parts and so forth.

Disciple: What are the characteristics of the religious life in Bengal?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by your question?

Disciple: Bengal has more life than other provinces.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is an accepted fact. At different times different provinces had led, now it is the turn of Bengal.

Disciple: Is there any connection with the religious life of Bengal and the present show of activity?

Disciple: Are there any peculiarities of religion in Bengal?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, there is the Shakti worship in Bengal and also Vaishnavism – these are in other parts also but Bengal gives peculiar prominence to these. The Shakti form of Tantricism developed in Bengal. Bengal, Nepal and Tibet are the three places where Tantricism developed. Bengal is emotional. They have a mental intuition – not intu-

itive mind. As I explained in my famous letter there is a quickness in the Bengalis, but there is not sufficient thought behind it. The Vedantic thought had not much influence in Bengal. They are very emotional. They quickly go to activity, but have not the patience for sustained work. There is Ramkrishna [sic] who had a very extraordinary play (activity) of the intuitive mind. Then there was great emotionalism in him and also a vital rapidity. He could have spiritual realization in three days, which others took years to accomplish. But he did not organize these realizations.

Disciple: Vaishnavism is nowadays very popular in Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that is because the Bengalis are very emotional. But this emotionalism has a tendency to externalize – it does not much help in inner spiritual growth. It has thus great dangers, as it has its merits.

(I referred to a woman who had not taken food for a long time. Sri Aurobindo said that theoretically it is quite possible but it is not at all easy to accomplish. He referred to his own fasting experience. How he could draw sufficient energy through Yogic force but could not stop the waste of tissues. Though on the second occasion this waste was comparatively much less than on the first occasion.)

31 August 1926 (Evening)

(Phillip raised some abstract theories about time.)

Sri Aurobindo: I do not bother myself with those questions. Of what use are they?

Disciple: Are not vital and mental spaces quite different from physical space?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: But are not these mere figures of speech – these phrases “field of consciousness”, “plane of consciousness”? Consciousness is not something extended.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you know what is consciousness? I find it to be widely extended. It is consciousness which knows the extension of matter. What is consciousness? When you feel anger – is it not extended in the body?

Disciple: Only the results of anger on the body are extended.

Sri Aurobindo: What is consciousness?

Disciple: I think, feel, will – that is what I know to be consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: These are the results of consciousness. We say force of consciousness, movement of consciousness – the movement must be somewhere; thus consciousness is in space. It is only when you think of consciousness as a mere mental abstraction – then of course it cannot be said to be extended.

Disciple: Thus, by space we have to mean a field where there is movement of forces?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes – and these are different in mental, in vital, in the physical – different sorts of forces and movements, so different planes.

Disciple: Are these arranged one above the other in space?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course not in the physical manner – they are different kinds of forces and movements. In the human consciousness they are so arranged – the mental over the vital, the vital over the physical.

Disciple: Why is it that in the vital plane the evil powers are easily mistaken to be gods?

Sri Aurobindo: It is because men approach these with vital and mental desires, vanity, ambition – these forces disguised as gods promise their satisfaction. You hear of persons possessed by Kali – these are mostly evil forces. In many temples these evil forces are worshipped.

Disciple: Do the gods harm men?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but not intentionally. When men come into the way of the gods they get hurt – thus through their own fault. People blame the gods in the same manner as they complain of other human beings. But the gods have no sentimental relations with men and they do not deviate from their work to satisfy the needs of men – they do not serve human interests, but the interests of eternal truth. There are eternal laws which they follow.

Disciple: Are the gods very busy?

Sri Aurobindo: Not in the same sense as we are – but they have their work.

Had there been no such difficulties and obstacles the world would have been very dull and uniform.

Time is the force of consciousness in action. Space is the extension of consciousness in being.

September 1926

1 September 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What is meant by the opening of the physical plane?

Sri Aurobindo: The consciousness in the physical plane is ignorant and involved and it has to open itself to the higher Truth and light. The vital and the mental also have to open – they also are ignorant and involved, but the physical is more so. On account of the half-light thrown by the mind, the physical being cannot be understood. When you have experience you will understand what physical being and physical consciousness is.

The opening of the physical plane does not mean that the whole physical nature has to be supramentalized – the physical being in the man is to be opened, thus making an opening in the physical nature for the supramental to come. That is the basis – unless the physical opens the supramental cannot be established. The supramental may come down to the mental and the vital – then one will be much above the ordinary level of humanity, still it will not be the thing.

Disciple: Will it withdraw, then?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, though it is not that nothing is done. It will be a help to the next attempt. If the physical can be opened, then it is something accomplished on the earth. The supramental is established above – it is to be brought down and established here.

Disciple: Is the physical consciousness in man the same as the physical consciousness in a plant?

Sri Aurobindo: No, the plant has not developed the physical mind as man; it is involved in the vital physical.

Disciple: That of the animal?

Sri Aurobindo: That is more near to man – it has a physical mind; the animal is in the physical plane though it has the play of the vital and the mental. The physical part of man is the animal man. In having the vital, he is superior to animals – he may be a devil but that is superior to animals.

Disciple: *Animals belong to the tamasic sarga [creation].*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but so does the physical man also.

Disciple: *The vital being is higher than the tamasic sarga.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is rajasic.

Disciple: *What will be the effect on the physical vital, when the supramental comes down?*

Sri Aurobindo: You mean the vital physical? It is very difficult to say. Of course there will be full mastery over the nervous system as well as over disease and death – there may be many more things.

When the supramental is realized then we shall see its conditions and possibilities.

Disciple: *Do the gods help us even if we do not invoke their aid or worship them?*

Sri Aurobindo: The gods have their own work – helping the spiritual evolution, and man as a part of it is helped.

Disciple: *When we carry on sadhana, is it not a part of their work to help us?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you can establish a relation with the gods by helping in the evolution. The help of man is required because on this earth it is through man that evolution is to be made.

There is a truth behind the relation between gods and men – but generally men confound the truth by their human ideas. Men think that they are the centre of the universe and everything else exists for their sake. That is a great mistake. Evolution is not only for men. Gods do not work to satisfy the needs and desires of men. So I spoke of the eternal laws of their work.

Disciple: *Are there physical gods?*

Sri Aurobindo: You mean gods in the physical plane? Yes, they are the cosmic forces. Thus, behind the fire, there is a divinity, that is not the spirit of fire.

Disciple: *What is the difference between divinity of fire and spirit of fire?*

Sri Aurobindo: Gods have their *ganas* – deputies through which they work. The spirit of fire is involved in the form of fire – it is a lower consciousness, a deputy so to speak of the divinity behind the principle of fire.

Disciple: How narrow and limited is the material conception of the universe?

Sri Aurobindo: Of course. The modern scientists now are coming to recognize something very subtle and mysterious but they cannot go very far.

Men understand the work of gods according to their own standards. From the supramental standpoint this human mentality – the needs and desires of men – appear very small and insignificant. This insignificance of the human standpoint is at the back of asceticism. These (ascetics) got glimpses of the nature of divine consciousness, but did not know how to bring that down to life, hence they forsook the life of the world.

It is very easy to become a sannyasi.

I entered the Brahman consciousness in three days, but for the supramental it took a decade. There are many forms of the Brahman consciousness – the *śānti* form, the ananda form. All the movements of the world appear to be mere names and forms – there is no movement of the vital, the mind is abolished and there is perfect peace and Ananda. One can remain eternally there without caring for anything else.

I came out as I got the command from above.

2 September 1926 (Evening)

(There was some talk about the influence of climate and place on man. X pointed out that some Bengali relatives domiciled in Assam have developed Mongolian features.)

Sri Aurobindo: That is due to something in the subtle physical. The men who have lived and died there have left a sort of archetype which works on man living there.

Malaria began in Bengal, spread to Bihar and ever since it has been spreading. Exploitation caused poverty and poverty diminished the resisting power, hence the prevalence of these diseases.

Disciple: In Kashmir there are places full of swamps, where the people are very poor, yet there is no malaria.

Sri Aurobindo: Kashmir has a quite different climate which is not favourable to the growth of malaria.

*

The square is the geometrical symbol of the supramental.

The double triangle represents the three planes in the higher nature and three planes in the lower nature. The supramental is at the centre.

The colour of the physical plane is red, of the vital plane purple and green, of the mental plane yellow, of the higher spiritual planes white and golden and blue.

The white light is essential purity, golden light is truth; blue represents spiritual ananda and also something else.

Disciple: What is the colour of the psychic being?

Sri Aurobindo: It has no colour.

3 September 1926 (Evening)

(X raised the topic of table-tapping. Sri Aurobindo said that generally no spirit comes from the outside. The will of the medium and the men participating creates a force which makes those manifestations. The answers are from the minds of the men – they may come from the subconscious mind or from the subliminal which knows many more things than men are aware of. The concentration of the men produces an atmosphere, a change in the (universal?) consciousness – which calls forth the manifestations.

Sometimes small spirits of the lower vital plane and the physical plane may take part in it and help in the manifestations simply for the sake of amusement.

Genuine cases of intervention are very rare. Dead persons can communicate with the living if they feel interested and are sufficiently near.

*

Sri Aurobindo described the experiments made by Mirra [the Mother] in these matters. She, simply by the exertion of her will could create such a force as would make a table to jump across a room and come to her bed where she was lying.

*

The idea that all sorts of departed persons are hanging about for centuries and respond to the table-rappers is ridiculously absurd.

*

Persons when dying may create thought-forms which appear before distant relatives. Dying persons may leave behind influences which may be taken up by vital beings and worked – this explains the genuine cases of oppression by the ghosts of departed persons.

Devils may appear in human bodies which they take possession of at the time of birth.

4 September 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: As regards the table-moving experiments by Mirra – was that done by will-force?

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is not the force of will which moves the table – some vital dynamic force is called forth, which compels the movement of the table.

Disciple: Moves the table?

Sri Aurobindo: No, compels the table to move.

Disciple: Is it done by suggestion?

Sri Aurobindo: No, suggestion is something mental. Those who have the power, by their concentration create an atmosphere in which the force is manifested; the force acts directly on the material body, similarly as electricity acts. There are men, who without the medium of an atmosphere can directly cause the force to act on matter.

Disciple: What is done in Mesmerism?

Sri Aurobindo: In Mesmerism the action is not on a material body but on a human being with a mind and acts through the mind. Some force in the vital physical being of the performer acts on the physical mind of the subject; this in its turn acts on the material body.

Disciple: Is the force used, something created or is it only some force utilized?

Sri Aurobindo: How can a force be created? It is a force of nature, as electricity is a force and it is simply utilized.

Disciple: It has been seen that when a flower vase is moved from one place to another, in the transit it remains invisible, nothing appears on snapshot photo. Does the thing disappear temporarily and appear again in a new place?

Sri Aurobindo: It is difficult to say what actually happens, but such disappearance is quite possible. The being which moves it may take the thing into its own atmosphere – its own plane – and it thus disappears and is then again brought forth. Material bodies are only gross formations of subtle physical forces. Even in the material plane there are various degrees of subtlety – but this line may be crossed and the thing may take another form in a higher plane – thus it is said that in the physical

world there are seven planes and ordinarily we are cognizant of the 7th plane – the gross material. The different manifestations in different planes are continuous.

Disciple: Is the human body sevenfold?

Sri Aurobindo: At least there are five gradations of the physical body and three of them can be easily known – e.g. the material physical, the vital physical, the mental physical; but the supramental physical and the Ananda physical are very difficult to know.

Thus when one can break the material barrier, the first thing he knows is the vital physical body. The vital physical is outside the material body – in the material body it acts through the nervous system. Thus, when there is disease in the body, it is first the vital physical that is attacked and afterwards it is manifested in the physical body. One can see any disease as it touches the vital physical and it can be thrown away, then there will be no disease of the body. At one time I used to get fever. I threw it away from the material body; then I felt fever not in the body, but around me in the vital physical; then I threw it away even from there.

Disciple: What is meant by having the inner eye opened by which these different bodies are distinguished?

Sri Aurobindo: That is only a way of speaking – one becomes conscious of the different bodies.

Disciple: That is, one knows the different bodies?

Sri Aurobindo: One becomes conscious; knowledge is not the same thing as consciousness – it is the result of consciousness. Thus, without knowing the physical body one is conscious of it – one has the sense, one feels – that is as much as we can say.

Disciple: When one has great sensibility, one is agitated by touches from the external – is it a weakness?

Sri Aurobindo: All agitation is weakness. But as one's consciousness is awakened, he becomes sensitive. Those who are stolid have no such sensibility. But to have sensibility without disturbance or agitation is real awakening.

Disciple: What is the life of atoms?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the life of atoms?

