20 July 1955

Mother reads from *Lights on Yoga*, “Surrender and Opening”.

What does “to seek after the Impersonal” mean?

Oh! It’s very much in fashion in the West, my child. All those who are tired or disgusted with the God taught by the Chaldean religions, and especially by the Christian religion—a single God, jealous, severe, despotic and so much in the image of man that one wonders if it is not a demiurge as Anatole France said—these people when they want to lead a spiritual life no longer want the personal God, because they are too frightened lest the personal God resemble the one they have been taught about; they want an impersonal Godhead, something that doesn’t at all resemble—or as little as possible—the human being; that’s what they want.

But Sri Aurobindo says—something he has always said—that there are the godheads of the Overmind who indeed are very similar—we have said this several times—very similar to human beings, infinitely greater and more powerful but with resemblances which are a little too striking. Beyond these there is the impersonal Godhead, the impersonal Divine; but beyond the impersonal Divine there is the Divine who is the Person himself; and we must go through the Impersonal to reach the Supreme Divine who is beyond.

Only it is good, as I said, for those who have been put by education into contact with too individual, too personal a God, to seek the impersonal Divine, because this liberates them from many superstitions. After that if they are capable they will go farther and have once again a personal contact with a Divine who indeed is beyond all these other godheads.

So that’s it.
Sweet Mother, how can we escape from other people’s influence?

By concentrating more and more totally and completely on the Divine. If you aspire with all your ardour, if you want to receive only the divine influence, if all the time you pull back towards yourself what is taken, caught by other influences and with your will put it under the divine influence, you succeed in doing it. It’s a work that can’t be done in a day, in a minute; you must be vigilant for a very long time, for years; but one can succeed.

First of all you must will it.

For all things, first you must understand, will, and then begin to practise — begin by just a very little. When you catch yourself in the act of doing something because someone else wanted it or because you are not very sure of what you want to do and are in the habit of doing what this one or that one or tradition or customs make you do — because, among the influences under which you live, there are collective suggestions, social traditions, many!... Social habits are something terrible; your consciousness is stuffed with them from the time you are quite small; when a baby you are already told: “This should be done, that should not be done, you must do this in this way, you must not do it in that way”, and all that; these are ideas which usually parents or teachers have received in the same way when they were very young and to which they are accustomed and submit by habit; these are the most dangerous influences because they are subtle, they are not expressed outwardly by words; your head was stuffed with them and your feelings and reactions, when you were very small, and it is only later, much later, when you begin to reflect and try to know what the truth is... as soon as you understand that there is something which must be put above all the rest, that there is something which can truly teach you to live, which must form your character, rule your movements... when you understand that, you can look at yourself doing, objectivise
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yourself, laugh a little at all those multiple small bondages of habit, traditions, the education you have received, and then put the light, consciousness, aspiration for surrender to the Divine on these things, and try to receive the divine inspiration to do things as it’s necessary, not according to habits, not according to one’s vital impulses, not according to all the vital impulses and personal wills which one receives from others and which push him to do things which perhaps he would not have done without all that.

One must observe all these things, look at them attentively and put them one after another in front of the divine Truth as one can receive it — it is progressive, one receives it purer and purer, stronger and stronger, more and more clear-sightedly — put all these things before it and with an absolute sincerity will that this may guide you and nothing else. You do this once, a hundred times, a thousand times, millions of times and after years of sustained effort you can gradually become aware that at last you are a free being — because this is what’s remarkable: that when one is perfectly surrendered to the Divine one is perfectly free, and this is the absolute condition for freedom, to belong to the Divine alone; you are free from the whole world because you belong only to Him. And this surrender is the supreme liberation, you are also free from your little personal ego and of all things this is the most difficult — and the happiest too, the only thing that can give you a constant peace, an uninterrupted joy and the feeling of an infinite freedom from all that afflicts you, dwarfs, diminishes, impoverishes you, and from all that can create the least anxiety in you, the least fear. You are no longer afraid of anything, you no longer fear anything, you are the supreme master of your destiny because it is the Divine who wills in you and guides everything. But this does not happen overnight: a little time and a great deal of ardour in the will, not fearing to make any effort and not losing heart when one doesn’t succeed, knowing that the victory is certain and that one must last out until it comes. There you are.
Sweet Mother, what is meant by “the Divine gives Himself”? 

It means exactly this: that the more you give yourself the more you have the experience — it is not just a feeling or impression or sensation, it is a total experience — that the more you give yourself to the Divine the more He is with you, totally, constantly, at every minute, in all your thoughts, all your needs, and that there’s no aspiration which does not receive an immediate answer; and you have the sense of a complete, constant intimacy, of a total nearness. It is as though you carried... as though the Divine were all the time with you; you walk and He walks with you, you sleep and He sleeps with you, you eat and He eats with you, you think and He thinks with you, you love and He is the love you have. But for this one must give himself entirely, totally, exclusively, reserve nothing, keep nothing for himself and not keep back anything, not disperse anything also: the least little thing in your being which is not given to the Divine is a waste; it is the wasting of your joy, something that lessens your happiness by that much, and all that you don’t give to the Divine is as though you were holding it in the way of the possibility of the Divine’s giving Himself to you. You don’t feel Him close to yourself, constantly with you, because you don’t belong to Him, because you belong to hundreds of other things and people; in your thought, your action, your feelings, impulses... there are millions of things which you do not give Him, and that is why you don’t feel Him always with you, because all these things are so many screens and walls between Him and you. But if you give Him everything, if you keep back nothing, He will be constantly and totally with you in all that you do, in all that you think, all that you feel, always, at each moment. But for this you must give yourself absolutely, keep back nothing; each little thing that you hold back is a stone you put down to build up a wall between the Divine and yourself. And then later you complain: “Oh, I don’t feel Him!” What would be surprising is that you could feel Him.
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That’s all?

