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*“People often meet in these planes, before they meet upon earth. They may join there, speak to each other and have all the relations you can have upon earth. Some know of these relationships, some do not know. Some, as are indeed most, are unconscious of the inner being and the inner intercourse, and yet it happens that when they meet the new face in the outer world, they find it very familiar, quite well known.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (21 April 1929)*

That depends very much upon the level of consciousness in one's inner being. For most people, all that is a mixture in the mental, vital and physical planes; they are not at all conscious of what is happening. Some are conscious and usually they have a similar feeling when they are told: “Why, it was like that that I knew you, yes, I know you already intimately, and I have a feeling, but the impression is very vague.” Very few people are developed enough to say: “Well, I saw you under such and such circumstances.” Yet this has happened.

And then there are those who have learnt a little, who are more or less occultists or believe in rebirth in a childish way, believe that it is a tiny person who has put on a physical robe, that is, a body, and when this garment falls off, it goes away and puts on another and then another... like a doll whose dress is changed. For them it is like that: one changes one's body, as one changes one's clothes. Some people have even written books very seriously telling you about all their lives since they were monkeys! That indeed is absolute childishness. For in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, it is just the tiny psychic formation at the centre of the being that continues after death; all the rest is dissolved, goes to pieces, scattered here and there, the

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individuality exists no longer. Now, how often in the physical life does the psychic being take part consciously in what the physical being does?... I am not speaking of people who do yoga and are a little disciplined; I am speaking of average people who have a psychic capacity in the sense that their psychic is already sufficiently developed to be able to intervene in life and guide it — some pass years and years without the psychic intervening. And they come and tell you in which country they were born and what their father and mother were like and the house they lived in, the roof of the church and the forest that was by the side and all the most casual events of their life! It is absolutely idiotic, for it is all rubbed off, these things don't exist any longer; whilst the memory that one may still have is that of the particular moment in life when there is a special circumstance, "vital" moments, so to say, in which the psychic suddenly takes part, through an inner call or an absolute necessity — all of a sudden the psychic intervenes — and that then is engraved in the psychic memory. When you have the psychic memory you remember a set of circumstances at one *moment* of life, particularly of the inner emotion, of the consciousness that acted at that moment. And then that passes into the consciousness along with some associations, with all that was around you, perhaps a word spoken, a phrase heard; but what was most important was the state of the soul in which you were: for that indeed remains very clearly engraved. These are the landmarks of the psychic life, things that have left a deep impression and taken part in its formation. Hence when you find your psychic being in you again constantly, continuously, clearly, it is things like these that you remember. There may be quite a few, but they are flashes in one's life, and one cannot say: "I was such and such a person, I did such and such a thing, I was called by this name and I was doing this or that." Or otherwise it would mean that at that moment (a rare one) there was a combination of circumstances good enough for one to be able to fix the date or the place, the country and the age. That can happen.

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Naturally the psychic takes a greater and greater part, and the larger does the set of memories grow. And then one can retrace one's life, but not in all its details. One can say that at certain moments, "it was like this," or "I was that." Certain moments, yes, very important moments of a life.... What's necessary is a being wholly identified with the psychic, one that has organised its whole existence around it, unified its whole being — all the tiniest parts, all the elements, all the movements of the being around the psychic centre — that has made of itself a single being, solely turned to the Divine; then, if the body falls off, that remains. It is only a completely formed conscious being that can remember exactly in another life all that has happened before. It can even pass consciously from one life to another without losing anything of its consciousness. How many people upon earth have reached that state?... Not many, I believe. And usually they are not in the least inclined to narrate their adventures.

*There are people who tell the life of others.*

Yes, I know. I know many things, I have heard all that one can hear. They tell stories after stories.... They look at you and say: "You were so-and-so in that life, you did such and such a thing." Well I guarantee, it is not true. For I know how one can find out where one has seen a person and what he was and how it is — it is not just a little story that you can write in a book. When you look within a person, when you have the perception, precisely of the psychic world, which enables you to recognise the psychic there where it was, then all of a sudden you can see a scene, an image, a form, a word; there is a sort of association due to which even in the present being of this person there still remain certain sympathies and attractions which come from previous lives. But, as I was saying, these are "moments" of life. And so one sees, one can see these various moments, but one cannot narrate a whole life.

