Reincarnation – Memory of Past Lives

To understand rightly the problem of what is popularly called reincarnation, you must perceive that there are two factors in it which require consideration. First, there is the line of divine consciousness which seeks to manifest from above and upholds a certain series of formations, peculiar to itself, in the universe which is its field of manifestation. Secondly, there is the psychic consciousness which climbs up from below, the seed of the Divine developing through time till it meets the Force from above and takes the impress of the supramental Truth. This psychic consciousness is the inner being of a man, the material from which his true soul or jiva can be fashioned when, in response to its aspiration, the Supramental descends to give it a consistent personality. The exterior being of man is a perishable formation out of the stuff of universal Nature — mental, vital, physical — and is due to the complex interplay of all kinds of forces. The psychic absorbs the essence, as it were, of the experiences of the various formations behind which it stands; but not being in constant contact with them it does not retain the memory of the lives in their totality to which it supplies the background. Hence by merely contacting the psychic one cannot have the recollection of all those past lives: what commonly goes by the name of such recollection is, mostly, either deliberate imposture or a fabrication out of a few spasmodic hints received from within. Many people claim to remember their animal lives as well: they say that they were such and such a monkey living in this or that part of the globe. But if anything is certain, it is that the monkey has no contact whatever with the psychic consciousness and so transmits not one jot of his experiences to it. The impressions of his exterior monkey-nature vanish with
the crumbling of his animal body: to pretend to a knowledge of
them is to betray the grossest ignorance of the actual facts of the
problem under consideration. Even with regard to human lives,
it is only when the psychic has come to the fore that it carries and
preserves definite memories, but certainly not of all the details of
life unless it is constantly in front and one with the exterior being.
For, as a rule, the physical mind and the physical vital dissolve
with the death of the organism: they disintegrate and return to
the universal Nature and nothing remains of their experiences.
Not until they have become united with the psychic, so that there
are not two halves but a single consciousness, the whole nature
unified round the central Divine Will and this centralised being
is connected up with the divine line of consciousness which is
above — not until this happens can one receive the knowledge
belonging to that consciousness and become aware of the entire
series of forms and lives which were upheld by it as its own
successive means of gradual self-expression. Before this is done,
it is meaningless to speak of one’s past births and their various
incidents. This precious oneself is just the present impermanent
exterior nature which has absolutely nothing to do with the
several other formations behind which, as behind the present
one, the true being stands. Only the supramental consciousness
holds these births as if strung on one single thread and that alone
can give the real knowledge of them all.