***Disciple:** There is the activity of the electrons, chemical affinities, and so forth.*

Sri Aurobindo: These are mechanical. We do not see in the atoms anything which we call life. But there is a sort of life and even consciousness in atoms that is very involved and mechanical, not at all individualized. One cannot ordinarily perceive these signs in atoms. But the life and consciousness that is there is outside the atom hovering about it. The universal being supports the atom with some form of consciousness and life and anyone who can enter into this universal being and consciousness can feel the life that is in atoms. Thus when a blow is struck on a table, the vibrations are purely mechanical but outside the table there is a consciousness, which disturbed by the vibrations gives response. Even metals have some sort of life. J. C. Bose left the metals and began investigating with plants because that was easier – if he had continued his experiments with the metals, he could have found many characteristics of life and consciousness there.

Men are individuals in comparison with the lower beings – atoms and material bodies. But they may also be said to be not yet fully individualized. When the group soul will be fully developed then only men will become real individuals.

***Disciple:** A material body like an iron-rod under some experiments shows that the particles there try to keep the body intact.*

Sri Aurobindo: That is certainly a sign of life – tendency to self-preservation and conservation. Then the phenomena of fatigue also are phenomena of life.

6 September 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: In spiritual sadhana what should be the ideal relation of a disciple to his Guru?

Sri Aurobindo: The disciple must determine himself – no general standard can be fixed for all. It is only the mind which seeks such ideals and standards, – it will deduce rules and make the whole thing artificial.

Disciple: Of all the disciples of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda derived the greatest benefit from his Guru. Was it due to the greatness of his ādhāra or to the fullness of his surrender?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by greatest benefit? Vivekananda was certainly the most powerful and he was great in action. But how can we judge the amount of benefit which other disciples derived? As regards capacity and surrender, surrender is a part of the capacity of the disciple.

Disciple: Has the Guru preference for particular disciples?

Sri Aurobindo: What the Guru gives is something impersonal and there is no such preference in the divine power. The human personality of the Guru makes mistakes – it represents something higher than itself. They may have some vital and mental preference, but what they give is not determined by that. Of course when ordinary human beings become Gurus they may have preference.

Disciple: Cannot there be ahaituki bhakti [motiveless devotion]?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by *ahaituki* [motiveless]? The divine power does not do anything in caprice or arbitrarily – there is reason for everything it does but it is not human reason.

Disciple: What then is the significance of divine grace?

Sri Aurobindo: This only means that if one has defects, yet if there be some right aspiration in him, the higher power will descend on him. The divine power overcomes adverse circumstances and apparent improbabilities. Thus, there is this much truth in “divine grace” that it supplies an infinite basis for faith. If one can fulfil certain conditions and open himself up to the higher power then in spite of defects and difficulties the power may descend.

Disciple: Does not the power help us to fulfil the conditions?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, otherwise it will not be possible.

Disciple: Thus ultimately everything depends upon the grace of God.

Sri Aurobindo: That is from a very high standpoint. But in our present circumstances we have to see the arrangement of forces and accept the conditions. Man has a part to play.

Disciple: You once said that in order to command money by Yogic force two conditions are required: first, non-attachment, second – *bojhāpadā* [mutual understanding] with the money forces. What is meant by *bojhāpadā*?

Sri Aurobindo: Non-attachment is necessary for two reasons; first, by attachment you fall into a state where the hostile forces have power and when they know that you are going to exceed them they will check you; secondly, by attachment you may surrender yourselves to the evil forces which command money. The world is now under the domination of these forces – they have money in their control and they give money only to those who accept their conditions.

Then you must be able to make the right use of money, otherwise you forfeit your claim to get money. Chaotic use of money is very bad. Your expenditure must be orderly – you must have reason for spending every piece.

Then you have to deal with the forces which act in relation with money. There are two methods. Some persons rely wholly on God to meet their needs. But in our Yoga we do not leave the matter to God. We have to deal with the forces of nature, even with the most material things. We must not submit to the hostile forces which prevent us from getting money. There are the Luxmi [sic] force and the Mammon force. We resolutely fight the Mammon force until we establish harmony with the Luxmi force. We should want money only for the work we have to do – to meet the divine needs.

Disciple: Before we have the higher power, should we deal with the hostile forces by the strength of our will?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the right sort of will, free from desire or attachment.

The money force has a twofold movement – of gathering and throwing away; those who can keep this rhythm have plenty of money, e.g., the big industrial magnates. Mere hoarding is an obstacle.

It [money] is a vital force which enables men to command success. Some persons possess this in a marked degree.

(Sri Aurobindo remarked that if he had not taken up Yoga, then by this time he might have been the Principal of the Baroda College and written some poetry.)

Disciple: What would have then happened to the energy you possess?

Sri Aurobindo: This energy was not in me then; I got all my present energy from Yoga. Even the energy I put forth into political work was derived from Yoga.

Disciple: But the possibilities were there before.

Sri Aurobindo: A seed has the possibilities of growing into a tree, but can it become a tree unless it gets suitable soil and surroundings?

(In this connection Sri Aurobindo distinguished between success in outer life and success in inner development of the soul. So far as development is concerned failure is often better than success.)

Disciple: How?

Sri Aurobindo: Success has ruined the chances of development of many.

7 September 1926 (Evening)

(Sri Aurobindo was surprised to hear that Sir Oliver Lodge, on account of his views about the spirit world, had been asked to resign his membership of a science association.)

Sri Aurobindo: Oliver Lodge has brought the scientific mind into these questions and thus his conclusions and results are often wrong and incorrect.

The French have a logical mind, the English are most illogical; hence it is that English poetry is more powerful than the French, while in prose the English cannot compare with the French. The Germans are more imaginative than the French.

Disciple: The English have more practical commonsense than the French.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, in practical commonsense the English are superior to most people. The French have an intellectual commonsense.

Disciple: What is a logical mind? What is logic?

Sri Aurobindo: A logical mind goes on thinking and reasoning consistently, having harmonious ideas – starting from premises and drawing rational conclusions.

Disciple: The Bengali mind is neither practical nor logical.

Disciple: The subtleties of Navya Nyāya were developed in Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo: Of course the Bengalis have subtlety of mind, but that is not exactly what we mean by logical mind; it is the logic of the school – academical.

Disciple: What are the characteristics of the Bengali mind?

Sri Aurobindo: That is a very old question and I have answered it many times. The Bengali mind has a quick intuition but does not go very deep – it is subtle but has no depth of soul.

Disciple: To what is this defect, this want of depth, due?

Sri Aurobindo: It is some defect in the vital being of the Bengalis – depth requires a steadiness in the vital being, but the Bengalis have a mobile vital nature. Then depth depends on *mahimā*. Don't ask me to de-

fine these things. Thus there is *mahimā* in Sanskrit poetry, though not in Bengali.

Disciple: *What are the characteristics of the Gujarati mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is still in formation and no fixed type has been reached. Thus the non-Brahmins and Brahmins have very different characteristics.

Disciple: *There are many heterogeneous elements in Gujarat.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

The Mahratha mind is curious – we seldom see them smiling. They are very grave, serious, laborious, dogged, practical. But they have no turn for business.

Disciple: *Has not the ancient Vedic mind of India been preserved anywhere?*

Sri Aurobindo: Has the mind of the ancient Roman dramatists reappeared anywhere in modern Italy? The old types disappear giving rise to new race-types.

Disciple: *The English are said to have acquired the characteristics of the Romans.*

Sri Aurobindo: They have not the ancient Roman grandeur. They are more like the Carthagians.

8 September 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: What are the possibilities of industrialism in India?

Sri Aurobindo: About that you can say as much as I.

Disciple: I don't think so.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by industrialism?

Disciple: I mean the system of large-scale production through big machineries.

Sri Aurobindo: Big machineries are bound to come. Poverty of the people can be removed only by large-scale production.

Disciple: The real question is how to prevent life being mechanized.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a different question. But big machinery does not necessarily imply all the evils of industrialism.

Disciple: Even in cottage industries men are mechanized to a certain extent.

Disciple: Yes, but cottage industries leave the social life intact.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should the present form of social life remain intact? New forms of social organization will rise with the advent of large-scale production. It is the tendency of Indians towards poverty which is really responsible for their cry against machinery.

Disciple: The problem is how to have big machinery, yet avoid all the evils arising from it.

Sri Aurobindo: The evils are bound to disappear. The different ideas and schemes suggested in Europe show that people are trying to correct the defects. Unless one enters into it, how can the evils be overcome?

Disciple: Will India have to pass through all the evils of industrialism?

Sri Aurobindo: But why should India wait until other countries have solved the problems, so that they [Indians] might imitate afterwards?

Disciple: How will India avoid those evils?

Sri Aurobindo: Let them first acquire wealth – without wealth they cannot expect to make any progress.

(I referred to the new town built at Jamshedpur, which centres round the Tata Iron and Steel Works.)

Sri Aurobindo: Probably they took the idea of town-planning from Patrick Geddes who himself derived his ideas from town-planning in ancient India. The difference is that they have substituted the machinery for the temple. In ancient India the temple and all the communal things were at the centre – and the whole town was so arranged as to have easy access to the centre.

Disciple: Many villages seem to have been built according to that plan.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that was the system everywhere. Also they had efficient systems of drainage of which relics can be seen even now.

(There was a reference to C. R. Das. He often acted from impulse – there was a vital rush in him. He was sentimental, and that is always a weakness in politics. He had defects and made mistakes but every politician makes mistakes and he would have gradually got over them.)

Disciple: It would have been much better for him if he had remained here.

Sri Aurobindo: I could have kept him. When he came here he offered to remain for a month. But he was not yet ready and so I did not take him. And people would not have allowed him to remain here. He would have brought here a world with him.

Disciple: He was very much run down in health when he came here.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I put some force in him which kept him up. But from a distance I could not exert the same influence; other forces dragged him off and also he himself could not receive.

Then, he was not strong enough to combine the two things – politics and Yoga. Very few people can do that. When in politics, you can take the help of intuitions, work as if you were being led by God, even receive force from spiritual men and pursue conventional ways of sadhana. But when a political worker begins to practise Yoga, he disturbs the balance of forces which may bring illness and disaster.

I knew him before he joined politics. At that time he had a clear,

lucid mind and intelligence. After entering into politics that part was put into the background and all sorts of influences and forces rushed in. Had he remained here and practised Yoga that part would have reasserted itself and developed.

9 September 1926 (Evening)

Disciple: Can the attack of hostile forces be made use of by the sadhak for his progress?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean?

Disciple: Let me put the question in another form. In our Yoga we have to discountenance the lower movements of nature as being obstacles to our sadhana but the Tantrics turn these obstacles to account and take their help to build up spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo: How?

Disciple: That is my question.

Sri Aurobindo: I have no objection to taking fish; even you can take wine if it suits you; but how can the sexual act be made a help to spiritual life?

In itself the sexual act is not bad as the moralists say – it is a movement of nature which has its purpose and is neither good nor bad. From the Yogic point of view the sexual force is the greatest force in the world and if properly controlled it helps to recreate, regenerate the being. But as it is indulged in the ordinary way it is a great obstacle for two reasons: first it involves a great loss of vital force – it is a movement towards death, though this is compensated by the creation of new life. That it is a movement towards death is proved by the exhaustion felt after the act; many people feel even a disgust.

Disciple: But statistics have been collected to show that married people live longer than bachelors.

Sri Aurobindo: That is a fallacy. Thus someone says that he has lived a hundred years without smoking, another will say that he has lived up to that age with smoking.

Secondly, the excitement and the act destroys the psychic possibilities of the man. He is separated or dissociated from the higher centres and goes downward. People say that they take the attitude of Shakti taking the *bhoga* [enjoyment] through them – but that is only a mere saying. I have never seen any man rising by such acts. People indulge in lower movements, yield to the hostile forces and at the same time pose as Yogis. Even the Vedantic attitude is often made an excuse for yielding to the hostile forces – thus they say, the action of nature, of hostile forces, all that is *maya*, illusion; there is no virtue or sin, no good

or evil and then give themselves up to lower vital forces.

Disciple: The lower movements of nature themselves are not hostile forces.

Sri Aurobindo: But they offer an opening to the hostile forces and these forces use those lower movements for their own purpose.

Disciple: As regards the degrading effects of the sexual act, does marriage and legal intercourse make any difference?

Sri Aurobindo: Absolutely none. These moral injunctions are for the maintenance of society, for the welfare of the children born; but so far as Yogic life is concerned sexual act with one's own wife is as much harmful as that with any other woman...

Disciple: My original question was whether the attack of hostile forces can be utilized by the sadhak?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, by conquering it. The sadhak acquires knowledge of the action of the hostile forces, also of the defects in his nature which invite the attacks.

