APPENDIX II

A Clarification

In 1935, Sri Aurobindo was asked: “In ‘Rebirth and Karma’, second chapter,¹ I find that it is the ‘mental being’ which is put forth from life to life — that it is the reincarnating soul. But would not the mental being be a part of the personality — the mental, nervous and physical composite — which in the popular conception is the thing that is carried over or which takes a new body in the next life? And the ‘Self’ here is quite different from the ‘mental being’. . . . Is the ‘mental being’ then the same thing as the ‘psychic being’ which is carried over to the next life?”

The mental being spoken of by the Upanishad is not part of the mental-nervous-physical composite — it is the manomaya purusha prana-sharira-neta, the mental being leader of the life and body. It could not be so described if it were part of the composite. Nor can the composite or part of it be the Purusha, — for the composite is composed of Prakriti. It is described as manomaya by the Upanishads because the psychic being is behind the veil and man being a mental being in the life and body lives in his mind and not in his psychic, so to him the manomaya purusha is the leader of the life and body, — of the psychic behind supporting the whole he is not aware or dimly aware in his best moments. The psychic is represented in man by the Prime Minister, the manomaya, itself being a mild constitutional king; it is the manomaya to whom Prakriti refers for assent to her actions. But still the statement of the Upanishads gives only the apparent truth of the matter, valid for man and the human stage only — for in the animal it would be rather the pranamaya purusha that is the netå, leader of mind and body. It is one reason why I have not yet allowed the publication of

¹ See page 275.
Rebirth and Karma because this had to be corrected and the deeper truth put in its place. I had intended to do it later on, but had not time to finish the remaining articles.