7 March 1956

_Sweet Mother, what is this form of sacrifice in which animals are slaughtered upon altars?_

It is certainly one of the obscurest and most unconscious. And the sacrifice spoken about here and in the Gita, is the sacrifice one makes of oneself, not of others.

*Because here it is written: “Whoever the recipient, whatever the gift, it is the Supreme, the Eternal in things, who receives and accepts it.”*


Happily for the poor creature which is sacrificed! Perhaps it goes straight to the Divine.

It would be very interesting to see.... Imagine a man who wants to win the Divine’s favour, or that of some god or other, some deity, in order to obtain something very selfishly personal, something he desires and finds it hard to get; and so he snatches a chicken from his yard and goes and cuts its throat before the deity, with his prayer, perhaps for a good harvest or the good sale of his harvest, or for a child if he doesn’t have one, or that his wife may be cured if she is ill — anything at all. And then imagine that this evolving psychic particle, already like a tiny spark in semi-consciousness — not even semi-consciousness — the rudiment of consciousness which is in the chicken, goes straight to the Divine who magnifies it; while the man who has offered the chicken to obtain some benefit or other is not even heard.

Most probably, this is what happens. So the one who has truly gained in this business is the chicken, not the man!

80
7 March 1956

_Sweet Mother, some people make sacrifices and offerings to hostile forces. Are these also received by the Divine?_

You mean sacrifices like those I have just spoken about, from people offering something for altogether selfish ends?

_No, people who offer sacrifices to hostile forces._

To hostile forces? But they don’t know they are hostile! Or as they do here, when they take the deity of cholera round in a procession, for example, or the deity of smallpox: it is taken round with songs and beating of drums, and then all sorts of offerings are made to it. This is to satisfy it so that it doesn’t kill too many people.

One should first make sure that this deity exists, that it is not just a doll sitting there on its altar.

Anyway, in instances of this kind, I think it is people’s faith, above all, which saves them. When they have performed their little ceremony properly, they feel confident, “Oh! now it will be over, for she is satisfied.” And because they feel confident, it helps them to react and the illness disappears. I have seen this very often in the street. There might be a small hostile entity there, but these are very insignificant things.

In other cases, in some temples, there are vital beings who are more or less powerful and have made their home there.

But what Sri Aurobindo means here is that there is nothing, not even the most anti-divine force, which in its origin is not the Supreme Divine. So, necessarily, everything goes back to Him, consciously or unconsciously. In the consciousness of the one who makes the offering it does not go to the Divine: it goes to the greater or smaller demon to whom he turns. But through everything, through the wood of the idol or even the ill-will of the vital adversary, ultimately, all returns to the Divine, since all comes from Him. Only, the one who has made the offering or the sacrifice receives but in proportion to his own consciousness
Questions and Answers

and to what he has asked. So one could say that theoretically it returns to the Divine, but that the response comes from that to which he has addressed himself, not from the supreme Origin, for one is not in contact with it; one is in contact only with the next step, the next intermediary — no higher.

It is quite certain that if the movement is absolutely unconscious, the result will also be absolutely unconscious; and if the movement is entirely egoistic, the result is also entirely egoistic. It is as in that story by Sri Aurobindo\(^1\) I read to you one Friday, the first story in which he explained Karma, saying that evil results in evil, and good results in good. Evil begets evil, and good begets good: that is Karma; it is not a punishment or a reward, it is something automatic. Well, if your sacrifice is egoistic and obscure, it will necessarily have an obscure and egoistic result.

_Sweet Mother, here it is written: “The vulgar conception of sacrifice is an act of painful self-immolation, austere self-mortification, difficult self-effacement.... But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it is not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it, but to be increasingly fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine Light.”_  

_The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 100_  

**How can one be luminously open?**

If you like you may replace the word “luminously” by the word “sincerely”, or “transparently”, like something which is not opaque or does not distort; something clear, transparent, sincere, which does not obstruct.

\(^1\) The reference is to the tale “A Dream”, written originally in Bengali and published in _The Chariot of Jagannatha_.

82
You may take the image of a window open to the light. If your panes are of blackened or opaque glass, what comes through naturally becomes dark and opaque, and little passes through. And if the glass is quite transparent, then it is a luminous light which comes. Or if your glass is coloured, the light will be coloured in one way or another when it reaches you. While if the glass is absolutely pure and transparent, the light will come through pure and transparent.

Mother, the Gita speaks of the true essence of sacrifice, and Sri Aurobindo says, “Its method is not self-mortification, but a greater life; not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members....”

_Ibid., p. 101_

Isn’t it physical transformation we aspire for?

When Sri Aurobindo says “integral transformation”, naturally he is speaking of physical transformation. But the Gita does not speak of integral transformation, I don’t think so. Because for the Gita, the idea of physical transformation does not exist. As I was explaining to you the other day, the world is as it is and you have but to take it as it is, and not be affected by what it is. For you enter a higher consciousness, you are liberated from outer forms, but they remain as they are. Indeed, some slight mention is made of changing one’s character, but there is no question of changing the material world.

_Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: “The spirit’s inner enemies... have to be sacrificed in the harsher sense of the word, whatever pain in going they may throw by reflection on the consciousness of the seeker.”_

_Ibid., pp. 100–101_
Questions and Answers

Not understood? This has never happened to you? No? When, for instance, you have a movement you don’t like — a movement of anger or spite, all kinds of things like that, or an insincerity or something you don’t like — when you reject it from yourself, when you want to make an effort not to have it any more, it hurts you, doesn’t it? It hurts, it is as though something was being pulled out. Well, this is the pain he is speaking about; he says that it is the bad thing you throw away from you which, when leaving, gives you a nice little knock as a parting gift. That’s what he says.

For you are always under the illusion that pain belongs to you. This is not true. Pain is something thrust upon you. The same event could occur, exactly the same in all its details, without its inflicting the shadow of a pain on you; on the contrary, sometimes it can fill you with ecstatic joy. And it is exactly the same thing. But in one case, you are open to the adverse forces you want to reject from yourself, and in the other you are not, you are already too far away from them to be affected by them any longer; and so, instead of feeling the negative side they represent, you feel only the positive side the Divine represents in the experience. It is the divine Grace which makes you progress, and with the divine Grace you feel the divine Joy. But instead of identifying yourself with the Grace which makes you progress, you identify yourself with the ugly thing you want to get rid of; and so, naturally, you feel like it and suffer.

That is an experiment you can make if you are just a little conscious. There is something in you which you don’t want, something bad — for one reason or another you don’t want it, you want to pull it out — well, if you identify yourself ever so little with that thing, you feel the pain of the extraction; if, on the contrary, you identify yourself with the divine Force which comes to liberate you, you feel the joy of the divine Grace — and you experience the deep delight of the progress you have made.

And this is a sure sign for you, a sure indication of what you identify yourself with. If you are identified with the forces
from below, you suffer; if you are identified with the forces from above, you are happy. And I am not speaking about feeling pleasure; you must not think that when one jumps about, dances, shouts and plays, one is identified with the divine forces — one may or may not be. That is not what I am speaking of. I am speaking of the divine Joy, the inner Joy which is unalloyed.

Each time a shadow passes, with what may be just an uneasiness or what may become a severe pain or an unbearable suffering, through the whole range, from the smallest to the greatest — as soon as it appears in your being, you may tell yourself, “Ah, the enemy is there!” — in one form or another.

_Sweet Mother, what is the experience of the being who has given himself completely to the Divine?_

But... do it, my child, then you will know! It is not the same for everybody.

_Mother, “the intention ... and the spirit that is behind the intention,”² what does that mean, isn’t it the same thing?_

What?

_The intention..._

Yes, I know.

_...and the spirit that is behind._

To me it is as clear as crystal, I don’t understand your question.

² “The fruit also of the sacrifice varies according to the work, according to the intention in the work and according to the spirit that is behind the intention.”

Questions and Answers

What is the difference between the intention and the spirit of the intention?

*The spirit that is behind.*

Isn’t there a spirit behind all things? No?

*There is always a spirit behind.*

Well, yes, and that is all he has said, nothing else, that you must know what kind of spirit there is behind your intention.

*He says the result is different.*

But of course! According to the spirit in which you do things, the result is different.

*But the spirit and the intention are not the same thing?*

What do you want me to tell you? If you don’t feel the difference between the two, I can’t explain it to you.

There are forces at work all the time, which set people moving, which make them move. In the individual being this is translated into exact intentions; but behind the intention a force is acting which is not individual.

Do you understand?

Yes.

Ah!

I think one of the greatest difficulties in understanding things comes from an arbitrary simplification which puts spirit on one side and matter on the other. It is this foolishness that makes you incapable of understanding anything. There is spirit and matter — this is very convenient. So if one does not belong to spirit, one
belongs to matter; if one does not belong to matter, one belongs to spirit. But what do you call spirit and what do you call matter? It is a countless crowd of things, an interminable ladder. The universe is a seemingly infinite gradation of worlds and states of consciousness, and in this increasingly subtle gradation, where does your matter come to an end? Where does your spirit begin? You speak of “spirit” — where does this spirit begin? With what you don’t see? Is that it? So you include in “spirit” all the beings of the vital world, for instance, because you don’t see them in your normal state — all that belongs to “spirit” — and they may indeed be the spirit which is behind your intention — and it isn’t up to much! That’s it.

It is like those people who say, “When you are alive you are in matter; when you are dead, you enter the spirit. There, then! So, liberate the spirit from matter, die, and you liberate your spirit from matter.” It is these stupidities which prevent you from understanding anything at all. But all this has nothing to do with the world as it really is.

For the human consciousness as it is, there are certainly infinitely more invisible things than visible things. What you know, the things which are visible to you and which you are conscious of — it’s almost like the skin of an orange compared with the orange itself — and even an orange with a very thin skin, not a thick one! And so, if you know only the skin of the orange, you know nothing about the orange.

And this is more or less what happens. All that you know about the universe is just a superficial little crust — and even this you hardly know. But that is all you know about it, and all the rest escapes you.