Disciple: Is there anything more than the knowledge acquired?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, new openings may occur to the higher power, strength increases, and so forth.

Disciple: Can the hostile force be changed and transformed by conquest into something good and helpful?

Sri Aurobindo: A force of nature can be so transformed, but how can you change the force of a hostile being? Of course the hostile beings have certain forces of nature in their clutches – if you conquer the hostile beings, the nature-forces are liberated and help in fulfilling the *lilā* of God. Thus anger is nature-force in the clutches of the hostile powers – if it can be freed from their influence it can be used for divine purposes.

Disciple: How does anger act in a divine way?

Sri Aurobindo: God does not hesitate to strike and smite. He often behaves in a manner which to the ordinary mind may appear to be cruel. But the attitude is quite different.

Thus in the Vedas the *panis* [The powers of darkness who steal the cows (symbols of Light in the Vedas)] steal the cows from heaven and

conceal them in the caves; when they are conquered, the cows are released and rise heavenward.

Disciple: *Do the higher powers send hostile forces to the sadhak?*

Sri Aurobindo: The hostile forces are there – the higher power may use them for its own purpose. Of course everything comes from the supreme power, but that must not be understood in a crude way. The hostile powers may be used to test the capacity of the sadhak.

Disciple: *The higher power may sometimes act as a hostile force – as when by the descent of the higher power the sadhak breaks down.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, by the descent of the power the unfit *ādhāras* [the containing system: mind-life-body] break down, while the fit ones make progress. There are certainly risks, but all great achievements involve dangers and risks. When you are not fit and prepared, yet insistently call to God “come down”, “come down” the power will come down and then the *ādhāra* may collapse.

Disciple: *Is the power of the hostile attack always proportionate to the resisting power of the sadhak?*

Sri Aurobindo: Not always, otherwise why so many failures and defeats?

Disciple: *The Guru supplies the deficiency.*

Disciple: *Does the Guru ever ward off the attack without any effort on the part of the sadhak?*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes; there is no general rule – in some cases the Guru does the whole thing, sometimes the sadhak, sometimes both of them contribute.

“Guru helps” – means that the higher power helps, Guru is only made an instrument.

10 September 1926 (Evening)

(X referred to the symbolism in Tantra. There are different charkas or centres which open one after another. There is no general rule as to which will open first. The heart is the psychic and if that opens first, it is a very good opening.)

Disciple: *It is said that in Vamana avatar, God asked three steps from Bali. Does that signify that the three worlds – the physical, the vital and the mental – are in the possession of the Asuras and God demands that these should be liberated and come within the direct dominion of God?*

Sri Aurobindo: I suppose so. But as yet the liberation remains unaccomplished.

Disciple: *When the mind changes and is transformed by the higher power, what are the changes that occur in the mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: Which part of the mind? The thinking mind?

Disciple: *Yes.*

Sri Aurobindo: The reasoning and the fanciful constructions of the mind cease, there remains only a play of intuition.

Disciple: *Does not reason remain at all?*

Sri Aurobindo: When the whole mind is intuitivized, it knows directly and therefore need not reason. I see X before me – why should I argue whether he is there or not?

Disciple: *Reason may not be required for acquiring Truth, but for practical application of Truth, reasoning may be necessary.*

Sri Aurobindo: Do you think that Truth is not practical? Truth is not something abstract. As long as the mind reasons there is the possibility of error.

Disciple: *As regards mental constructions – are they always incorrect? May not they be inspired by Truth?*

Sri Aurobindo: Mind may build on its intuitions but there is every likelihood of its committing mistakes and errors.

The mental transformation is a gradual process. First the reasoning and constructions are silenced. Then the mind becomes intuitivized.

Then one feels that there is something above which is much more than intuition; intuition gradually goes downwards and the higher Truth takes the place of intuition. You find it difficult to understand how all reasoning and constructions will cease; that can be understood when you know what is intuition.

Disciple: Mental reasoning and constructions are obstacles to the coming of the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, if you go on eternally with these things, the Truth will not come.

Disciple: Then we must correct these things before the Truth can come down?

Sri Aurobindo: You cannot do that – it is only the Truth which can change the nature and activities of the mind. You can only be quiet there so that the Truth may come down and take up the transformation.

Disciple: If the mind is silenced will the Truth come down?

Sri Aurobindo: If you do nothing else, by merely silencing the mind you will have only a silent mind and nothing else.

Disciple: When a developed mind opens to the Truth and when an undeveloped mind opens to the Truth – which will be the richer?

Sri Aurobindo: At first you have to see whether the undeveloped mind can open itself to the higher Truth; generally it cannot. Then, it may have a narrow opening and the results will be limited. The higher Truth may afterwards develop the mind. But if the mind is developed, there is already rich material upon which the Truth may work. But the too much developed mind is also an obstacle – it has its fixed habits, a fixed groove to which it sticks tenaciously.

With the coming of the Truth, mind may suddenly develop new powers, e.g. painting, poetry and so forth.

Disciple: Does not that presuppose that the preparation was there in the man beforehand?

Sri Aurobindo: When was he prepared?

Disciple: Say, in his past life.

Sri Aurobindo: Do you mean to say that if a man suddenly begins to understand the Chinese language, that means that he was a Chinese in his past birth?

Disciple: When the higher Truth descend it brings both Knowledge and Power as well as śānti [spiritual peace]. What are the manifestation of Power?

Sri Aurobindo: Power manifests in so many ways – it transforms the whole being in the end.

Disciple: But in the beginning, how does it manifest? How are our ordinary activities affected?

Sri Aurobindo: They begin to be transformed.

Disciple: Is the Power felt in the body?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, but that at first comes through the mind. Power may be manifested in writing articles or learning the violin, though I am quite sure that in the case of X the power is not acting in the violin.

It is very difficult to learn the violin. It requires at least 15 years' practice before anyone can hope to produce something on the violin. (To X): Why have you chosen the violin? Is it because you want to do the most difficult thing first?

(I referred to a dream – how Sri Aurobindo came to our house and I had to open myself wholly to him. He pointed out the defects and blemishes in me and remarked that those had to be corrected.)

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that that was a dream?

Disciple: Was that true?

(X described another dream of his.)

Sri Aurobindo: I am sure there was no truth in it.

11 September 1926 (Evening)

(X referred to the use of drugs by some Yogis.)

Sri Aurobindo: This has been greatly abused. The drugs give artificial stimulation which makes possible certain experiences, but these experiences do not bring any permanent change; on the other hand, the normal condition becomes more dull. Merely the throwing out of the consciousness from the body is not at all difficult but it brings no improvement. Those who are conscious of and can control such going out of the consciousness can make proper use of artificial drugs.

(X referred to certain drugs in America which, when taken, are supposed to give clairvoyance.)

Sri Aurobindo: I do not know of such drugs but that is quite possible, though this is not the proper method. Salvation achieved through the use of drugs is not worth having. The ancients found out some such drug in the soma plant.

Disciple: What happens when a person becomes unconscious under chloroform?

Sri Aurobindo: The vital consciousness is thrown out of the body.

Disciple: What happens to the mind?

Sri Aurobindo: That, of course, goes with the vital consciousness.

Disciple: There remains certainly a connection with the body, by which the consciousness returns to the body.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: The medical explanation is that the nervous centres are disconnected.

Sri Aurobindo: That is the result of the going out of the vital consciousness.

Disciple: How high must a person rise in sadhana before he becomes free from the attack of illness?

Sri Aurobindo: Rather you should say how low the power is brought down. When the Supramental comes down to the physical, it becomes quite safe from illness. Before that illness is to be warded off by the vital and the mental powers.

Disciple: *How is that done?*

Sri Aurobindo: By a sort of vital and mental control. Even those who are not Yogis may have such powers.

Disciple: *Is it a suggestion of the mind?*

Sri Aurobindo: No, it is a mental and vital control which some persons can find out. Again, Yogis who practise Pranayama are not attacked with illness. When I practised Pranayama at Baroda I had excellent health and powers. But when I came to Calcutta and political work did not leave me any time for regular practice of Pranayama, I was attacked with malarial fever which almost carried me off. These are the consequences of Pranayama or control – whenever these protections are withdrawn, the forces of illness rush up in a sort of revenge.

Disciple: *What is the proper attitude to be taken in cases of illness? (I myself had cold at the time.)*

Disciple: *In cases of cold? (Laughter)*

Sri Aurobindo: You should expose yourself by...¹ (Laughter)

Disciple: *He wants to know the proper attitude.*

Sri Aurobindo: The proper attitude is to localize the illness or the pain in the body and dissociate yourself from it, and then use the mental and vital will to throw it away. In all cases, such dissociation is the proper attitude – the attitude that the illness is in the body, but not in you.

Disciple: *How can one be safe from accidents?*

Sri Aurobindo: There may be awakened a sort of vital and bodily consciousness which will forewarn you against coming accidents. Those who practise Yoga may have a protection from the higher power but that does not remove the theoretical possibility of accidents. But when you have the Yogic body, the body itself will be able to throw off all attacks.

1. Some of the words are missing here.

13 September 1926 (Evening)

(I referred to the statement made by Henry Ford about his belief in rebirth – how men progress by gaining experience life after life. Life, according to him, is a great field of experience.)

Disciple: How could he get these ideas?

Sri Aurobindo: These ideas are greatly prevalent in Europe nowadays; the Theosophists have done much to spread these ideas in Europe.

Disciple: Is not rebirth against the teachings of Christianity?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, against the official teaching of Christianity. The Pope and the Church cling to certain ideas and dogmas and any opposition to these was severely punished. But in the Bible we have reference to rebirth. Thus John the Baptist speaks of coming again and again.

Disciple: Was belief in rebirth a part of ancient Hinduism?

Sri Aurobindo: I think so. Some scholars deny the existence of the doctrine in the Vedas. But there are passages in the Vedas which speak of rebirth.

Disciple: The Buddhists believe in rebirth.

Sri Aurobindo: By the time of Buddha the belief in rebirth was well-established in India.

Disciple: In the Gita it is taken for granted.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

Disciple: Was this doctrine a part of the ancient faith of the Japanese?

Sri Aurobindo: No, they got it from Buddhism. Japan's ancient faith consisted of ancestor-worship. Ancestors were regarded to have eternal life in the other world.

Disciple: The Hindus also give offerings to their ancestors.

Sri Aurobindo: But it is quite different from the Japanese worship. They regard ancestors to be ever present around them and demanding their worship. They worshipped the ancestors; they regarded the Mikado as the representative of the goddess of the Sun on the earth and the Na-

tion – these elements constituted Shintoism, the ancient faith of the Japanese.

Disciple: *The Japanese take death very easily.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, they believe that by death they become ancestors.

Disciple: *The Hindus have the worst fear about death – they shrink from death.*

Sri Aurobindo: Do they shrink from death more than the Europeans?

(There was some reference to the fear of death among European soldiers.)

Sri Aurobindo: In this respect the Indian Sikhs are the best.

(X brought a letter regarding the sadhana of one Y.)

Sri Aurobindo: The descriptions we have had of his sadhana are only movements in the vital plane. We need not bother about those letters.

Disciple: *They say that his sadhana has taken a new turn. (X read the letter.)*

Sri Aurobindo: We do not see what new turn he has taken. What is going on in him is all mere play of vital imagination – there is no indication of any higher possibilities in him. Even in the vital plane one can develop such powers as clairvoyance etc.; such possibilities also are not evident in Y. Even if these possibilities were in him that has got nothing to do with our Yoga. In our Yoga the mind must open to the higher Truth and it must be established in the mental plane at least. There are many sadhaks who have spiritual experiences in the mental plane and stop there. But we find no such possibilities in Y.

(Sri Aurobindo remarked how Europeans retain their energy even up to old age. One may remain young in mind even if the body grows old.)

Disciple: *How can one keep himself young internally even when old in age?*

Sri Aurobindo: One has to keep himself open to new ideas, new things – not moving in the old grooves.

25 September 1926 (Evening)

(Sri Aurobindo dictated the reply to Z's letter: He has made the right decision in not coming here now. As regards Yoga, in this path the chief thing is to open the whole being to the higher Truth. The ordinary experiences in Yoga are formations of the mental, the vital or the physical consciousness. Afterwards there come reflections from the higher Truth. But the highest experience is of the Truth itself.

The mind must open itself to receive the higher Truth and shape itself accordingly.

In entering into this path the first condition to be fulfilled is an inner aspiration – an aspiration that the Truth will descend and shape you in its own power and light. Then there must be sincerity. You must give up all egoism – all material or spiritual ambition. You must will only to be the instrument of the higher Truth.

