15 July 1953

“Each man has some fad or one preferred shibboleth or another, each thinks that he is free from this or that prejudice from which others suffer and is willing to regard such notions as quite false; but he imagines that his is not like theirs, it is for him the truth, the real truth. An attachment to a rule of the mind is an indication of a blindness still hiding somewhere.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (19 May 1929)

Are superstitions mental rules?

No, not rules but mental formations. Generally a superstition originates in an experience. For instance, there is a certain superstition in Europe, and you are told: “Never walk under a ladder, it will bring you ill-luck.” It is probable that someone walked under a ladder and the ladder slipped and fell upon him, and the story starts off like that. It can happen that this is a repeated experience, for, in fact, if a ladder is badly placed and you pass underneath it could fall at that very moment, and that would bring ill-luck! There are innumerable superstitions of this kind. They depend upon the countries, besides; these things are quite local and one may even find contradictory superstitions in different countries. In certain countries if you see a black cat, it is a sign that a catastrophe will come. In others if you see a black cat, it means that something very fine will happen! If you put things together you will come to the conclusion that nothing at all will happen to you! It is like that. Almost all superstitions are the result of an experience that is quite local, occasional, exceptional, which has been raised into a mental principle. It is a mental formation, it is not a rule.

Now, there are other instances, as for example a large
number of religious rules which are founded solely on hygienic principles, on medical knowledge, and have been raised into religious principles, for that was the only way to make people observe them. If you are not told that “God wants” that you should do this or that, you would not do it, the majority of men ordinarily do not do it. For instance, that very simple thing — washing your hands before eating; in countries where the civilisation is not quite scientific, some people discovered that in truth it was probably more hygienic to wash the hands first! If they had not made a religious rule, if they hadn’t said that “God wanted” that a man wash his hands before eating, otherwise it would be an offence against Him, people would have said: “Oh, why? No, not today, tomorrow. I have no time, I am in a hurry!” But in this way there is that constant fear at the back of their minds that something bad will happen to them due to God’s anger. This too is a superstition, a big superstition.

They do things because they are told to do them. There is an entire class of religion — for instance the Chaldean religion — which forbids the eating of pork. They say it is altogether impure and that you will become impure if you eat it. The truth is that in these countries (for they are hot countries), pig’s flesh is full of little worms which one takes in with the meat, even if it is cooked. It has to be cooked over an extremely long time to kill the worms. And so the little worms resist ordinary cooking and settle in your stomach or intestines, and then there they flourish and at times even end up by killing you or, in any case, by making you ill. These worms breed specially in this kind of meat. Now, if all this is explained to people, they do not understand; they haven’t any medical, scientific or hygienic ideas and this does not at all interest them: “Ah, but this meat is not expensive, it is sold cheap! We’ll see what happens.” What will happen is that after a while they will have terrible pains in their intestines, and then they will grow thinner and thinner and eat more and more, quite uselessly; they will not know what has happened; they will be simply eaten up by the worms. But if they are told: “Don’t do
this, God will be furious and will punish you”, that is enough. They won’t do it.

Another question?

“Someone has said that when you open the door to Yoga, you are confronted by a multitude of obstacles. Is this true?

“It is not an absolute rule; and much depends upon the person. Adverse conditions come to many as a test for the weak points in their nature. The indispensable basis for Yoga, which must be well established before you can walk freely on the path, is equanimity. Naturally, from that point of view, all disturbances are tests which you have to pass. But they are necessary too in order to break down the limits which your mental constructions have built around you and which prevent your opening to the Light and the Truth.”

Questions and Answers 1929 – 1931 (19 May 1929)

When we come to the spiritual life with an aspiration, can the adverse forces attack us?

Everybody, without exception.

Even though they look very nice?

Sometimes, yes. Sometimes these are the most dangerous.

But how can we know?