What exactly is meant by “the impersonal Divine”?

It’s what is called in some philosophies and religions the Form-less; something that’s beyond all form, even the forms of thought, you see, not necessarily physical forms: forms of thought, forms of movement. It is the conception of something which is beyond not only what can be thought or conceived or seen even with the most subtle eyes, but all that has any kind of perceptible form whatever, even vibrations more subtle than those which infinitely overpass all human perceptions, even in the highest states of being, something which is beyond all manifestation of any order whatever — usually that’s how we define the impersonal God. He has nothing, none of the qualities we can conceive of, He is beyond all qualification. It is obviously the quest of something which is the opposite of the creation, and that is why some religions have introduced the idea of what they call Nirvana, that is, of something which is nothing; it is the same quest, the same attempt to find something which would be the opposite of all that we can conceive. So finally we define It, because how can we speak of It? But in experience one tries to go beyond all that belongs to the manifested world, and that is what we call the impersonal Divine.

Well, it happens — and this is very interesting — that there is a region like that, a region which... how to put it?... which is the negation of all that exists. Behind all the planes of being, even behind the physical, there is a Nirvana. We use the word Nirvana because it is easier, but we can say, “There is an impersonal Divine behind the physical, behind the mind, behind the vital, behind all the regions of being; behind, beyond.” (We are obliged to express ourselves in some sort of way.) It is not necessarily more subtle, it’s something else, something absolutely different; that is, in a meditation, for example, if you meditate on Nirvana you can remain in a region of your mind and by a certain
concentration produce a kind of reversal of your consciousness and find yourself suddenly in something which is Nirvana, non-existence; and yet in the ascent of your consciousness you have not gone beyond the mind.

One can have a little understanding of these things if one knows the multiplicity of dimensions, if one has understood this principle. First of all you are taught the fourth dimension. If you have understood that principle, of the dimensions, you can understand this. For example, as I said, you don’t need to exteriorise yourself to go from one plane to another, when going to the most subtle planes to pass from the last most subtle plane to what we call Nirvana — to express it somehow. It is not necessary. You can, through a kind of interiorisation and by passing into another dimension or other dimensions... you can find in any domain whatever of your being this non-existence. And truly, one can understand a little bit of this without experiencing it. It is very difficult, but still, even without the experience one can understand just a little, if one understands this, this principle of the inner dimensions.

(Silence)

It can be put like this (you see, it’s one way of saying it) that you carry within yourself both existence and non-existence at the same time, the personal and the impersonal, and... yes... the manifest and unmanifest... the finite and the infinite... time and eternity. And all that is in this tiny little body.

There are people who go beyond — even mentally, you see... their mental atmosphere goes beyond their body, even their vital atmosphere goes beyond their body — there are people whose consciousness is vast enough to extend over continents and even over other earths and other worlds, but this is a spatial concept. Yet by an interiorisation in other dimensions, the fourth and more, you can find all this in yourself, in one point... the infinite.

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Then Mother, isn’t the infinite an extension of space?

Oh, no! That’s the indefinite, not the infinite. The infinite is the opposite of the finite. One can contain in himself the most finite finite and the most infinite infinite; in fact one does contain them, perhaps even in each one of the cells of the brain.

(Silence)

Mother, is there any difference in the experience when one attains the Impersonal by his own effort and when he attains it by surrendering to the Mother?

(Long silence)

Yes, there is a difference.

(Silence)

There would not be a difference, perhaps, if the goal to be reached was the impersonal Divine and if one wanted to be identified and united with the impersonal Divine and dissolve in that. I think that in this case there wouldn’t be any difference. But if the aspiration is to realise what is beyond, we said, what Sri Aurobindo has called the supramental Reality, then here there’s a difference, not only a difference in the path, for that’s quite evident (it depends on different temperaments, besides), but if someone can truly know what surrender is and total trust, then it is infinitely easier, three-fourths of the worry and difficulties are over.

Now it is true that it can be said that one may find a very special difficulty in this surrender. This is true, that’s why I said that it depends absolutely on the temperament. But it’s not only that. If you like it may be compared to the difference between
something linear which terminates in a point and a spherical path which terminates in a totality; a totality, that is, nothing would be excluded from the totality. Each one, individually, can reach the Origin and the utmost of his being; the origin and the utmost of his being are one with the Eternal, Infinite and Supreme. Therefore, if you reach this origin, you reach the Supreme. But you reach there by a line (don’t take my words for an adequate description, you know, it’s only to make myself understood). It is a linear realisation which ends in a point, and this point is united with the Supreme — your utmost possibility. By the other path it is a realisation which may be called spherical, because that gives best the idea of something containing all, and the realisation is no longer a point but a totality from which nothing is excluded.

I can’t speak of the “whole” and the “part”, because there’s no division any longer. It’s not like that, it’s not that. But it is the quality of the approach, so to say, which is different. It is like saying that a perfect identification with one drop of water would make you know what the ocean is and what a perfect identification not only with the ocean but with all possible oceans. And yet with a perfect identification with one drop of water one could know the ocean in its essence, and in the other way one could know the ocean not only in its essence but in its totality. Something like that... I am trying to express it... It is very difficult but it’s like that, there is something, there is a difference... It could be said that all that was individualised preserves at once the virtue of individuality and what might be called in a certain sense the limitations necessary to this individuality, when one relies only on his personal strength. In the other case one can benefit by the virtues of individuality without being under its limitations. This is almost philosophy, so it’s no longer very clear. But (laughing) that’s all I can say.

Nothing else? No?
I think that’s enough!