With this sincere aspiration wait and watch what happens within you and give occasional reports through letters and then further necessary instructions will be given.)

***Disciple:** When a Yogi averts a destiny, e.g. when he saves a person from imminent death, is there any reaction?*

Sri Aurobindo: That depends on the power and the attitude of the Yogi. The hostile forces supporting the calamity, when thwarted, may attack the Yogi himself and unless he is watchful he may have to suffer. When an illness is thrown away from one person, it may attack another, unless the force is dissolved.

It is only when the hostile forces are opposed that there may be reaction; but when one's force of Karma is averted then there is no reaction.

[Note: The conversation of 25 September 1926 is incomplete as the pages in the notebook of Anilbaran Roy containing its remaining portion are missing. There is also no further record of any more talks in his notebooks with the exception of six loose sheets containing an undated conversation on the psychic being. The earlier portion of this talk is missing as well; what is reproduced below is the later portion of the talks recorded in these sheets.]

Sri Aurobindo: Another thing is that you acquire the tact to distinguish the true psychic experiences. A real psychic experience often is a clue in sadhana. A genuine psychic experience is always real.

Again psychic feelings are not the same as what ordinary men experience as sentimental or other feelings. For example, ordinary sentimental pity is not the same as what may be called psychic compassion. Psychic compassion is much deeper than ordinary pity.

Also psychic love is not the same as ordinary love or what generally passes as 'love'. It is also much deeper and inward. Firstly, there is no selfishness in psychic love; secondly, it is always free from all demand; it has no vital claims in it. Again, psychic unselfishness is not the same as what is ordinarily understood as unselfishness. There is an unselfishness which plays and shows itself off. It is philanthropy etc. There is the psychic counter part of it. It is that which sees the need in the other person and just satisfies it.

Lastly, lest he [K] may think that the psychic being is something weak and inert, let him understand that the presiding deity – the *adhithātā-devatā* of the psychic plane is Agni. It is the divine fire of aspiration. It is not something dead or inert. When the psychic being is awakened the God of the plane also is awakened. And even if the whole being is impure it is that (Agni) which intervenes and removes the obstacles standing in the way and consumes all the impurities of the being.

Disciple: Is the psychic being the same as what is generally meant by the Atman?

Sri Aurobindo: The Atman generally means what you imply in English by the word 'spirit'. It is self-existent, *caitanya* and *ānanda* being (*purusa*). It is the same in all. It is that which is behind all the manifestations of Nature.

Disciple: It has no features, then?

Sri Aurobindo: No features. The only thing that can be said about it is that it is *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*.

Disciple: Is it used to indicate the passive or the active state?

Sri Aurobindo: Generally, it is meant to imply the passive state but sometimes it is used for both. But the psychic being is not the Atman. It is what corresponds to the European idea of the 'soul'. The Western occultists recognize – at least they used to recognize – these things: the spirit, the soul and the body. The spirit corresponds to the Atman, the psychic being to the soul. It is the *purusa hrdaye guhāyām* [The Soul in the secret cave of the heart].

Disciple: *Is the ... [some words are missing here] in the heart the same as the psychic being?*

Sri Aurobindo: It may be. I think they probably meant the psychic being by the phrase.

Disciple: *Ísvarah sarvabhūtānām hrddese [The Lord in the heart of all creatures, Gita, XIII, 61.] – is the same as the psychic being?*

Sri Aurobindo: Ishwara in the heart is different from the psychic being.

Disciple: *Is not the psychic being the direct portion of the Divine? Is it the same as the Jiva?*

Sri Aurobindo: It is the direct portion of the Divine here. But the Jiva is something more than the psychic being. The psychic being is behind the heart, while the Jiva is high above connected with the central being. It is that which on every level becomes the Purusha, the Prakriti and the personalities of Nature. The psychic being, you may say, is the soul personality. The psychic being most purely reflects the Divine in the lower triplicity of the mind, life and body. There are the four higher levels of Sat, Chit, Ananda and the Vijnana. They are in Knowledge, while below we have three: mental, vital and physical being. Now, the psychic being is behind these three, and among these three it is the most divine and most open to the higher Truth. Also, that is why it is indispensable for the manifestation of the Divine. That alone can open itself completely to the Truth.

Because the movements of the three lower parts – mind, vitality, and body – are full of defects, errors and mixtures and however sincere they may be and howsoever they may try to transform themselves into the Truth, they cannot do it, unless the psychic being comes to their help. Of course, they have their own sincerity.

Also when the psychic being awakens it becomes easy to distinguish the mixture of truth and falsehood from within and also to throw out from inside any wrong movements.

Diary Notes and Conversations With the Mother

Foreword

During his stay in Pondicherry, Anilbaran used to record his conversations with the Mother in his notebooks under the title, With the Mother. These notes began from 27 December 1929 and continued till 28 March 1938. These notes have been published in the online forum of Overman Foundation along with his diary notes. We take the opportunity to thank Shri Debranjana Chatterjee, Librarian of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library and Shri Raman Reddy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Department for helping us to collect the conversations and diary notes.

*With warm regards,
Anurag Banerjee, Founder,
Overman Foundation.*

Diary Notes of Anilbaran Roy

10 December 1926

Arriving from Bengal I find an all-round change at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo has retired and Mirra Devi has taken charge of creating a new world. The nucleus, the central cell (cubical form) will be formed here, of which the life will be the sadhaks present here. Every one of those sadhaks is manifesting a particular power of the universe. I was to be the vehicle of one of the chief powers.

11 December 1926

I took part in group meditation, by the left side of A at midday; and between B and C in the evening. During evening meditation D saw a vision of golden light by the side of A and I was in the centre of that column of light.

After the afternoon meditation Sri Aurobindo saw me for a few minutes. A remarkable change has appeared in his personal appearance – to me he appeared thinner, taller and brighter. I expressed my regret that I was away from Pondicherry at this critical time. Sri Aurobindo said that the unpleasant experiences I had in Bengal were necessary for me and that my absence on the 24th November would not affect me. He gave me three instructions. 1. A new world is being created here into which I am entering and I must now make a definite choice to give up all old world relations and ideas. 2. I must now make a full surrender to Mirra Devi who has taken up the work of new creation. 3. Nothing of what is going on here should be given out to the outside world, as hostile forces, coming to know of these, may try to frustrate them. He explained to me the particular power that was to manifest in me. I have a particular work (which is God's work) to do but not in the old way. Henceforth I must take all my instructions from Mirra Devi.

12 December 1926

During the morning interview Mother changed my place for the evening meditation to the side of A, with whom she said I had intimate relation in reference to the work and power that is to manifest in me.

At night during sleep I had a forceful attack in the form of a nightmare just at midnight. E cleared it off.

13 December 1926

The attack after last night was explained to me as by the force which is antagonistic to my mission. It is the dark Shakti which is the central force supporting death, dissensions, falsehood...

Today a programme of sadhana was suggested to me from within that I should take up Faith, Surrender, Peace, Aspiration etc. one by one and concentrate on them for some days. As the doubts of my physical mind were creating great obstacles to my sadhana, I took up Faith first and began today to place all the doubts in my physical mind before the Higher Shakti to be cleared by her.

14 December 1926

On the morning of the 14th when I was being roused from my sleep I saw an interesting dream (vision?). A tiger was eating something in a vessel; it ran away at the approach of a black wild elephant. I was pursued by the elephant and cowered; at the last moment a warrior came and pierced the elephant with a lance; the elephant disappeared. Then two men with drawn swords began a bloody fight with each other – the fight was ferocious, there was profuse bloodshed and I intervened to separate them and they were saved from sure death.

*

During the morning interview I explained to Mother my programme of sadhana and she readily agreed to it suggesting that I should take four days for every item. Thus Faith would be completed by the 16th.

Mother informed me that this morning the dark Shakti referred to before had been imprisoned and placed under the sea for centuries. This Shakti was created with the creation of the world and she was responsible for all false movements. Of course there are numerous other forms and emanations of this Shakti still working in the world and we shall still have to fight with them; but their central support is gone and it will be now comparatively easier to bring out the true movements out of the false.

Anilbaran: Then, this is a conquest for all humanity?

Mother: It is first a conquest for us, then for India, then for all humanity; after that it will be a conquest for the whole universe.

15 December 1926

During afternoon meditation, I saw a ball of golden light seated on a semicircular base of blue above another semicircle of red light. This ball of light descended down to my heart. I felt that now I had got faith established in me and my doubts had been killed fundamentally.

16 December 1926

In the morning I described this descent of light to Mother and said that I took it as a symbol of faith established in me. Mother explained that it was not merely a symbol, but a reality. That day a being had incarnated in me and he was represented by the ball of light and the blue base represented faith. Mother told me how during the afternoon meditation yesterday D saw a new being entering into me. D described his experience to me thus: “A question arose in my mind as to who you were? A sudden flash of light came to me and by an intuition I at once saw that you were V. After that whenever I look at you I find your face resembling that of V. Mother told me that in the evening yesterday F also got a similar intuition.”

V was created at the beginning of the world and he was reincarnating again and again. But this is his last incarnation. All the hopes and aspiration of V will be fulfilled through me.

During afternoon meditation I found that my faith was firmly established and the next item of sadhana I should take up was “Surrender”. After meditation Mother blessed me with a beautiful rose – the symbol of surrender.

17 December 1926

When in the morning I said to Mother that from today I have taken up “surrender,” she was very pleased. She said how during meditation yesterday afternoon the rose came to her hands when she was selecting flowers for blessing me. She said, “A new process of sadhana, a practical process is taking form in you and you should keep short notes of your progress as they will be of great help to other sadhaks.”

*

Towards the afternoon of the 17th I felt that out of the four days of my surrender this first day should be devoted to the surrender of the mental being in me. I practised the surrender of Buddhi, of intelligence and will, to the Divine Consciousness – my will to be the channel of the Divine Will, my intelligence to be lighted by the Divine Light.

18 December 1926

From the morning and even from the close of yesterday I have been practising the surrender of my vital being – specially my attachment and ties to my former family relations. This morning there was no talk with Mother – I simply bowed to her feet, got the touch on the head and came away. I am preparing to give up my family relations to her – henceforth to be determined by her in the divine way, and not by me in the crude worldly way.

Gradually I realised that it was my egoism that was the knot of my bondage to the old world. If I could dissociate myself from the false self – this ego – I would be free. During afternoon meditation light and power descended from above and cut ties of my ego which felt mortally wounded. After meditation I felt that the ego was to die so that I might be born in the higher Prakriti – in the Divine Consciousness. When blessing me after the meditation, Mother gave me, with other flowers, a red jabā [hibiscus]. When meditating in my room this blood-red flower appeared to be like the blood-stained face of Mother Kali with her bloody tongue lolling out. This figure seemed to demand sacrifice from me and I offered my false ego to be sacrificed. As a symbol of this sacrifice I burnt a black incense stick before the flower. As long as the stick burnt I felt that my ego – my former self – was being burnt. The flower remained fresh and erect as long as the incense burnt and then it dropped down and faded.

19 December 1926

This morning I described to Mother the above experiences and told her that my former self was dead, and that she had given birth to a new self in me, my higher self; henceforth all my old relations were gone and all new relations would be determined only through her, as she was now my real mother and I had now really entered into her family as a new-born babe to be nourished and grown by her. Mother, after hearing all this, smilingly remarked: “You have done this gloriously.”

Then I explained to her the present programme of sadhana that had been suggested to me as follows: This day would be devoted to the surrender of the physical, as the two previous days were devoted to the surrender of the mental and the vital. After this I should take up Peace for four days, after that Aspiration for four days. Then this stage would be completed. I should firmly hold to Faith, Surrender, Peace and Aspiration and leave myself to be worked upon by her in two ways – first, she should carry on the transformation of my being; secondly, she should make me an instrument of her will in any work for which I might

be found a suitable vehicle.

I had surrendered my will on the 17th and it is interesting to note that on the 18th for the first time, Mother made me an instrument of her will in a particular spiritual work that she was doing. I had to guard a window against the approach of hostile forces and when I sat for it I found a force coming from her, working through my will, which then guarded the door.

As regards the surrender of the physical, I am feeling that all ideas... about health etc. are to be given up; a new body is going to be created out of the old and for this I have to place my physical being completely at her disposal. During meditation yesterday as well as today I found light descending from the Supramental sun down the spinal column to the very bottom of it. Two lotuses seemed to open under the light, one in the heart and the other in the Muladhar. Thus light has begun to descend down to the physical in me.

20 December 1926

This was the day of complete surrender. From this morning I began to take my meals from Mother and gave up to her all the money I possessed. Mother remarked: "Giving up all your money to me implies that you will get all your needs from me."