Ah! The easiest way, when you have a Guru, is to go and ask him. It is within the reach of everyone. It is enough to have faith in one’s Guru, to go and find him and ask him; he will tell you, for he indeed knows.
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If you do not have a Guru, then it is a little more difficult, because these forces are very clever; they do not put on a look of catastrophe and misery and wickedness, for you will immediately find it out and will not let yourself be taken in; generally they come in the garb of a friend. If you are very sincere, soon you notice some little indications, like small suggestions that satisfy your vanity or awaken in you doubts or make you a bit unconscious of what exactly is to be done — very tiny things. If you are very sincere, you see through them; particularly if you are alert enough not to allow yourself to be deceived by compliments or attempts that encourage you in these satisfactions of *amour-propre*. Things that give just a little encouragement to your vanity — that is the surest sign; something that makes you think: “After all, I am not so bad. All that I do, I do well. My attempt is very praiseworthy. My sincerity is above all reproach, etc.” You become more and more self-satisfied and then there you may be sure. But even there, it does not always take these forms. There are other things, depending upon the persons. For some it is this; for others, they awaken ideas of grandeur: “If I continue in this way I shall become a great Yogi. I shall have great powers. I shall do much fine work. How nicely I am going to serve the Divine, how happy he will be with me!” It is very dangerous. The very opposite thing may happen: “After all, perhaps I am good for nothing. Is it worth while my making any effort? Nothing will come out of this effort. Am I capable of the spiritual life? Probably I shall never do anything, I am giving up tangible things for the sake of an unrealisable dream. And what am I after all? A grain of dust. Is it worth my making an effort to find the Divine? Probably I shall find nothing at all and all my efforts are futile.” That is even much more dangerous. I could cite hundreds of examples like that.

There is only one thing that can truly save you, it is to have a contact, even the slightest, with your psychic being — to have felt the *solidity* of that contact. Then whatever comes to you
from this person or that circumstance you place in front of that and see whether it is all right or not. Even if you are satisfied — in every way — even if you say to yourself: “At last I have found the friend I wanted to have. I am in the best circumstances of my life, etc.”, then put that before this little contact with your psychic being, you will see whether it keeps its bright colour or suddenly there comes a little uneasiness, not much, nothing making a great noise, but just a little uneasiness. You are no longer so sure that it was as you thought! Then you know: yes, it is that small voice which one must listen to always. It is that which is the truth and the other can’t trouble you any longer.

If you come to the spiritual life with a sincere aspiration, sometimes an avalanche of unpleasant things falls upon you: you quarrel with your best friends, your family kicks you out of the house, you lose what you thought you had gained.... I knew someone who had come to India with a great aspiration and after a very long effort towards knowledge and even towards Yoga. That was long long ago. At that time, people used to put on watch-chains and trinkets. This gentleman had a golden pencil which his grandmother had given him to which he was attached as the most precious thing in the world. It was fixed to his chain. When he landed at one of these ports — at Pondicherry or perhaps elsewhere in India or at Colombo, I believe it was at Colombo — they used to get into small boats and the boats took you ashore. And so this gentleman had to jump from the gangway of the ship into the boat. He missed his step, somehow got back his balance, but he made a sudden movement and the little gold pencil dropped into the sea and went straight down into the depths. He was at first very much aggrieved, but he told himself: “Why, that is the effect of India: I am freed from my attachments....” It is for very sincere people that the thing takes such a form. Fundamentally, the avalanche of troubles is always for sincere people. Those who are not sincere receive things with the most beautiful bright colours just to deceive them, and then in the end to enable them to find out that they are mistaken! But
when someone has big troubles, it proves that he has reached a certain degree of sincerity.

Here you say: “When you come to the Divine, you must abandon all mental conceptions; but, instead of doing that, you throw your conceptions upon the Divine and want the Divine to obey them.”

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Yes, everyone. All the while, constantly. If the Divine is not as you understand him, well, that is not the Divine. If he does not do what you want, if he does not act as you think he should, if he has not the character you lend him, it is not the Divine: “I recognise you as the Divine if you do exactly what I want you to do!” Naturally, people are not sincere enough to admit that, but it is so. I could give you millions of examples — not hundreds, but millions. And there is not a single one among you who does not do this unconsciously. It is a rule, you know; one says: “Yes, I am quite ready to surrender to the Divine and do his will, to accept his presence and his action, but on condition that it is like this or like that, that he thinks like that, feels like that, acts like that, etc.” At the first opportunity I shall show you a little example dangling before your eyes. That will not fail. It will come one of these days. Quite soon. Voilà.