I believe Sri Aurobindo has written something very amusing

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about this, the number of Caesars one knew, the number of all the great beings, the Napoleons and all the important personages, the Shakespeares, all the people whose names have survived in history! How many are there! There are hundreds of them! And you hear their stories: “I was this, I was that, I did this”, or in séances the so-called spirits come and speak to you. A large number of people indulge in this playing with “spirits”, practising automatic writing and particularly in communicating with spirits. Now, there are garrulous spirits. They come to many places at the same time, especially people like Napoleon (I do not know why they have a partiality for Napoleon), everywhere Napoleon arrives and tells you extraordinary stories of his life and usually very contradictory stories and perhaps all at the same time! These are really very active people. Well, it is extremely comic — and it is impossible.

The truth is that these are small vital entities, a class of beings formed by the decomposition of desires that have persisted after a man’s death and retained their form; of imaginations that have remained coagulated and try to manifest and reappear. Sometimes they are small beings of the vital world, not very well-disposed; as soon as they see people playing at such things — automatic writing, spirit-communication — they come and play. And as they are in a domain from where it is easy to read human thought, they tell you very well what you have in your head. They respond to what you expect. You wish to have a particular answer: they give you the answer even before you have put the question! They can give you precise details, they can tell you that such and such a thing happened to you, that such and such a member of your family... They know quite well. They do excellent thought-reading and tell you things altogether convincingly. “I did not say that I was married and had three sons and four daughters, how did he know all that?” — Because it was in your head.

Psychic memories have a very special character and a wonderful intensity. But that cannot be narrated in this way... They

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are unforgettable moments of life when the consciousness is intense, luminous, strong, active, powerful, and sometimes turning-points in life that have changed the direction of one's life. But one will never be able to say what dress one was wearing or the gentleman with whom one spoke and the neighbours and the kind of field where one was.

*Why do we forget our dreams?*

Because you do not dream always at the same place. It is not always the same part of your being that dreams and it is not at the same place that you dream. If you were in conscious, direct, continuous communication with all the parts of your being, you would remember all your dreams. But very few parts of the being are in communication.

For example, you have a dream in the subtle physical, that is to say, quite close to the physical. Generally, these dreams occur in the early hours of the morning, that is between four and five o'clock, at the end of the sleep. If you do not make a sudden movement when you wake up, if you remain very quiet, very still and a little attentive — quietly attentive — and concentrated, you will remember them, for the communication between the subtle physical and the physical is established — very rarely is there no communication.

Now, dreams are mostly forgotten because you have a dream while in a certain state and then pass into another. For instance, when you sleep, your body is asleep, your vital is asleep, but your mind is still active. So your mind begins to have dreams, that is, its activity is more or less coordinated, the imagination is very active and you see all kinds of things, take part in extraordinary happenings.... After some time, all that calms down and the mind also begins to doze. The vital that was resting wakes up; it comes out of the body, walks about, goes here and there, does all kinds of things, reacts, sometimes fights, and finally eats. It does all kinds of things. The vital is very adventurous. It watches.

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When it is heroic it rushes to save people who are in prison or to destroy enemies or it makes wonderful discoveries. But this pushes back the whole mental dream very far behind. It is rubbed off, forgotten: naturally you cannot remember it because the vital dream takes its place. But if you wake up suddenly at that moment, you remember it. There are people who have made the experiment, who have got up at certain fixed hours of the night and when they wake up suddenly, they do remember. You must not move brusquely, but awake in the natural course, then you remember.

After a time, the vital having taken a good stroll, needs to rest also, and so it goes into repose and quietness, quite tired at the end of all kinds of adventures. Then something else wakes up. Let us suppose that it is the subtle physical that goes for a walk. It starts moving and begins wandering, seeing the rooms and... why, this thing that was there, but it has come here and that other thing which was in that room is now in this one, and so on. If you wake up without stirring, you remember. But this has pushed away far to the back of the consciousness all the stories of the vital. They are forgotten and so you cannot recollect your dreams. But if at the time of waking up you are not in a hurry, you are not obliged to leave your bed, on the contrary you can remain there as long as you wish, you need not even open your eyes; you keep your head exactly where it was and you make yourself like a tranquil mirror within and concentrate there. You catch just a tiny end of the tail of your dream. You catch it and start pulling gently, without stirring in the least. You begin pulling quite gently, and then first one part comes, a little later another. You go backward; the last comes up first. Everything goes backward, slowly, and suddenly the whole dream reappears: "Ah, there! it was like that." Above all, do not jump up, do not stir; you repeat the dream to yourself several times — once, twice — until it becomes clear in all its details. Once that dream is settled, you continue not to stir, you try to go further in, and suddenly you catch the tail of something