Then Mother explained how already difficulty had arisen in reconciling so many strong personalities to dining together; some arrangement must be done, so that the true significance of the symbol of taking food from the Mother may be brought out. She called me to organize this and remarked that since I came here, she was getting clear visions of organization.

To G she had remarked: "This V has wonderful organizing capacity." I began by making a list of all the sadhaks for the purpose of grouping.

In the evening at the time of meditation we had wonderful experience, the like of which I had never seen before. H, when bowing to Mother, became evidently possessed by a great force and consciousness, began to move his hands and fingers in a trance-like hypnotic way and spoke sometimes loudly, sometimes almost inaudibly, but always with great force and effectiveness. He spoke such beautiful English that it is a pity that I cannot reproduce the whole. The purport of what he said is this: "Everyone should throw away all doubts of the mind. The time of Krishna has come. Last time He had to retire as the world-conditions, the physical material world, were not ready. He died wounded in his left leg. This time mortality will be overcome, light will

descend down to the physical material, every atom of the body will be transformed. Every sadhak will be transformed and get immortality. Do not cover, do not covet – surrender everything to the Mother and wait with calm aspiration. Mother will do everything for you – have faith in her, she is ... in you. The Purusha is born in her womb. I am not H, I am of this earth. There is the heaven above, there is the heaven below. I am the heaven below. I shall sweep away all impurities and swallow all dross. Throw away your dross at me, I shall swallow it. By mere touch you will now be transformed.”

Then, one after another, he touched and swept the body of I, J, D, K, L, myself and A.

When I was bowing before Mother, he remarked – “I see the swan – the white swan rising before me – who are you? Who are you?”

I said: “A.B.” He said: “Yes, I see you are the white swan – you will be speedily transformed.” He passed his hand and fingers over my head and face and remarked: “Your eyes will be opened.” Coming down to the moustache he said: “Here are the coils of Rudra – coils of bondage – this bondage will go.” He swept my moustache. “Take a touch from Mother and go.” I again bowed to Mother and her touch this time was thrilling.

When at night I went to her to take my cup of soup, she remarked: “You had an interesting experience this evening. The performances of H are really wonderful. He has brought out the ancient Vedic Truth and expressed it. It is the spirit of the earth incarnated in him. And what he said about your being the swan (V) was really remarkable; I had said to him nothing about this before.”

21 December 1926

Today is to begin my realisation of Peace. For the first time, Mother got a flower today which she found to signify, “Power of Calm” – the flower gives an impression of movement, yet the whole basis was calm. Mother remarked: “This flower has come for you.” and gave it to me...

When at night I went for soup I asked Mother about the special significance of taking the soup. Mother said: “Have you not heard of Divine Communion in this manner? My flesh and blood are to go to you and form your flesh and blood, but instead of actually giving my flesh and blood to you, I sip this soup, put my force into it and give it to be drunk by you.” N expressed the significance beautifully – he said, “By this process we get her even in our physical cells.”

22 December 1926

This was my second day for Peace. Mother said that when I came to see her last morning, she saw an atmosphere of settled peace around me.

After midday meditation she blessed me with Kamini flower, which is the emblem of solid, established Peace.

23 December 1926

This morning I proposed to Mother that I should give up spectacles. Mother enquired about the condition of my eyesight. When I said that medical opinion was that I should always wear spectacles, otherwise it would hurt me, Mother said: "Doctors speak like that. If one has sufficient faith he can get over these troubles." Mother approved of my giving up spectacles as she found that spectacles were an obstacle to a direct communion with her. She however suggested two methods: one is to give up the spectacles wholly and go with faith through all the troubles that may arise; the other is gradually giving up its use. Both the methods are approved. Mother advised that at present I should use spectacles only when reading and writing. I said: "Without spectacles I could not see things at a distance." Mother replied: "Why do you like to see things at a distance? That is significant."

After midday meditation Mother blessed me with Kamini flower and also with a bunch of tall, thin, white flowers with four petals which, she explained, represented calm settled in the body in every cell.

24 December 1926

This was the fourth day of my Peace. I felt that it was fundamentally established in me.

From next day I was to take up Aspiration. Mother explained to me the untold powers of Aspiration. She cited her own case as an example. She was not being able to conquer the subconscious region of the earth – this was not in her nature and she did not know how to do it. She got a hint from H who said: "Aspire, Mother, aspire." Then she sent up the fire of aspiration. She depended solely on it, did not take to the process of purification or using the light of destruction, but simply aspired continually for about two hours – the fire became stronger and stronger and at last she got what she wanted.

25 December 1926

I begin Aspiration from today. At night Mother told me that in my past life thousands of years ago I had established such an economic organization as had lasted up to this day.

26 December 1926

Just before midday meditation I was attacked with fever. During meditation I had great pain and struggle, but this gradually subsided as I deeply drew the breath of Mother. After meditation, Mother gave me the breath and touch. She had blessed me with a white lotus which represented her own self.

27 & 28 December 1926

The fever regularly came first before noon and subsided towards the evening. Mother explained how the heat of fever is a process of purification in my case and that there were two causes for it. One was that by my aspiration I had brought down great power, but my physical was not yet ready for that and hence the fever broke out as a process of purification. This was the important cause. The other cause possibly was an attack from the hostile forces which found only my physical part weak. The atmosphere of our guest house was congenial for such attacks and must be improved. If I could throw away this attack I would be purer and stronger.

29 December 1926

Last day my period of aspiration ended. Mother explained that now my purification was over, there was no necessity of fever and that now I was out of it. She said how yesterday, when I was intensely suffering from fever, she also felt heat in her body though she did not know that I had fever. Today the fever did not come at the usual time, but late in the afternoon there was a very slight attack which left very soon.

30 December 1926

I explained to Mother how it seemed to me that the four days' course my fever took came in the course of my system of sadhana for four days for every realization. Thus the four days' fever was a four days' course of purification, though in a way it intermingled with my course of aspiration (by which, in fact, it was brought down), beginning a day late and enduring a day late.

Today I had no fever.

31 December 1926

Mother gave instructions about the purification of the atmosphere at the Guest House. She told me that I represented Righteousness and had an influence on O which I should use silently. With the advent of O the spiritual disobedience had come amongst us.

1 January 1927

Early in the morning I went to see Mother. When waiting downstairs with some fresh Sephali flowers in my palm, I, in a sort of vision, saw the bright sun above my head, illumining a vast blue sky. When bowing to Mother I said that my aspiration was to get Truth within this year, Mother said: “Yes, you would get Truth and Transformation, too.”

7 January 1927

Last night when I went for soup, Mother saw a vision regarding me. There are houses of ill fame in France where the women are numbered and are not allowed to go out on grounds of public health. They are made free only if someone comes forward with a promise of marriage. Mother saw India as a woman weeping in one of these houses and I came forward to rescue her with a promise of marriage.

This morning I had a dream that I was carrying Mother on my head and shoulders and that she was doing something in my head. For some days back I was feeling that the Supramental was being established in my mind. Mother explained that this was indicated by the dream. The Supramental is working in my mind and I shall soon see its effect.

The yellow flower with which she blessed me last afternoon represents wealth and health generally but specially it represents true sight. (Here Mother touches the central point of forehead with her finger.)

*

For some days I had a boil on my right knee-joint and could not go for group meditation. One day L gave flowers to Mother in my name. Mother sent some flowers to me – one “jabā” with four “souls of India”. When meditating before these flowers in my room I saw a beautiful vision of Mother India. She was seated on a lion – as we see in Jagaddhatri figure. She had a crown on her head, a sceptre in her right hand and a book in her left hand, which seemed to me to be the Vedas.

16 January 1927

When meditating before Mother in the morning, I heard the following words from above: “Do not be inert or tamasic – be always alert and keep the right attitude – either the attitude of the Sakshi Purusha or the attitude of Prakriti opening yourself to the Higher Prakriti and allowing the Light to descend on you and work in and through you.”

19 December 1927

This morning I had special interview with Mother. Mother explained how she felt physical relation with certain sadhaks. Of course there is the inner relation with all, but with some the relation is even physical – we have been friends and co-workers in many past lives. These she did recognize as soon as she saw them.

She spoke of my first coming. Sri Aurobindo, saw a bright light on my head but the external mind was shadowing everything, so Mother was asked to see me – (in such cases Mother is generally asked for her inner sight.) When she saw me, she knew at once with a shock that I was one of the first created.

Mother spoke of four creations. First, there was the creation of free beings, but they met with certain oppositions and obstacles which could not be overcome. Then there was the second creation, the creation of the Gods – even in this creation all the obstacles could not be overcome. Then there was the third creation – the creation of the earth, so that the attempt at conquest may be made in a limited sphere and then extended to the whole universe. V belonged to this third creation and was created along with the creation of the earth. The fourth creation is now going to happen. It will begin with the creation of a new cell consisting of 44, forty-four beings; the Supramental will come down and create this cell.

*

Mother stated how I represented the “Fearless” – one of the very first creations.

2 February 1927

I sang a few songs before Mother on Monday last. Mother was very pleased – there were psychic vibrations in my songs, which were even physical.

Mother explained how things should come naturally and not by force. Thus, if she had tried to give up sleep she would not have

succeeded. But one day she found no time to sleep, and then it struck her that she could go without sleep.

The best way to conquer desires is the indirect way. It is no use carrying on an open fight against them; it is better to concentrate on constructive work, building up the inner life.

Referring to the confusion downstairs Mother said that these confusions should be taken as a test. Referring to her own relation with others, Mother said that with some the relation is very smooth but with others there have arisen difficulties which have created mountains of obstacles.

Nothing happens here without a reason, there is reason behind everything, though it is not mental or apparent – the reason is deep and spiritual.

12 February 1927

Today is Mother's birthday (esoteric). From the morning I am experiencing something of divine love and what it means. It is the human love transformed and divinized, devoid of all impurity, all desire. It is pure self-surrender and bliss and devotion.

Mother came to my room after meal time and in connection with some of her recorded experiences, read last two nights before evening meditation, she gave a short history of her life to me.

From her very childhood, since she attained some consciousness, she was conscious of the spiritual mission that she was destined to bring a new light, make a new creation on the earth. She was conscious of a being within her, – that being was afterwards known to be Krishna, – who said that they both would work together in India for the uplift of the earth.

But in the varied experiences she found the conditions very unfavourable and disappointing, but she never lost hope and always had aspiration. The power of aspiration was wonderful. Her life was full of varied experiences – it is remarkable that all the movements of the universe were exemplified in her life.

She met Sri Aurobindo in 1914. When in the Guest House she saw the head of Sri Aurobindo above the staircase, she at once realized that she had found out her lord. Before coming to India she was following some sort of Yoga in the individual way according to the Raja Yoga expounded by Vivekananda and the Gita and the Dhammapda of the Buddhists. She did not take the philosophy, but the practical parts of

these books and practised them in her life in her own way.

... At the first time she lived here for one year. Then the British, not liking that she should live in such politically dangerous association, somehow compelled them [the Mother and her husband Paul Richard] to leave India. Then they went back to France, but she left her psychic being at Pondicherry. The life she had then to live was of terrible experiences which could be told only to those who were very intimate and not to others. At one time she became very ill and was given up by the doctor. On the supposed death-bed she wrote a letter for Sri Aurobindo describing that she was dying. She knew that her work was in India and she also wrote some thoughts that came to her mind. Eventually that letter was never posted. But she recovered. Then she waited for long years to find an opportunity for coming back to India. All the hostile forces of the world seemed to conspire in preventing their coming together. She passed many years in Japan and then after the end of the war and conclusion of peace she returned to India, to Sri Aurobindo. That was a great conquest over the hostile forces – their being joined together. When that conquest has been made, ultimate victory is assured.

*

Records of Mother's past experiences read daily before evening meditation.

Anilbaran Roy's Conversations with the Mother

27 December 1929

I wrote a reply to X's attack on "The Pondicherry School."

Mother said: "Sri Aurobindo says it is not worth to give any reply to that man.

In the first place your reply is not in the right way. You bring yourself down to their level and apologize and explain. It is very bad to apologize. What we do, we do because it is necessary. You must not go on giving explanations. You write in a tone as if we are doing what they think we ought to do. But it is not true. There is as much untruth in what you have written as in what the man has said; only he has bad will and you have good will. We have not much clever men amongst us, our organization is very poor, there are better things elsewhere. If we were to depend on these there was no necessity of our work. What do I care whether one paints well or sings well: It is quite possible that these persons may not do well in sadhana. I do not give attention to these things, therefore they do not progress. My object is transformation, not going in the old way.

