2 September 1953

“All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and regulations, its rites and ceremonies all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State, it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.

“The first and principal article of these established and formal religions runs always, ‘Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are in falsehood or inferior’....

“This attitude is natural to the religious mind; but it is just that which makes religion stand in the way of the spiritual life. The articles and dogmas of a religion are mind-made things and, if you cling to them and shut yourself up in a code of life made out for you, you do not know and cannot know the truth of the spirit that lies beyond all codes and dogmas, wide and large and free. When you stop at a religious creed and tie yourself in it, taking it for the only truth in the world, you stop the advance and widening of your inner soul.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (9 June 1929)

If someone follows a religion and has a good capacity, can he go farther and reach identification with the Divine?
It is impossible.

Religion is always a limitation for the spirit.

If a man has a spiritual life independently of his mental formations and the set limits in which he lives, then this spiritual life makes him, so to say, cross the religious principles and enter something higher. But his consecration must come from within and not be formal. If it comes exclusively from the form, then the limitation is so great that he cannot go farther.

There are people who have necessarily to come out of their religion if they do not want to be halted in their progress. But those who have practically no mental activity, who do not ask themselves any questions, who have only an intense devotion in their heart and an urge to give themselves to something that is infinitely greater, for these it does not matter whether they have a religion or not. It is all the same. But if one is attached to forms, one can never go any farther.

It is difficult to go so far unless the mind is free and dwells in the light. It is one of the fairly indispensable conditions (although not absolutely indispensable). However, there are people who have no mental power and accept any dogma whatever without discussion; they feel that nothing can prevent them from having this inner urge which will put them in contact with the Divine. But generally they do not have a mental life: it is very much restricted.

_Do castes have any importance in the spiritual life?_

Castes? What has that got to do with spiritual life? Absolutely nothing. It is merely a social organisation, that is all.

_It is said that the Brahmans are more advanced for serving the Divine?_

They say many things.
Questions and Answers

Spiritual life does not depend upon these considerations, not at all. Certain social virtues depend upon them and solely because there exist in some environments special traditions of education and that some traditions are better than others. But that is all.

As for the question of not mixing blood, it is a subject for discussion. Because, for example, if you take the various kinds of dogs (excuse me, I do not mean to make an unfair comparison), still, the dog belonging to its kind of breed, when great care is taken to keep the type pure, to prevent any mixture, becomes more and more stupid, whilst the street-dog, product of mixed breed and sometimes a horror from the physical point of view — it is hideous, made of one kind crossed with another — is generally much superior from the point of view of intelligence. So even in these cases one cannot say.... Marriages in small communities, made within the caste, where no mixture is allowed, end usually in a gradual, progressive decline of intelligence in the group. It is not a selection, rather the contrary. New admixtures are always necessary to bring forth new types capable of manifesting progress.... From the social point of view, this is quite justifiable, and it is very convenient and simple: it gives frames allowing precisely an easier organisation but that is all the worth it has.

But I believe it is the same for the caste as for the country. Each caste is convinced that it alone holds the maximum progress possible! And when you hear people speaking, even those who are outcastes are full of contempt for the others and believe themselves superior.

“One who holds a particular faith, or who has found out some truth, is disposed to think that he alone has found the Truth, whole and entire. This is human nature. A mixture of falsehood seems necessary for human beings to stand on their legs and move on their way. If the vision of the Truth were sud-
It is difficult to say. Logically the whole creation must advance more and more towards the Divine, because it is its ultimate goal. But in fact it is a peculiar movement, for one takes three steps forward and two backward; one takes two steps forward and one sideways! So, it will take very long to arrive at the goal. It looks like that.

There is a great difference between the general principle, the theory seen in its totality over the millenniums, without taking any account of the number of years (not years, I say millenniums, thousands of centuries), a great difference between that and the practical facts. It can be said that the whole creation is moving towards union with its Creator, but there is the fact, first of all, that the whole evolutionary movement is a spiral movement. And in this spiral there are innumerable points, and at each point a progress in the vertical line is achieved. But one has to make a whole round in order to come back once more to the same point, but at a slightly higher level.... And so, all the time you spend doing other things, reaching other points, the first one is as it were forgotten. In human history that is translated in this way:

There is a wonderful civilisation with all kinds of extraordinary productions, from the scientific point of view, the artistic point of view, even the political, organisational and social point of view. There were fine civilisations like those which have left a kind of occult memory of a continent that might have linked India with Africa, for example, of which no trace remains (unless some human races be the remnants of that civilisation). There are civilisations like that which disappear suddenly and then follows a whole period full of darkness, unconsciousness, ignorance, of
altogether primitive races which seem so close to animals that one asks whether there is really any difference. And so there is a big hole in the darkness, passing through all kinds of disorders. Then all of a sudden it emerges above, at an even higher level, with greater virtues, a greater realisation... as though all those hours in the night, of labour in the night had prepared Matter so that it might express something higher. Then again another darkness, an oblivion: the earth becomes again barbarous, obscure, ignorant, painful. And suddenly some thousands of years later, a new civilisation comes....

So if you look at that from below, you ask yourself: “Where is the progress?” Because always it disappears, collapses or it rots, is ruined completely — and is forgotten. And mankind becomes once again something very ordinary, amorphous, grovelling in a half-obscurity. And then yet once more suddenly there is an illumination. And while one is in the midst of the illumination one says, “Now, we have it, it is the right thing, now we must not fall again....”

So far there has always been a relapse.
We shall see.

Will there be a fall once again?

That, my child, I have not said. I have said nothing, I said: “We shall see.”

In reality, I believe it depends somewhat upon each one of us and on our aspiration. If everyone does all that is needed and the maximum he can do, there is a chance of arriving at a stabilised stage where the upward movement will go on without the need to destroy anything in order to begin again.

It is not indispensable, but it has always been so till now, and indeed, I don’t know if Nature does not take great pleasure in it....

It happens we are obliged to take our support on what Nature has done, because it is she who has been at work till
now. But at the same time we do not approve of her ways of working. So, that produces a small inner conflict (in the family, if I may say so!); but it makes things somewhat difficult, because she does not like her way of being to be disturbed. And yet, if one goes on doing as she wants, then it will always be the same story, always there will have to be this disappearing and beginning again, for it is her play. Hence one must be able to prevent her from destroying. But if by chance a good way is found to get her interested and make her collaborate, then with her collaboration it would be possible to succeed.

In reality, all that is needed is to make her understand that things can be done in another way than hers.

And then since she possesses (as you see) a wonderful ingenuity and a truly fantastic imagination.... You have only to look at animals or to photograph them. If you look at that and compare the little mouse with the giraffe or the elephant with the cat, all those animals that were once there and all the animals that still have extraordinary and queer forms — what an imagination, what a tremendous imagination! If you had to create all the animals that are on earth, you would have found it rather difficult! Now that you see them, it appears to you quite natural.... I saw the other day a picture representing simply a giraffe picking fruits from far up a tree. I said: “One must have some imagination to find that, an animal having a neck long enough to reach the top of a tree so that it may eat the fruit!” It is wonderful. And everything is like that. It appears to us quite natural because we have always lived with it, but one must truly have a genius....

So, the person who has the genius as well as the power to realise whatever she imagines, does not like very much people meddling in her affairs! She says: “Are you capable of doing what I do?”

You must convince her that you don’t want to upset anything she is doing, but that you wish simply to bring in something more. There is only one way to convince her: to do it. So long
Questions and Answers

as it is an aspiration, she smiles, she looks on, she says: “Let us see, let us see, what are you going to do?”

But when it will have been done, I believe, she will say: “It is all right.”

So there is only one way, it is to do it.