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Today I received a question about a phrase I used on the fourteenth of August, the eve of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. And this question seemed interesting to me because it was about one of those rather cryptic phrases, that are almost ambiguous through simplification, and which was intended to be like that, so that each one might understand it according to his own plane of consciousness. I have already spoken to you several times of this possibility of understanding the same words on different planes; and these words were intentionally expressed with a simplification, a deliberate vagueness, precisely so that they would serve as a vehicle for the complexity of meaning they had to express.

This meaning is a little different on the different planes, but it is complementary, and it is only really complete when one is able to understand it on all these planes at once. True understanding is a simultaneous understanding in which all the meanings are perceived, grasped, understood at the same time; but to express them, as we have a very poor language at our disposal, we are obliged to say them one after another, with many words and many explanations.... That’s what I am going to do now.

The question is about the phrase in which I spoke of the birth of Sri Aurobindo—it was on the eve of his birthday—and I called it an “eternal birth”. I am asked what I meant by “eternal”.

Of course, if the words are taken literally, an “eternal birth” doesn’t signify much. But I am going to explain to you how there can be — and in fact is — a physical explanation or understanding, a mental understanding, a psychic understanding and a spiritual understanding.

Physically, it means that the consequences of this birth will last as long as the Earth. The consequences of Sri Aurobindo’s
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birth will be felt throughout the entire existence of the Earth. And so I called it “eternal”, a little poetically.

Mentally, it is a birth the memory of which will last eternally. Through the ages Sri Aurobindo’s birth will be remembered, with all the consequences it has had.

Psychically, it is a birth which will recur eternally, from age to age, in the history of the universe. This birth is a manifestation which takes place periodically, from age to age, in the history of the Earth. That is, the birth itself is renewed, repeated, reproduced, bringing every time perhaps something more — something more complete and more perfect — but it is the same movement of descent, of manifestation, of birth in an earthly body.

And finally, from the purely spiritual point of view, it could be said that it is the birth of the Eternal on Earth. For each time the Avatar takes a physical form it is the birth of the Eternal himself on Earth.

All that, contained in two words: “eternal birth”.

So, to conclude, I advise you, in future, before telling yourself: “Why! What does this mean? I don’t understand it at all; perhaps it is not expressed properly,” you could say to yourself: “Perhaps I am not on the plane where I would be able to understand”, and try to find behind the words something more than mere words. There.

I think this will be a good subject for our meditation.

(Meditation)