Man cannot make any progress in the old way; it has to be transformed – that is our object, that is the right answer in two lines. That answer has been given already in the mental, it is not necessary that it should be given a material form; people also will not understand it.

So many stupid things are said about our sadhana. Even people who have lived here for a long time, everyone speaks stupidly. But we are prepared for it. They have to be changed and transformed.

In the second place, it is not necessary to give an answer. Such attacks do little harm. Those who have faith in us will regard these as stupid. Those who have no faith will not be convinced by what you write; they will say that these persons think themselves to be very clever.

Anilbaran: Take me out of this lower level.

Mother: When you are in your inner consciousness you live on a high level. But when you deal with these persons you at once come down to their level. This must cease. When you deal with them you must rise up even higher than your highest.

It is better that people do not understand us, for if they understood

they might come in our way and become dangerous.

*

On the afternoon of 27.12.1929 Mother heard a voice:

“There is a Power that no ruler can command; there is a Happiness that no earthly success can bring; there is a Light that no wisdom can possess; there is a Knowledge that no philosophy, no science can master; there is a Bliss of which no satisfaction of desire can give the enjoyment; there is a thirst for Love that no human relation can appease; there is a Peace that one finds nowhere here, not even in death.

“It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Bliss, the Love, the Peace that flow from the Divine Grace.”

Mother brought this typed on a slip of paper and remarked: “I have brought this for you. That must be true even in the most material consciousness.”

5 January 1929

I submitted an account of my earning, all of which goes to my family.

Mother said: I am thinking that your family is lucky, they have lost nothing, you are still earning so much for them.

Anilbaran: It is a strain for me to write for money.

Mother: Yes, that is dragging you down to the lower level. I am sorry that for this you cannot progress. Your present addresses are not on the same high level as those which you gave before. This also was the case with your answer. Sri Aurobindo remarked that you have lost your inspiration. I know the reason.

Anilbaran: You take me out of it.

Mother: You remember you made an ugly bargain about your family. I could not possibly allow to do that, so I made the arrangement that what you earn should go to your family. Sri Aurobindo asked where was the money going? When I replied, he remarked, “He also is like the others!”

Anilbaran: I was satisfying myself that all I earn was given up to you.

Mother: That is a deception you are practising on yourself. You did not give up your family but wanted to throw their charge on me. You still

feel responsible for your family. You write for earning money for them – it is this which is standing in the way of your progress. Do not write on anything and everything that comes your way – only write when you have something to say and you can keep yourself in the consciousness of this place.

Anilbaran: When I meditate on you, I become so absorbed; I do not care for anything.

Mother: That I know, but you must not write unless you feel in the same manner my presence by your side.

Let whatever happen to your family – do not care for that, do not write to help them, write only when you get the true inspiration.

1929 (Undated)

Mother: I give a problem to you. It has been said somewhere in the Scripture to the effect: He who has, shall receive all; he who has not, whatever he has will be taken away from him.

The Christians do not understand it. Here the reference is to the Divine Grace.

If you wish to collaborate with the Divine you must increase beauty, light, joy, wealth, power, but not diminish ugliness, misery, ignorance, poverty and so forth. By helping the poor you certainly do them some natural good. But thereby you bring about a levelling, making the poor a little less poor. Rather make the rich more rich so that in some the Divine may manifest. That applies to everything, beauty, knowledge, etc.

Anilbaran: Nature does something of the kind: wastes millions of individuals to evolve a few highest.

Mother: Nature's way is very clumsy.

Anilbaran: Yes, that is bound to be, because Nature is not conscious but does things mechanically. But the tendency is there.

Mother: There is a consciousness in Nature but not the full consciousness. But Nature does things certainly better than man.

1929 (Undated)

Anilbaran: Make me absolutely yours. I cannot bear anything that stands between you and me. Make me conscious of any obstacle and

I will throw it away with all my life.

Mother: I like this flame. This you have got from your previous incarnation. This flame will carry you through everything. When I first met you under the mango tree, I said within myself, “This man is mine.” When I told this to Sri Aurobindo, he remarked, “That is not a small thing.” I replied, “I do not say it is a small thing.”

Anilbaran: To give myself to you without any reservation is a great joy.

Mother: There can be no greater joy.

17 August 1929

Anilbaran: How shall the activity of mind be in harmony with yours?

Mother: My mind is never active, it does not work. What acts in me is the Overmind – not the Supermind. The mind is only a centre of expression, it gives the form.

Anilbaran: It is merely the channel.

Mother: Yes, it is the channel.

Anilbaran: How is it that I get ideas and suggestions which are contrary to yours?

Mother: The mind is like a public street; all sorts of things are coming from the outside.

Anilbaran: When I am with you alone I can establish the true relation with you. But in the presence of others, I feel disturbed.

Mother: That shows that you are yet open to influences from the outside. That is very bad. Even in a crowd you must remain as if there are yourself and myself. When I turn to anybody I at once bring my true relation with him. You also should be able to do that.

1929 (Undated)

Anilbaran: Why is it that your force cannot yet work effectively through me? Is there anything in me which is not given to you?

Mother: It is the want of transparency. The whole being may be given, yet movements may continue with mix with the true inspiration. These have to be transformed and it is a long process. You must learn to distinguish between the two, and reject every movement that is not originated by the Divine. In you it is the mind which originated these mixed movements. You should be always alert. If in the midst of speaking you see that such a movement is coming, you should stop speaking.

Anilbaran: It seems to me that I am more successful in the vital than in the mental.

1929 (Undated)

Mother: Write to X:

“I hear that you are still suffering from illness and not keeping in good health. You should know that the cause is the same. You are still divided, your inner being seeks the Divine but your outer being pulls the other way. You are still bargaining with the Divine. How can you expect to be all right? It is this disharmony in you which is causing all these disturbances. All your ills are bound to disappear when you consecrate yourself to the Divine without reserve in all your parts. Constantly aspire for the same and exert your will to make your being one and undivided, integrally given up to the Divine.”

7 October 1929

Mother: Only devotion can break the crust. Even love is not sufficient – it brings down the Divine to the same level.

*

From my childhood I had the Agni in me. It makes one so hopeful, luminous, master over all difficulties. Only those people feel depressed who have no Agni in them.

13 October 1929

Mother: Unless one has the will to change, an ardent will, he will never change. I have lived with people for twenty years who always commit the same mistakes, though every time they repent for it. If the defects are pointed out to them, they at once become depressed and discouraged.

You have changed much, but that does not mean that you should sit satisfied.

14 October 1929

I interpreted a blessing of the Mother thus: “The Divine gives her love only to those who love her with sincere gratefulness.”

Mother: You are last of the last [uncertain reading]. Shall I give you a scolding? The Divine does not wait for anything for manifesting love; it is there always, everywhere, supporting every atom. Without Divine Love nothing could exist. Those who are purified by loving gratitude become conscious of this love.

You know this but it is your mind which has gone wrong. It is not merely a mistake of expression, but a mistake of thought which is very bad.

It is a good training for your mind.

October 1929 (No date)

Again I committed a similar mistake. I wrote: “Give yourself generously to the Divine and the Divine’s Love is sure to respond with generosity.”

Mother: It is not at all inspired. It is very flat. There is the spirit of bargain. The generosity of the Divine’s Love is always there, that is revealed to you when there is generosity in you. What will be revealed to you of the Divine depends on your own experience and realization.

23 October 1929

“Surrender to the Divine and the integral transformation are the two great steps leading to the new perfect creation.”

This sentence contains in itself the whole of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga. It has the force of a mantra. It came to the Mother during soup last night and the whole time (one hour) it was with her as a vast experience. She saw the surrender as a square (while showing this Mother drew the square with hand on her chest) consisting of millions and millions of small offerings, full of light and from the “needle heads” of light there was rising the transformation.

27 October 1929

“With simple sincerity, faithfulness and purity open your vital being to the Divine’s Love.”

Here sincerity implies that the opening is whole, not partial, there being no reservation; faithfulness implies that there is not temporary opening and then closing up – the opening must be permanent, constant; purity implies that it is not mixed up with desire.

5 November 1929

Mother: Whenever there is a reference to your sister, I see a great danger for you. She may exert a subtle influence on you and your progress will be stopped. It has happened to other people. They were going on well, but after their wives or sisters arrived their progress was arrested. So you must be very careful. You must not try to help her in any way, that will affect your sadhana. It is a great test for you. It is for this reason that I have been again and again postponing her coming. I did not want to put you to that test. I am now bringing her not for your sake, but for her sake. There are many sides.

7 November 1929

I asked: Is it at all necessary to stock dry fish for cats?

Mother said: It was I who made that arrangement. You see how you receive things. The physical inconvenience to which you are put – the bad smell – blinded your consciousness.

You will see a message today intended for another person. The subject is the same, though in his case it is a conscious revolt, whereas yours is unconscious.

*

X wants to know what is meant by bargaining with the Divine. You can write to him that Mother has given the following answer:

Bargaining means to try to buy things as cheap as can be.

To bargain with the Divine is an attempt to get the Divine Grace and help, yourself giving as little as possible.

*

November 1929 (No date)

Mother: When I saw Sri Aurobindo for the first time, at once I knew that here was he, the Divine. It was a revelation. And once you know that here is the Divine, how can there be any more doubt, any questioning? I unburdened myself before him and became so happy, joyful, free! Whatever he said I at once accepted it as the truth, there was absolutely no room for doubts. When he said that my mental constructions were illusions, they at once broke down, though I had lived on them for 14 years!

In 1914 I had to go away. He did not keep me, what could I do? I had to go. But I left my psychic being with him and in France I was once on the point of death; the doctors had given me up.

*

People must have faith, surrender and absolute vital confidence in the Divine.

*

For complete mastery over sex these are the requirements – pure mind, a mind completely free from all sexual thought; integral opening with sincerity; vital peace; patience in transformation.

*

19 November 1929 (Evening)

Mother: Long before I met Sri Aurobindo, 10 or 12 years before I was doing conscious yoga, I was aware of two dangers: one was the danger of accepting as the Divine one of the Asuras who masquerade as so and the other was mistaking movements of the lower nature as inspirations coming from above. But I surrendered to nobody. I felt the presence of the Divine in my inner being and my exterior life was faithful to it. I was never divided. Then when I saw Sri Aurobindo, I at once knew that it was he, the Divine, and I wholly surrendered myself to him; my whole being gave the consent; if it was a mistake it was a mistake of the whole being and I could not do anything else. Thereafter whatever Sri Aurobindo said, I accepted without the least doubt, questioning or hesitation.

It was very easy to ask him what was to be done and guide oneself accordingly. Now my relation with him is such that I can know directly what he would require me to do. When anybody asks me any question of some importance, I concentrate and receive the answer from Sri Aurobindo, I come into touch with his centre of expression. Afterwards when I meet him, he gives the answer almost in the same words. This happens in most cases.

It has taken a long time to accomplish this. It requires great wakefulness, observation, discrimination – a long, patient labour like that of a scientist in his laboratory. Always to remain wakeful and unite

the will with the Divine Will – that is true surrender.

*

Tamas is a great obstacle. It stops all progress. I have become so conscious, even in my most material being, yet sometimes there comes the tendency to avoid effort, to withdraw into Sri Aurobindo – as I so often do – and leave him to do the work. During soup time, the dull, heavy, dark, tamasic atmosphere created by the people puts a great strain on me.

*

In your case, I approve of the work you are doing.

*

21 November 1929 (Evening)

Is this not true? Sincerity, sincerity, sincerity – that is the great lever of uplifting.

I told Mother about a dream. She was telling people that they wanted the Divine not for the sake of the Divine but for the satisfaction of their own egoistic claims. Mother said: “That is quite true.”

2 December 1929

I asked Mother: May I ask X to copy my articles?

Mother frowned and said: He has already sufficient work. Then I do not like it on principle that people should be asked to work in this manner. It does not help them. On the other hand, it disturbs them and creates false relations. Why can't you do it yourself? It will be a little later, but it is not something of tremendous importance. It is the old habit of seeking to be surrounded by people.

*

10 December 1929

Mother: I am as much against journalistic writing as against politics. You have to interest the people, otherwise your writing will not be published; and by trying to be interesting you bring yourself down to their level. And what is the use? The world will not suffer, on the other hand

gain much, if most of the journalism was not there. I have seen it work and know what it means.

It is better to write impersonally on a subject without reference to personalities and personal opinions.

I do not ask you to stop writing articles but that is my way of looking at it.

*

What is worship? Offering? No, that is your mistake. Worship has many forms besides offering. Thus singing, dancing, burning incense, all these are forms of worship. True worship is the true outward form given to the inner movement of devotion. And what is it that best expresses devotion? It is the integral offering of our whole being.

