“Some persons ask: ‘Why has not the Divine come yet?’ Because you are not ready. If a little drop makes you sing and dance and scream, what would happen if the whole thing came down?

“Therefore do we say to people who have not a strong and firm and capacious basis in the body and the vital and the mind: ‘Do not pull’, meaning ‘Do not try to pull at the forces of the Divine, but wait in peace and calmness.’ For they would not be able to bear the descent. But to those who possess the necessary basis and foundation, we say, on the contrary, ‘Aspire and draw.’ For they would be able to receive and yet not be upset by the forces descending from the Divine.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)

Why does the divine force upset people?

Because it is too strong for them. It is as though you were in the midst of a big cyclone. It happens at times that the wind is so violent that you are not able to stand — you have to lie down and wait till it blows over. Now, the divine forces are a thousand times stronger than a cyclonic wind. If you do not have in you a very wide receptivity, an extremely solid basis of calmness, of equality of soul and inner peace, they come and carry you away like a hurricane and you cannot resist them. It is the same thing with light; some people get a pain in the eyes when they look at the sun and are obliged to put on dark glasses because sunlight is too strong for them. But this is merely sunlight. When you are able to look at the supramental light, it appears to you so brilliant that sunlight seems like a black stain in comparison. One must have strong eyes and a solid brain to
bear that, one must be well prepared, established in something extremely calm and vast — it is as though one had such a strong basis of tranquillity that when the storm passes, when the light comes with a great intensity, one is able to remain immobile and receive what one can without being knocked over. But there is not one being in a million who can do it. Only those who have had a foretaste of inner experience can know what this means. But even if you enter consciously into the psychic, it is dazzling; and it is within your reach because it is your own psychic being, and yet it is so different from your external consciousness that the first time you enter it consciously, it seems to you truly dazzling, something infinitely more brilliant than the most brilliant sunlight.

The psychic is what may be called “the Divine within the reach of man”.

Are there any signs which indicate that one is ready for the path, especially if one has no spiritual teacher?

Yes, the most important indication is a perfect equality of soul in all circumstances. It is an absolutely indispensable basis; something very quiet, calm, peaceful, the feeling of a great force. Not the quietness that comes from inertia but the sensation of a concentrated power which keeps you always steady, whatever happens, even in circumstances which may appear to you the most terrible in your life. That is the first sign.

A second sign: you feel completely imprisoned in your ordinary normal consciousness, as in something extremely hard, something suffocating and intolerable, as though you had to pierce a hole in a brass wall. And the torture becomes almost unbearable, it is stifling; there is an inner effort to break through and you cannot manage to break through. This also is one of the first signs. It means that your inner consciousness has reached a point where its outer mould is much too small for it — the mould of ordinary life, of ordinary activities, ordinary relations,
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all that becomes so small, so petty; you feel within you a force to break all that.

There is yet another sign: when you concentrate and have an aspiration, you feel something coming down into you, you receive an answer; you feel a light, a peace, a force coming down; and almost immediately — you need not wait or spend a very long time — nothing but an inner aspiration, a call, and the answer comes. This also means that the relation has been well established.

If there is an upsetting when the force descends, does it not mean that the vital is not ready and should it not be forced to be ready?

How can you force it? It escapes through your fingers, so to say. Your will thinks it has caught it, and it eludes you. It is difficult to control. And force it to what? To be ready?... All that you will be able to get from it is that it will become inert, that is, it will hide in a corner, not stir any longer, and let the storm pass! Because for it the contact with the divine forces is like a storm. And when it sees that the crisis is over, it will react: “Here we are! Now, it is my turn!”

If you are upset, it means that you have still much work to do upon your vital before it can be ready, it means there is a weakness somewhere. For some, the weakness is in the mind. I knew a boy in France who was a fine musician, he used to play the violin admirably. But his brain was not very big, it was just big enough to help him in his music, nothing more. He used to come to our spiritual meetings and, all of a sudden, he had the experience of the infinite in the finite; it was an absolutely true experience; in the finite individual came the experience of the infinite. But this upset the boy so much that he could make nothing at all of it! He could not even play his music any longer. The experience had to be stopped because it was too powerful for him. This is an instance where the mind was too weak.
He had the experience, truly, not the idea (ideas are generally something foreign to all men). One must have the experience before the idea; for most men think only with words—if you put two contradictory ideas together, they no longer understand, while the experience is quite possible. So the mind must be a little wide, a little supple and quiet, and instead of feeling immediately that everything you were thinking of is now escaping you, you wait very quietly for something in your head to begin to understand the content of the experience.