“The power of money is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world. It is because of this influence that you never see money going in any considerable amount to the cause of Truth. Always it goes astray, because it is in the clutch of the hostile forces and one of the principal means by which they keep their grip upon the earth. The hold of the hostile forces upon money-power is powerfully, completely and thoroughly organised and to extract anything out of this compact organisation is a most difficult task. Each
time that you try to draw a little of this money away from its present custodians, you have to undertake a fierce battle.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (12 May 1929)

What is the money situation now? Have these beings still a great power over money?

Yes, it continues. It continues, it is no better. Besides, the conditions to be fulfilled are not fulfilled.\(^1\) So you can’t expect that it would be better. Even this very morning, I was complaining (but “I was complaining” is just a way of speaking, it is to make myself understood), I was telling myself: to do what we want to do we need a great deal of money — a great deal, you understand, not just a little — and then I said to myself: still, it is not that money is lacking; there is a lot of money in the world. There are even people who have so much that they do not know what to do with it. But it will never come to their mind to give it for the divine Work.... They can’t say that they do not know, for one has always the means to know if one wants to know. When the idea comes to you: “I want to make the best use of my money” (and the best use, not only from the viewpoint that this gentleman or lady conceives as being useful), well, one can always find out. Generally (there are exceptions), generally these people who have a lot of money put one condition: it must bring them at least some satisfaction. There must be some merit — they give, but they must get something. If they are not business people and do not give their money to gain more, if they are, for example, philanthropists who wish to give money to help humanity make progress, they always wish, more or less consciously (but generally very consciously) they always wish, that it should bring them fame, a kind of satisfaction of

\(^1\) In a former talk (of 10 March 1951) Mother had said that the condition to be fulfilled for obtaining power over money was to become master of the sex impulse in human beings.
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their *amour-propre*. They give money for founding a school: the school will bear their name. They build a monument somewhere: it must be mentioned that Mr. So-and-so has donated the money and so on. There was a time when I was building Golconde, there were people who approached me or sent others to me to say: “I am quite willing to give you so much or so much, but you must place in one of the rooms a marble tablet on which is written: “This room has been built by the gift of Mr. So-and-so.” Then, I said: “I am sorry. I can make marble tablets for you but I’ll pave the basement with them!” It is like that.

There are exceptions, as there are exceptions to all rules; however I cannot say that money goes spontaneously, freely, without effort there where useful things will be done most. No. The maximum of goodwill is to give money for something which one understands well (which is also easy to understand), to build a hospital, for example, or to open a crèche for little children. These are all works of goodwill that men understand. But if they are told that we want to change the human consciousness, we want to create a new world, oh! the first thing they say is: “Pardon me! Do not speak of God, for if it is God who is doing the work, well, it is God who will give you the means for it and you have no need of our help.” I have heard people saying: “If you represent the Divine upon earth you can do whatever you like; there is no need for us to give you anything.” And how many among you are free from that idea (an aftertaste of that idea): the Divine is all-powerful, therefore, the Divine can do whatever he likes?

That is the first argument, that is the theory. The Divine is all-powerful, he can do whatever he likes; therefore he does not need anybody’s help. And if you push your idea sufficiently far, you will see that if the Divine is truly all-powerful in this world and does always whatever he wants, well, I tell you, he

2 One of the guest-houses of the Ashram.
is the greatest monster in the universe! Because One who is all-powerful and makes the world such as it is, looking with a smile at people suffering and miserable, and finding that all right, I would call a monster. It was the kind of thing I used to think about when I was five. I used to tell myself: “It is not possible, what is taught there is not true!” Now, as you have a little more philosophical mind, I shall teach you how to come out of the difficulty. But, first of all, you must understand that that idea is a childish idea. I simply call on your common sense. You make of your Divine a person, because that way you understand him better. You make of him a person. And then this person has organised something (the earth, it is too big, it is difficult to understand — take anything else) and then this thing the Divine has organised with the full power to do exactly as he likes. And in this thing — that he has made with the full power to do as he likes — there is ignorance, stupidity, bad will, fear, jealousy, pride, wickedness, and also suffering, illness, grief, all the pains; and a set of people who cannot say that they have perhaps more than a few minutes of happiness in the whole day and the rest of it is a neutral condition, passing by like a thing that’s dead — and you call that a creation!... I call it something like a hell! And one who would make that deliberately and not only make it but look at it and say: “Ah! it is very good”, as it is narrated in some religious books, that after having made the world such as it is, the seventh day he looked at it and was extremely satisfied with his work and he rested.... Well, that never! I do not call that God. Or otherwise, follow Anatole France and say that God is a demiurge and the most frightful of all beings.