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else. It is more distant, more vague, but you can still seize it. And here also you hang on, get hold of it and pull, and you see that everything changes and you enter another world; all of a sudden you have an extraordinary adventure — it is another dream. You follow the same process. You repeat the dream to yourself once, twice, until you are sure of it. You remain very quiet all the time. Then you begin to penetrate still more deeply into yourself, as though you were going in very far, very far; and again suddenly you see a vague form, you have a feeling, a sensation... like a current of air, a slight breeze, a little breath; and you say, “Well, well....” It takes a form, it becomes clear — and the third category comes. You must have a lot of time, a lot of patience, you must be very quiet in your mind and body, very quiet, and you can tell the story of your whole night from the end right up to the beginning.

Even without doing this exercise which is very long and difficult, in order to recollect a dream, whether it be the last one or the one in the middle that has made a violent impression on your being, you must do what I have said when you wake up: take particular care not even to move your head on the pillow, remain absolutely still and let the dream return.

Some people do not have a passage between one state and another, there is a little gap and so they leap from one to the other; there is no highway passing through all the states of being with no break of the consciousness. A small dark hole, and you do not remember. It is like a precipice across which one has to extend the consciousness. To build a bridge takes a very long time; it takes much longer than building a physical bridge.... Very few people want to and know how to do it. They may have had magnificent activities, they do not remember them or sometimes only the last, the nearest, the most physical activity, with an uncoordinated movement — dreams having no sense.

But there are as many different kinds of nights and sleep as there are different days and activities. There are not many days that are alike, each day is different. The days are not the same,

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the nights are not the same. You and your friends are doing apparently the same thing, but for each one it is very different. And each one must have his own procedure.

*Why are two dreams never alike?*

Because all things are different. No two minutes are alike in the universe and it will be so till the end of the universe, no two minutes will ever be alike. And men obstinately want to make rules! One must do this and not that.... Well! we must let people please themselves.

You could have put to me a very interesting question: "Why am I fourteen years old today?" Intelligent people will say: "It is because it is the fourteenth year since you were born." That is the answer of someone who believes himself to be very intelligent. But there is another reason. I shall tell this to you alone.... I have drowned you all sufficiently well! Now you must begin to learn swimming!

*If one finds the truth in things, does it mean that one has found the Divine?*

Surely! In everything, whatever it is that is the only way. There is not a thing that does not carry in itself an eternal truth, otherwise it could not exist. The universe could not exist for even a thousandth part of a second if it did not contain a truth in itself.

*If one were in contact with the Divine, what would be its effect?*

For each one a different effect. Because we are in the presence of a fact: there is a universe, at least there is an earth, of that we are almost sure, you cannot dispute that, granted?... Have you ever asked yourself why there is an earth? No! Probably it was quite wise. Once I spoke to you of that occultist whom I knew.

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He was a wise man in his own way. People used to come and ask him:

First of all, why is there a universe? Answer: What is that to you?

Secondly, then why is it as it is? Reply: It is as it is. What does it matter to you?

Thirdly, I do not find it satisfactory.

That's very good. We begin to touch the practical. To those who do not find it satisfactory, I would say: There is only one thing to do, start working for its change, find a way for it to be otherwise and to be good. Things are as they are. Why are they so?... Perhaps one might know — it is not certain. In any case they are so. The most remarkable thing is that if you are sincere you will find out why they are so and how they are so: the cause, the origin and the process. For it is one single thing. There is what we call the Truth, the basis of everything; because if this were not there, there would be nothing. Once you have found the Truth, you find the origin, you find the means of changing the cause — how it is so, why it is so and the means of changing it. If you are in contact with the Divine, you have the key to everything. You know the how, the why and the process to change.

There is something to do: to work, it is so interesting. You represent a small agglomerated mass of substance that makes up yourself. Enter within and find the key. You have only to go down inside there. You cannot say: "That is beyond me, it is too big for me." Go within your little person and you will find the key which opens all the doors.