There are people—many—who are weak in their vital being. When they have this sensation of infinity, eternity, in their very small person, in their very little strength, it is so different from the impression they have constantly, that they understand nothing whatever. Then they fall sick or they begin to talk deliriously or to shout and dance.

But if you are absolutely sincere and look at yourself clear-sighted, this cannot happen to you, for an experience which comes inopportune like that is always the result of some pride or ambition or some lack of balance within, due to having neglected one part of the being for the benefit of another.

Those who think they can advance in yoga by leaving their body completely inert, their vital asleep and their mind in a kind of stupefaction (for often, what they call “silence” is just stupefaction), get completely upset, you may be sure, when an experience comes to them. They lose their head, they do extravagant things or otherwise something very unfortunate happens to them.... One must have a solid well-balanced body, a well-controlled vital and a mind organised, supple, logical; then, if you are in a state of aspiration and you receive an answer, all your being will feel enriched, enlarged, splendid, and you will be perfectly happy and you will not spill your cup because it is too full, like a clumsy fellow who does not know how to hold a full tumbler. It is like that, you see, it is as if you had a small vase there, quite small, which will remain small if you do not take care to make it bigger; then if all of a sudden
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it is filled up with something which is too strong, everything overflows!

When the consciousness feels imprisoned within its too narrow external mould, what should be done?

You must particularly not be violent, for if you are violent, you will come out of it tired, exhausted, without any result. You must concentrate all the forces of aspiration. If you are conscious of the inner flame, you should put into this flame all that you find strongest in you by way of aspiration, of a call, and hold yourself as quiet as you can, calling, with a deep reliance that the answer will come; and when you are in this state, with your aspiration and concentrated force, with your inner flame, press gently upon this kind of outer crust, without violence, but with insistence, as long as you can, without getting agitated, irritated or excited. You must be perfectly quiet, must call and push.

It will not succeed the first time. You must begin again as many times as is necessary, but suddenly, one day... you are on the other side! Then you emerge in an ocean of light.

If you fight, if you are restless, if you struggle, you will get nothing at all; and if you become irritable you will only get a headache, that is all.

Yes, it is that. To gather together all your power of aspiration, make of it something intensely concentrated, in an absolute tranquillity, to be conscious of your inner flame and throw into it all you can that it may burn ever higher and higher, and then call with your consciousness and, slowly, push. You are sure to succeed one day.

Mother reads a comment made by someone during her talk in 1929:

“In the case of some persons who turn to the Divine it happens that every material prop or everything they
are fond of is removed from their life. And if they love someone he also is taken away.”

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We enter here into a big problem.... The notion of what is good for a being and what isn’t is not the same to his evolved consciousness as to the divine consciousness. What appears to you good, favourable, is not always what’s best for you from a spiritual point of view. It is this which must be learnt from the beginning, that the divine perception of what will lead you fastest to the goal is absolutely different from yours, and that you cannot understand it. That is why you must say to yourself from the beginning, “It is all right. I shall accept everything and I shall understand later on.”

So often you come across persons who, before they began yoga, had a relatively easy life, and as soon as they come to yoga, all the circumstances to which they were particularly attached break away from them more or less brutally. Then they are troubled; they do not perhaps have the frankness to admit it to themselves, they perhaps take recourse to other thoughts and other words, but it comes to this: “How is it? I am good and I am not treated kindly!”

The entire human notion of justice is there. “You try to become good and what cataclysms befall you! All the things you loved are taken away from you, all the pleasures you have had are taken away from you, all the people whom you loved leave you; it is indeed not worth the trouble to be good and to have made an effort.” And if you follow your reasoning far enough, all of a sudden you come upon the canker — so, you wanted to do yoga out of self-interest, you wanted to be good out of self-interest, you thought your situation would be better and you would be given a bonbon for your wisdom! And that does not happen!... Well, this refusal is the best lesson that could ever be given to you. For as long as your aspiration hides a desire and as long as in your heart there is the spirit of bargaining with the
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Divine, things will come and give you blows till you wake up to the true consciousness within you which makes no conditions, no bargains. That’s all.

_Since the time I have been doing yoga I find that all my affairs are going better than before. So I conclude..._

Perhaps your aspiration was truly sincere and disinterested. In such a case, things must happen like that.