But there is a way out of the difficulty. (To a child) Do you know it, you? Yes, yes, you know it! You will see all these conceptions and this idea that you have are based upon one thing, an entity that you call God and a world that you call his creation, and you believe these are two different things, one having made the other and the other being under the first, being the expression of what the first has made. Well, that is the initial
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error. If you could feel deeply that there is no division between that something you call God and this something you call his creation, if you said: “It is exactly the same thing” and if you could feel that what you call God (perhaps it is only a word), what you call God suffers when you suffer, he does not know when you do not know; and that it is through this creation, little by little, step by step, that he finds himself again, unites with himself, is realising himself, expressing himself, and it is not at all something he wanted in an arbitrary way or made like an autocrat, but that it is the growing expression, developing more and more, of a consciousness that is objectifying itself to itself.... Then there is no other thing but the sense of a collective advancing towards a more total realisation, a self-awareness of knowledge-consciousness — no other thing but that, a progressive self-awareness of knowledge-consciousness in a total unity which will reproduce integrally the Original Consciousness.

That changes the problem.

Only, it is a little difficult to understand and one must make a little more progress. Instead of being like a little child that kneels down, joins its hands and says: “My God, I pray to Thee, make me a good child so that I may never hurt my mother....” That of course is very easy and indeed I cannot say that it is bad. It is very good. Only there are children with whom these things do not work, because they say: “Why should I ask You to make me good? You should make me good without there being any need of my asking You for it. Otherwise You are not nice!” It is very good when one has a simple heart and does not think much, but when one begins to think, it becomes more difficult. But if you had by your side someone to tell you: instead of that, instead of lighting a candle and kneeling down before it with your hands folded, light a flame in your heart and then have a great aspiration towards “something more beautiful, more true, more noble, better than all that I know. I ask that from tomorrow I begin to know all these things, all that I cannot do I begin to do and every day a little more.” And then, if you throw yourself out a little,
if, for one reason or another, you were put in the presence of much misery in the world, if you have friends who are unhappy or relatives who suffer or you meet any kind of difficulties, then you ask that the whole consciousness might be raised all together towards that perfection which must manifest and that all this ignorance that has made the world so unhappy might be changed into an enlightened knowledge and all this bad will be illumined and transformed into benevolence. And then as far as one can, as far as one understands, one wishes it with all one’s heart; and indeed that can take the form of a prayer and one can ask — ask of what? — ask of that which knows, ask of that which can, ask of all that is greater and stronger than oneself, to help so that it may be thus. And how beautiful those prayers would be!

My children, in five years I shall take with you a study course of spiritual life. I give you five years to prepare yourselves; what I am telling you now is just a little of the kind, as one would light a small candle to give you an idea of what light is. But I want you all to see that we do not repeat and say over and over again indefinitely all that nonsense which is uttered every time one turns towards something other than the ordinary life. Even as I have spoken here, in this book, of the confusion that is made between asceticism and the spiritual life, well, one day I shall

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3 “Take, for example, the very universal superstition, prevalent all over the world, that asceticism and spirituality are one and the same thing. If you describe someone as a spiritual man or a spiritual woman, people at once think of one who does not eat or sits all day without moving, one who lives in a hut in great poverty, one who has given away all he had and keeps nothing for himself. This is the picture that immediately arises in the minds of ninety-nine people out of a hundred, when you speak of a spiritual man; the one proof of spirituality for them is poverty and abstinence from everything that is pleasant or comfortable. This is a mental construction which must be thrown down if you are to be free to see and follow the spiritual truth.... Once it is gone, you find something that is much higher than your narrow ascetic rule, a complete openness that leaves the being free. If you are to get something, you accept it, and if you are to give up the very same thing, you with an equal willingness leave it. Things come and you take them up; things go and you let them pass, with the same smile of equanimity in the taking or the leaving.”

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speak to you of the confusion made between what one calls God and what I call the Divine. This will be later on.

It is 9.20 — time to wind up.

Next time we shall speak of health and illness and I shall confound all those who are attached by iron chains to their illness and who do not want to let it go! I shall give them scissors to cut their chains.