When the placing of flowers at the feet of the Divine, or some such movement done in the right way, is the symbolic expression of the inner movement of devotion, then it becomes true worship.

19 December 1929

Mother: Do you know what this flower means? It is “Thoroughness in work”¹ ; it is the true movement of Mahasaraswati – opposite to à peu près which means a work half-done, a work which seems to be finished but is not really so.

22 December 1929

Mother: This is “Organization” external and internal. You must have it now.

*

This is “Intuitive light in the material”. You do not know what it means? You are becoming silly. It is the light of the intuitive mind in the material consciousness; it is very useful and necessary.

*

Anilbaran: I sometimes utter words, even obscene words, without knowing why I do so – they seem to be something quite apart from

1. In this and the subsequent notes the word or words shown within inverted commas are the spiritual significances given by the Mother to some flowers.

me.

Mother: It shows that you are under the influence of some mischievous power – it is trying to use you for amusement. You must not lose consciousness and have control over yourself.

24 December 1929

Mother: What is purified life-energy?

Anilbaran: When it is free from obscurity and is not bound by habitual association, but is consciously consecrated to the Divine. When it is an upward movement and not downward.

Mother: You should try to explain what you mean by these words. It is a want of such explanation which has led to much confusion. The divine is above, below, everywhere. The word “upward movement” is used by those who want to escape from the material world to some higher level. But the divine life is to be realized here.

Sri Aurobindo once told me that originally there was truth in the teaching about Maya, though afterwards people lost the truth and misunderstood it. The world as we see it is an illusion from the point of view of the truth-consciousness. But that does not mean that the world is an illusion. A stick appears broken under water; the truth is that the stick is not broken and the brokenness is an illusion; that does not mean that the stick is an illusion.

I know what you mean but you cannot express it correctly. You vaguely use words to which you are habituated. It is due to your habit of making speeches, writing newspaper articles. You must first clearly see the truth, the seer in you must see the light before it; then there must be an aspiration in the centre of expression for the true words; you must wait for them and not use anything that comes from habitual associations.

*

Today is “new birth” day. People are having new names. You have already a name, but it is difficult to carry. It is the name of a god and you cannot bear it until it is realized.

*

Be clear, lucid, conscious, wakeful.

25 December 1929

I offered "Detachment".

Mother asked: From what?

Anilbaran: From all lower movements, from all falsehood. Let my birth in the higher consciousness be established (confirmed).

Mother said: Begin with "Vital Harmony" and she blessed me with it.

*

Speaking of X Mother said his heart was closed. Such a person cannot carry on Yoga.

30 December 1929

Interpretation of flowers given by Mother for blessing: When "The physical centre is under the supramental influence" there will come "Mental victory" over "Gold"; mental victory is only the beginning.

16 January 1930

Mother found out a new flower today signifying, "The power to reject hostile suggestions".

I said: This is very useful.

Mother: O yes, it is indispensable.

Anilbaran: Hostile suggestions have to be averted before they enter into us.

Mother: Yes, from a distance.

Anilbaran: Otherwise once it is allowed to enter, the mischief is done.

Mother: It will have to be worked out.

20 January 1930

Yesterday I wrote a poem on Navajanma, new birth.

Mother said: About this poem Sri Aurobindo said that this was not good and asked me to tell you not to write until you get powerful inspirations. Your mind is becoming active.

26 January 1930

Tonight Mother concentrated on “Radha” flower and I came third.

Mother said: You ought to have come first – it is rather awkward. Perhaps you will come first with some other flower. What is it?

2 February 1930

Mother: People want to go their own way and thus stumble on stones. They want to substitute their own will for the Divine’s Will. They think they can trick me, fools as they are. They put pressure upon me thinking that I shall yield to their will; if I yield – and sometimes I do – then they are lost for good. I must check the people.

3 February 1930

Mother gave “Conquest of sex” and then a bunch of “Faithfulness” remarking smilingly, “That is the condition”.

21 February 1930

Mother’s message:

“Sincerity means to lift all the movements of the being to the level of the highest consciousness and realization already attained.

“Sincerity exacts the unification and harmonization of the whole being in all its parts and movements around the central Divine Will.”

*

Mother: Every part of the being may not know or understand the Divine or feel its touch, nevertheless, it must obey the highest part – that is the essence of sincerity. People have a false idea of sincerity, that of bringing the higher to the lower level. Thus if you feel that you hate a person, you should express it in word and deed. To feel hatred and show yourself otherwise – that may be insincerity, but true sincerity consists in getting rid of the hatred and thus harmonizing your feeling and action.

5 March 1930

Mother explained the significance of “Rebirth”:

You completely leave your past behind, the old habits and ways of living; you enter into a new consciousness.

Your past is a burden, it drags you down. Why do children feel so light? They have no past.

Do not look behind, but always look towards the front.

Anilbaran: Does this new birth occur abruptly or does it occur gradually?

Mother: It occurs abruptly – there is a sharp break from the past. But the new consciousness settles down gradually.

26 March 1930

Mother blessed me with “Detachment” (thorough) and “Faithfulness” and remarked: Something will be made clear to you today.

In the evening Mother said: Why are you still attached to your family? It is so ingrained in you that you do not even know it; it is clouding your consciousness and you are deceiving the Divine; in this manner, the sense of responsibility towards the family, you are no better than others.

It is this attachment to the family which is causing the mischief to your [sadhana] and the family. Have done with it. Henceforth everything you earn shall come here.

I said: I am sincerely trying to give up this attachment, but I do not succeed. Help me. With your help I shall do it.

Mother: Do not say that. I am helping you all along every hour, every minute, every moment.

5 April 1930

I asked the significance of a flower.

Mother: You don’t remember? Your education was very bad. It is “Vital plenitude”. Do you know what it means?

Anilbaran: Yes, fullness.

Mother: Yes, it is that; it is fullness; also fulfilment.

6 April 1930

Mother: This flower signifies “The play of Sri Krishna’s light in the overmind.”

12 April 1930

Mother: Whenever any person conceals anything from the Divine he goes a step downwards into unconsciousness, he dies to that extent. Your life should be like an open book before the Divine, always ready

for integral inspection. Nothing that feels uneasy before the light of consciousness and wants to conceal itself should be allowed to do so. Only in this way will consciousness be awakened everywhere.

*

The force behind desire and the force behind realization is the same thing. In case of desire it is distorted by selfishness. On account of this force behind, desires have such power of realizing themselves. If you go on knocking at a thing with desire, it is bound to be realized. But people have a confusion of desires contradicting each other; hence they are not fulfilled.

16 April 1930

Anilbaran: I find now that the inner contact is much more intense than the outer physical contact.

Mother: Yes, the physical is closed, poor; it is dull and irresponsive, so requires movement. The psychic contact is wonderful.

23 April 1930

Mother: This is “Detachment” from everything that is not Krishna’s light in the material. Do you understand? Krishna’s light, that is the light of the Truth. To be more clear, be detached from everything else except Sri Aurobindo’s creation.

12 May 1930

Mother: What does your vital being pray for?

Anilbaran: For the Divine.

Mother: You have put it very nicely. I like it.

*

Eight is the number of the best protection.

20 May 1930

Anilbaran: Your protection is always with us. When we realize this, we have not the least fear of hostile forces and adverse circumstances. We have only to trust in you, and go on merrily.

Mother: Yes. People do not do that, they depend upon their own power.

Anilbaran: In order to have complete trust in the Divine, one has first to feel and realize the grace and the protection of the Divine.

Mother: No. It is not so. Your trust and faith in the Divine must be unconditional. If you make it depend on what you see and understand of the ways of the Divine, if you begin to argue and understand by the mind, then you are finished. The faith must be in your nature. If I go back to my experience in respect of Sri Aurobindo, I find this. All the circumstances were against my putting trust in him; he even appeared to wish that I should go away, though that was only an appearance. I had to go away. But I knew Sri Aurobindo was the Divine, and that was sufficient for me to put my absolute trust in him. If you begin to judge things by the mind, you are finished.

Anilbaran: This faith must be in one's nature.

Mother: But you must also keep it up.

18 June 1930

Mother: This is "Ananda in the sex-centre." It is not yet realized. It requires a lot of preparation.

22 June 1930

By "Modest" "Devotion" you will "Realize" "The conquest over sex-movements".

2 October 1930

Mother: So X brought you out. She has brought you out of all things, out of your detachment, concentration, aloofness. Seeing her sobbing you let yourself off.

You were grieved to meet the death of your mother. You were not conscious of the tremendous help that was given to you. You felt proud and so you stumbled.

I did not stop you, as it was not serious. I allowed you to go through it, to see for yourself, to realize the need of remaining always vigilant.

21 October 1930

From Mother's book:

The small detailed movements in our life are governed by the

subconscient. How far they will reflect the Divine depends on the measure in which the subconscient is turned towards the Divine.

29 October 1930

Mother: What do you require most?

Anilbaran: I do not know.

Mother: I think it is a quiet mind which you require most.

6 November 1930

Anilbaran: What is pure mind?

Mother: A mind which is moved only by the supramental influence, that is, the divine influence; a mind quiet, surrendered, receptive.

Anilbaran: How to make the mind quiet?

Mother: By making it quiet. It looks like a joke, but it is serious.

8 November 1930

Anilbaran: Mahakali belongs to the overmind?

Mother: Yes, all the four Powers¹ are of the overmind, as also all the gods.

Anilbaran: Sri Krishna?

Mother: He also is of the overmind.

Anilbaran: Who, then, are the supramental gods?

Mother: There are no supramental gods; they have their origin in the supramental planes; their manifestations are in the overmind.

*

Anilbaran: When the mind becomes quiet, it does not become empty.

1. According to Sri Aurobindo, the four aspects of the Mother represents her four leading Personalities and Powers which have stood in front 'in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play.' These aspects are Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati.

Mother: Oh, no. It becomes full of knowledge; it becomes like a mirror reflecting truth. A quiet mind does not move. But it must be empty of the lower things before it can truly reflect truth. People are afraid of this.

11 November 1930

Anilbaran: I find myself surrounded by hostile forces, they are only too ready to take advantage of the least weakness or lapse in me.

Mother: Yes, that happens in yoga.

Anilbaran: Sometimes it seems to me that these attacks come as tests from you.

Mother: No. That, again, is a hostile suggestion. The hostile forces act in this twofold way. They launch attacks and at the same time suggest that these are coming from the Divine.

Anilbaran: Does not the Divine send tests for us?

Mother: No. All tests come from the hostile forces. They go on trying as long as they see any chance of success. If they find no such chance, they give up.

21 November 1930

My brother X arrived this morning.

Mother said: These are trials for you. Remain calm and consecrated.

24 November 1930 (The Great Victory Day)

Datta had declared the great victory on the 24th November 1926 thus: "He (Sri Aurobindo) has conquered life, conquered death, conquered all. Lord Krishna has come."

Mother explained last night: It is not that Lord Krishna was not there; on the 24th he manifested in the most material consciousness and Sri Aurobindo said that he knew that now the time had come to take up the work of the new creation.

*

Speaking of those days Mother said that the atmosphere was intense because it was a psychic atmosphere. The overmind, the plane of the gods, was brought in touch with the physical plane; this touch was necessary,

otherwise the supramental transformation would not be possible. Now the work is going on in another field, because it is necessary.

*

In the evening Mother said: Sri Aurobindo was pleased with you and said, "He is always progressing."

17 December 1930

Mother: The Infinite manifests itself in and through finite forms. As long as we limit ourselves to the transient forms we live in Ignorance. When we have conscious communion with the Infinite beyond and behind the names and forms, these appear to us in their real truth, as the occasions, channels, instruments of our communion with the Infinite Light and Power and Bliss.

*

We are at least a contributory cause of all difficulties and disturbances that come upon us and upon others connected with us. The atmosphere we create around us by our nature is responsible for most of the things that happen to us. Everything will be all right in our atmosphere of calm, peace, faith, true aspiration, love, devotion.

*

Never depend upon any knowledge brought by the mind; it is always imperfect, incomplete, partial, mixed, if not altogether false. For true knowledge, make the mind silent and receptive, opening itself to the light that comes from above.

20 January 1931

Mother said in the evening: I was talking with Sri Aurobindo about the sadhaks. Sri Aurobindo said: "For those who are still in the human consciousness, the one thing needed is faith in the Divine", and then he mentioned "like A and X. Then what is best will happen." This is not the first time that he referred to you. He mentioned you before as one of the very few who are progressing steadily and give the minimum trouble.

I am not praising you, I am impartially saying what Sri Aurobindo has said.

5 April 1931

Anilbaran: You determine all my work, Mother.