_If someone who has been bad and wicked, suddenly decides to change, does he immediately hear the small inner voice which warns every time one does something bad?_

Everything depends upon the form the reversal, the inner conversion has taken. If the change is sudden, yes, one can immediately become conscious of the small voice, but if it is gradual, the best effects will also be gradual. It depends absolutely on each case, one cannot tell. If a kind of tearing, an illumination takes place, then yes, one has immediately the inner indication. It can even be retrospective. That is, while thinking of certain past acts, one may get a clear vision of what one was compared with what one now is. Besides, each time there is a true change in the being, each time one overcomes a fault, one has the clear vision of a whole set of things which seemed quite natural and which now pass across the screen like a dark spot; you see the origin, the causes and the effects. If you have a precise, exact memory and have for a certain length of time, say a period of ten years, made sincere efforts to transform yourself, to consecrate yourself more and more, and if you could recollect what you were before, you would say, “It is not possible, I was not like that!” And yet you were indeed like that. There is such a distance between what one was before, what seemed quite natural to you before and what seems to you natural now, that you cannot believe you are the
same person. This is the surest indication that you have truly progressed.

*When can one say that one has truly entered the spiritual path?*

The first sign (it is not the same for everybody) but in a chronological order, I believe, is that everything else appears to you absolutely without importance. Your entire life, all your activities, all your movements continue, if circumstances so arrange things, but they all seem to you utterly unimportant, this is no longer the meaning of your existence. I believe this is the first sign.

There may be another; for example, the feeling that everything is different, of living differently, of a light in the mind which was not there before, of a peace in the heart which was not there before. That does make a change; but the positive change usually comes later, very rarely does it come at first except in a flash at the time of conversion when one has decided to take up the spiritual life. Sometimes, it begins like a great illumination, a deep joy enters into you; but generally, afterwards this goes into the background, for there are too many imperfections still persisting in you.... It is not disgust, it is not contempt, but everything appears to you so uninteresting that it is truly not worth the trouble of attending to it. For instance, when you are in the midst of certain physical conditions, pleasant or unpleasant (the two extremes meet), you say to yourself, “It was so important to me, all that? But it has no importance at all!” You have the impression that you have truly turned over to the other side.

Some imagine that the sign of spiritual life is the capacity to sit in a corner and meditate! That is a very, very common idea. I do not want to be severe, but most people who make much of their capacity for meditation — I do not think they meditate even for one minute out of one hour. Those who meditate truly never speak about it; for them it is quite a natural thing. When
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it has become a natural thing, without any glory about it, you may begin to tell yourself that you are making progress. Those who talk about it and think that this gives them a superiority over other human beings, you may be sure, are most of the time in a state of complete inertia.

It is very difficult to meditate. There are all kinds of meditations.... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result — this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea — simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one’s power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquillity. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns.

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and moreover you will not be sure of the result; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else — simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen
and especially of what may not, and above all without desiring
that something may come — simply, the joy of an aspiration
which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more
and more in a constant concentration. And there I may assure
you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is,
it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realised when
you do this. These possibilities may be very different according
to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be
silent, going behind appearances, calling a force which answers,
waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like
an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living consciously in
this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see
that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time
something will happen.

During the concentration that we have here\footnote{For a long time meditations used to take place in the Ashram building. Then, as the number of disciples increased and sports gained importance, these meditations were replaced by collective “concentrations” at the Ashram Playground.} together,
on what should we concentrate?

Can anyone tell me what this concentration is and why we have
it? It is a very interesting question, it concerns everybody. Can
anyone tell me the difference between this concentration and a
so-called “ordinary” meditation? Why do we do it and what
happens there?

We make an offering of all our daily actions.

Yes, this is the individual side. And collectively, what is this
concentration for? (He is on the way, note, he has taken half the
first step).

We concentrate on our weak points and aspire for their
disappearance.
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That is also an individual aspect.

In the meditations we formerly used to have there [at the Ashram], when we had a morning or evening meditation, my work was to unify the consciousness of everyone and lift it as high as I could towards the Divine. Those who were able to feel the movement followed it. This was ordinary meditation with an aspiration and ascent towards the Divine. Here, at the Playground, the work is to unify all who are here, make them open and bring down the divine force into them. It is the opposite movement and that is why this concentration cannot replace the other, even as the other cannot replace this one. What happens here is exceptional — in the other meditation [at the Ashram] I gathered together the consciousness of all who were present and, with the power of aspiration, lifted it towards the Divine, that is, made each one of you progress a little. Here, on the other hand, I take you as you are; each one of you comes saying, “Here we are with our whole day’s activities, we were busy with our body, here it is, we offer to you all our movements, just as they were, just as we are.” And my work is to unify all that, make of it a homogeneous mass and, in answer to this offering (which each one can make in his own way), to open every consciousness, widen the receptivity, make a unity of this receptivity and bring down the Force. So at that moment each one of you, if you are very quiet and attentive, will surely receive something. You will not always be aware of it, but you will receive something.

In March 1964, the following question was put to the Mother:

And now that you are no longer physically present at the Playground concentrations, what happens?

I hope people have made some progress and do not need the physical presence to feel the Help and the Force.