It is very important that the vital should agree to change: it must learn to accept conversion. The vital is not in itself anything to be decried: in fact, all energy, dynamism and push comes from it — without it you may be calm and wise and detached, but you will be absolutely immobile and uncreative. The body would be inert, just like a stone, without the force infused into it by the vital. If the vital is left out, you would be able to realise nothing. But like a spirited horse it is liable to be refractory and, therefore, requires good control. You have to keep your reins tight and your whip ready in order to keep the powerful beast in check. Of course, once the vital has consented to be transformed there is no need either of the tight reins or the ready whip: you proceed smoothly towards the goal, leaping lightly over each obstacle in the way. Otherwise, the vital will either stumble over the barriers or fight shy of jumping them. It is no use thinking that all would have been well if there had been no hurdles at all: they are a part of the game and if they are not faced and jumped in this life on earth you will have to surmount a hundred times greater ones on other planes and in other lives. The best thing is to make up your mind once for all and train your vital to run the race here while you are in the body and, if possible, win it. You are sure to win provided your physical mind reforms itself and helps the vital to change, instead of playing the role of a robber who holds down his victim while his accomplice makes a haul of the victim's property.

The condition of your being after death depends very much on whether the vital has been converted here or not. If you are only a medley of unorganised impulses, then at death, when the consciousness withdraws into the background, the different
personalities in you fall apart, rushing hither and thither to seek their own suitable environments. One part may enter into another person who has an affinity for it, another may even enter an animal, while that which has been alive to the divine Presence may remain attached to the central psychic being. But if you are fully organised and converted into a single individual, bent on reaching the goal of evolution, then you will be conscious after death and preserve a continuity.

As to rebirth, it must be confessed that no rule holds good for all cases. Some people are reborn almost immediately — it most often happens with parents that a part of them gets assimilated into their children if the latter are very much attached to them. Some people, however, take centuries and even thousands of years to be reincarnated. They wait for the necessary conditions to mature which will provide them with a suitable milieu. If one is yogically conscious he can actually prepare the body of his next birth. Before the body is born he shapes and moulds it, so that it is he who is the true maker of it while the parents of the new child are only the adventitious, purely physical agents.

I must here remark in passing that there is a common misconception about rebirth. People believe that it is they who are reincarnated, yet this is a palpable error, though it is true that parts of their being are amalgamated with others and so act through new bodies. Their whole being is not reborn, because of the simple fact that what they evidently mean by their “self” is not a real individualised entity but their exterior personality, the personality composed of the outward name and form. Hence it is wrong to say that A is reborn as B: A is a personality organically distinct from B and cannot be said to have reincarnated as B. You would be right only if you said that the same line of consciousness uses both A and B as the instruments of its manifestation. For, what does remain constant is the psychic being which is not the outward personality at all, but something deep within, something which is not the exterior name and form.

You want to know if all men retain their identities after
Questions and Answers

the dissolution of their bodies. Well, it depends. The ordinary
mass of men are so closely identified with their bodies that noth-
ing of them survives when the physical disintegrates. Not that
absolutely nothing survives — the vital and mental stuff always
remains but it is not identical with the physical personality. What
survives has not the clear impress of the exterior personality be-
cause the latter was content to remain a jumble of impulses and
desires, a temporary organic unity constituted by the cohesion
and coordination of bodily functions, and when these functions
cease their pseudo-unity also naturally comes to an end. Only if
there has been a mental discipline imposed on the different parts
and they have been made to subserve a common mental ideal,
can there be some sort of genuine individuality which retains
the memory of its earthly life and so survives consciously. The
artist, the philosopher and other developed persons who have
organised, individualised and to a certain extent converted their
vital being can be said to survive, because they have brought
into their exterior consciousness some shadow of the psychic
entity which is immortal by its very nature and whose aim is to
progressively build up the being around the central Divine Will.