Mother: You are not yet ready for it.

Anilbaran: Try.

Mother: I do not try.

Anilbaran: I think I am ready.

Mother: Think it a little longer.

Anilbaran: Before I knew that I was not ready, but now I feel otherwise.

Mother: You have progressed, no doubt.

19 May 1931

Mother remarked: By spirituality these people understand ethical self-discipline; they do not know the glory of union with the Divine.

12 August 1931

Conveying Sri Aurobindo's remarks about my poem "The Miracle", the Mother said: He has changed some words. Some words you have used are philosophical, not poetical, (e.g. 'Love Divine'). Then the phrase 'turns blue' in English means something ridiculous. Also there is rhyme in the first verse but not in the second. The image is good. You must have rhyme in both the verses or in none. So Sri Aurobindo has made some corrections which make it a fine poem.

The poem as corrected by Sri Aurobindo stands thus:

The Miracle

The great transcending sky leaned from above
In silence kisses the aspiring earth,
Its vast unbounded space
Locked in the close embrace,
It turns the stainless void to sapphire love!
The one universal Truth to souls below
In mystic union far beyond all time
Bends through the world's play-bars;
Its suns and moons and stars
Are pale reflections from that Love sublime.

15 August 1931

Mother said in the evening: He [Sri Aurobindo] gave you a big compliment. I do not remember the exact words – “the most remarkable of all”, “the most wonderful” – these are not the words, but that is the sense. He places you on the top from the yogic point of view. How he smiled!

20 August 1931

About my poem “The World-Shunning Saint” the Mother said in the evening: Sri Aurobindo has asked you to study rules of metres, rhymes and rhythms. The thought is good but it is not poetry. When there are rules you must follow them. Sri Aurobindo said that you write English poetry just as you write in Bengali – but the two things are different. Perhaps you have not read sufficient English poetry which would have created a subconscious ground in your mind. You know better the rules of Bengali poetry.

I said: I do not feel inclined now to read for the sake of writing poetry; if anything comes, I shall write.

Mother approved and said: It does not matter. Only Sri Aurobindo will say that it is not good poetry.

26 August 1931

Mother: Sri Aurobindo says that the turn of your mind is too philosophical for writing poetry; you explain too much, whereas poetry should be more suggestive. We shall see whether it is corrected.

5 September 1931

I said to the Mother that I was taking Amlaki with curd as prescribed in Ayurvedic books. Mother said to the effect that all sorts of things are written in books. Every ten years theories are changing. Before it was said that tomatoes were very harmful, now they say that tomatoes are very good. Before it was recommended that you should take as much grapes as you can, now they advise moderation. These are all mental ideas. I think Nergine with curd is very good.

Anilbaran: Shall I stop this?

Mother: As you like it. I have no experience of this thing.

Anilbaran: Why should I follow mental ideas?

Mother: Why should you replace one set of ideas by another? As long as you have ideas, this sort of things will go on.

6 September 1931

Mother read a message in the stores this evening, that in yoga a link, a connection is to be established between the outer body and the inner self. Mother said to me: “All this is old stuff for you. Something like six years old.”

26 January 1932

Mother said during interview:

These nights I have been seeing you. Two days ago I saw you – it was a long affair, all symbolical. There were people living in isolated homes in the Ashram – a ship sailing – a train. You offered me an umbrella. I wanted to go to you with something to give, probably sweets. X objected, as the umbrella you offered was an ugly one. Still I went to you. I saw you completely undressed. I said “No, that won’t do.” Immediately you dressed yourself. Then you gave me your umbrella. I said “Yes, it is all right, it is exactly the thing I need.” You said “That is all I can give. But I am giving you six good chairs.” Chairs, of course, meant places for persons – and that was a substantial help. The chairs were very nice. I said I would not now give them to people. I shall give them the old ones.

The sea was very rough – all the people on the ship were sick and complaining. But you said “Where is the storm? I do not feel anything.” I said “Come out and see.” You came out and saw but said that you did not feel anything. I said “Yes, only those who are one in Consciousness with me will not feel it.”

People were boarding an overcrowded train. The train of course referred to our progress. I said, “I won’t go by this train, I shall choose my own time and go with my selected ones.”

9 February 1932

Mother said during interview:

Have you taken... from X? You have still social feeling? Why do they not take my permission? These things have to be done in the divine way. People forget that they are here to do yoga. They want to continue old habits, old ways.

When you hear of the illness of your child, can you take it in the same manner as if you were hearing of the illness of any other child? That is a test. You must eliminate the subconscious reactions. You may not know, but there is attachment very deep. Why do you not live always in your higher consciousness? What are those family relations, when

viewed from there? It is just like regarding the earth you are treading upon as your own.

Give up the lower consciousness for good. When you come for pranam on the 21st, throw it at the feet of Sri Aurobindo.

The subconscious reactions have to be got rid of slowly and gradually. I do not believe in clean cuts; that only throws them back. I left my family in 1916 and I took up my work 8 years later in 1924.

Why do you think of your physical birth? I have given you new birth positively so many times?

We aim at curing humanity of illness and other suffering, but for that it is necessary to change the consciousness.

20 April 1932

During the interview Mother explained:

No letter written in connection with the death of my nephew X. If there is any link between two persons, one surely knows about the death of the other even from a great distance, because he is in the atmosphere of him.

I said I knew. Mother said: You had some link with him; you tried to protect him. There is no objection to it; that is the work which the Divine demands of you and you do it in the right attitude.

The interchange was never deep and sweet but short. I said “It finishes too soon.” Mother said “It finishes never.”

1 June 1932

Mother: Last night you were showing me your writings – poems, translation of my sentences, etc. I heard actually your voice. You had drawn silver lines and were showing them to me. Silver is the symbol of spirituality. You were making some sort of arrangement of the writings. Were you conscious?

*

Do you know what Sri Aurobindo said about you? “Be prepared to live at the height of the thing.” Several days ago, when speaking about the sadhaks, he spontaneously said, “A has the spirit of this yoga.” It is true. Did I not tell you so under the mango tree? The tree is still there.

3 July 1932

Mother: Great force is put upon X so that the responsible work he has may be done. People have to keep themselves open and receptive and the work will be done through them. But in his physical nature there is not only resistance and obscurity but perversion. His pains are really due to this and not to the work.

People wrongly interpret things. A woman had a dream. She was climbing a hill and had other experiences. Lastly there was a slide, a big stone fell upon her and she woke up with a feeling of suffocation. It was found that a bit of the ceiling had fallen upon her – a very small thing. It was explained by the psycho-analysts that this was the origin of the whole dream. It is not so. Things happen in other worlds before they happen here – sometimes they occur simultaneously; only the manifestation is a little different. The woman had gone to another world, had experiences which she interpreted as sliding of the stone. These happenings had a result in this world comparatively very small, viz. the falling of a bit of the ceiling.

X has been under the influence of adverse forces. To you it came as a test to show up a weakness that is still in you.

But now that is all finished. Forget all this. I give you today a new birth. Be as pure in your outer being as in the inner being – then will begin the transformation.

24 May 1933

Mother: I was telling Sri Aurobindo the other day that the world was far from being ready. Sri Aurobindo replied that if the thing that was to manifest was to wait until the world was ready it would have to wait for ever. The world will continuously choose falsehood – it chooses falsehood spontaneously. We have to bring the thing down and impose it upon the world.

29 September 1933

Some days ago X put the question whether there was any correspondence or identity of nature between him and myself. Sri Aurobindo replied, “No; the identity is in the opening to the Mother and its completeness.”

20 October 1933

The subject of music I gave. As a child I confide myself to them. Mother said: When I sat I thought something weak and sweet would come. But

when I opened myself, a very forceful being came. Perhaps it was a Russian musician. The Russians have that characteristic mysticism – the power of complete self-giving. A child does not surrender to the Divine – it has only an instinctive dependence on persons from whom it gets bread etc. To make that kind of surrender consciously one must have gone through all the turmoil of the vital and mental planes. A man like X can make that surrender, not a boy like Y.

The music was very good. Mother said that it was this kind of music which she would have liked to have noted down.

12 September 1934

Mother: The Divine is behind everything and everybody, but it is very far behind. If it is said that all the suffering in the world, suffering of the innocent, reign of falsehood, ill-will – all these are brought in by the Divine, that will not be true. All these come from the hostile forces. Things have gone very wrong – and the Divine Love has intervened to correct. The mystery was at the beginning – there are many possible worlds, many experiences and there is only one – a drop. There must have been some accident which made the world as it is – whatever the explanation of that accident – things as they are, are very bad.

When these things will be corrected, the perfection also will be unique and wonderful.

8 January 1935

Mother gave flowers after the interview, meaning: “Intuition in the mind”, “Stability in the vital”, “Divine love in the psychic centre”, “Divine purity” will lead to perfect “Friendship with the Divine”.

5 March 1935

Mother gave these flowers:

First “Promise of Realization” to begin with; that will come by “Purification” through “Agni”; the result will be “Ananda in the physical”.

Anilbaran: Little by little Thy work will be accomplished in spite of all obstacles.

Mother: The time is not much if you consider the time that is taken for light to come from the first star. The obstacles are always the same.

12 March 1935

Mother gave these flowers: “Flame in the psychic”, “Divine thought in the mental”, “Aspiration in the physical”, “Promise of success”.

21 June 1935

Flowers from the Mother: “Peace in the physical”, “Light in the subconscious”, “Purity” – these are the conditions of the realization of the “Ananda of the Presence”.

13 October 1936

After a long time I had a talk with the Mother today; so also the Mother remarked. It was about X’s past attempts at suicide. Mother said:

The consciousness has to be changed, and the bodily life is an opportunity of effectuating this change. Those who commit suicide, throw away this opportunity and cause great confusion.

It takes 20 years to develop the consciousness. By suicide, one loses all the work and has to begin again.

People think they cannot change – that is why the change is not effected. I give the consciousness and the power – the consciousness of the thing to be done and the power to do it. What more is required? But people must have the will to change and make use of this consciousness and power.

When the change is effected there will be no wrong reactions – you will not be a slave to them. It is from the subconscious that the reactions come. The change is not effected at once – it has to be done again and again. You cannot say, “Now the thing is accomplished”; you must go forward, otherwise you will fall back.

How far the change has been done is tested by accidents. Mother gave an example from her own life. A motor accident was going to happen; the natural instinct would move the Mother for self-protection, there was no time to think. Instantaneously the Mother moved to protect another person, a student of her, from injury, exposing herself to danger. Then she knew that some change had been effected in her. It is very interesting to note how the physical behaves.

The reaction to collectivity is another example. In a gathering people are catching fear, grief, etc. from others without any reasonable cause. Solidarity is all right, but not in this slavish ignorant way.

Another example is illness. There is something in the being which does not want to throw it away and allows it to take its normal course.

I remarked that it was difficult to act on the physical.

Mother said, “No. That work has been already done by now. The Purusha in the physical has to exert the will.”

8 December 1936

I told Mother that as I was having acidity, I had reduced my diet. Mother took this occasion to point out to me my chief defect in sadhana now. She said that I was hypnotized by the body; I thought about it not in the yogic way. It was this thought about the body that was dragging me down and I had not the same intensity of sadhana and Ananda as I had before. I have passed all other tests but failed in this. There are two or three parts in which I am still thinking not in the yogic way but as an ordinary man. But today only about the body. Mother said: Have the surrender there, don't bother about the body; look at the reactions, do the needful, but do not let your mind be occupied by it. Say, “Lord, let Thy will be done, save this body as a means of Thy work”, with the faith that the Will will do the needful. All the doctors in the world will not be able to help you, as the Divine Power will. Have trust in it.

Thoughts do great harm, every thought has a reaction. These thoughts are irrational, illogical, subconscious – so to say.

31 August 1937

During the interview the Mother scolded me for supporting X in her whims by my feeling of pity for her. Mother said in this connection: “Your inside is all right, but your outward consciousness has to be changed. It is time that you do it; be ready.”

28 March 1938

For a few days I was feverish in the afternoon and was having some trouble in the intestines, due probably to something wrong in the enema which I took on Friday night. Mother said, “Was it fever really or the heat? I do not find any fever now.” Then she said, “Whatever that may be, it can be cured in the yogic way, even accidents. Don't react to these things like an ordinary man but like a yogi. Have faith in the Divine, call for peace and throw away the ailment.” I said, “I felt now no disturbance in the mind and was detached.”

Mother said, “Mere detachment is not sufficient. You have to bring down the peace in the physical cells. Of course, there is nothing in the mind, but I am speaking of the body. It is not a new theory; all bodily ailments can be cured in the yogic way by bringing down peace in the

very cells of the body.”

The End