5 October 1955

Mother reads The Great Secret: The Scientist.

I had the intention of leaving out the last speeches and going straight to the answer of the Unknown Man. But... I shall tell you, because it didn’t raise... it seemed to me that it didn’t give rise to enough questions to justify all the time we would spend in reading it... but it happens that, for this one, “The Scientist”, someone who, by the way, is not here, has urgently asked two questions which seem interesting to me. So I shall read “The Scientist” today, and next week we shall directly take up “The Unknown Man”.

(After Mother has read “The Scientist”, Pavitra gets ready to read the questions.)

So, will you read them, Pavitra? You can’t see well? We can switch on the light again.

(Pavitra) No, no, it is all right, Mother.

_The scientist speaks of two postulates with which he has undertaken the research of the secrets of Nature and which would have dwindled gradually._

“For me”, he says, “ignorance was the primary if not the only evil...”

_Isn’t it truly so?

That is, put plainly the question is this: Isn’t ignorance the first and perhaps even the sole evil of humanity?

Science, which considers the world from the most material point of view, has asserted it; and one of the greatest spiritual masters, one of the greatest enlighteners and minds which have
sought for the solution of the ills of humanity on the extreme opposite plane, has said the same thing — I am speaking of the Buddha. And both are at once right and wrong, in the sense that each of them sees only one side of the question. It is true that one can reduce the difficulty to a certain aspect and that this makes it easier to solve the problem, though it's not sure whether the solution is absolutely effective. But in any case, if we speak of ignorance, if we see the problem from the angle of ignorance — that it's because man doesn't have the knowledge that he can’t be saved — it seems obvious. But what knowledge are we speaking about?

The scientist will tell you: Study the laws of Nature, know all that it can teach you and it will give you the knowledge which will enable you to master life and become its possessor instead of being possessed by it. But here we see, according to what we have just read, that as he goes on studying and searching, sincerely and more and more deeply, he becomes aware that there is something which eludes him, because, quite naturally, he comes to the limit of the material world and, there, he faces a precipice; he can no longer carry on his research in what is beyond, because the same methods don’t suffice.

But if we take the question from the other end, we shall see that the ignorance the Buddha was speaking about was not at all that which consists in not knowing that if one swallows poison one is poisoned, or that if one keeps his head under water without breathing, he is sure to be drowned; it is not even in not knowing how Nature builds the atoms; but for him ignorance consisted in believing that the world was real and that life could be good if one had the good luck to live in favourable conditions. To come into the world was to be born into ignorance; it was the result, according to him, of a desire to live; and as this desire for life was in itself the supreme ignorance, if one abolished desire, quite naturally after some time one would abolish life, since it is its result — life, the world and all this unhealthy and baneful appearance.
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So for him, to come out of the ignorance meant coming out of this false conviction that the world was something real, and above all, from the desire to live which was the supreme stupidity. Only, he found himself facing another problem which was at least as serious, if not still more so than the problem of the scientist. It was that his remedy was good only for the individual; it could apply only to an extremely limited number of individuals who had already undergone countless experiences, through lives as countless, to await the time when they were ready to understand this truth and liberate themselves from the world by liberating themselves from desire, and disappear into Nirvana.

But how can these final conversions be sufficiently multiplied so as to succeed in making the world disappear? This seems impossible, because the process is progressive and one must pass through all the stages of conscious life until one comes to the state when he is ready to take flight into Nirvana. And so, during all this time, what happens to all these poor people, not only to people but to animals also and to plants, to all this life which suffers and struggles and strains? So, even deprived of all hope... because at least the scientists tell you, “We are going to find the means of making life more comfortable for you.” They don’t seem to have discovered this very well, because this kind of comfort complicates life and doesn’t make it more pleasant. Still at least they give you a gleam of hope, while the other tells you, “Wait, wait. When your turn comes you will pass over to the other side.” But while waiting one is not happy. So perhaps it could be said that this way of approaching the problem is not altogether satisfactory, for it is a purely and exclusively mental way, and can satisfy only those who have a mental life, and they do not form the majority. Besides, this is what has caused all religions to be vulgarised, even those which had at the start something very high and very true to give; they have been obliged to reduce it to the proportion of the human consciousness. For humanity suffers and it is not with beautiful ideas that it is cured.
Something else is necessary. This perhaps we shall see at the end when we come to it. For the moment...

(Pavitra) The second postulate: “That it is possible to know the universe as it really is, to grasp its laws objectively.”

The kind of regularity which we observe in the universe and translate into what we call the laws of Nature—does it have an existence independent of us? Or is it that these so-called laws exist only in our mind?

Is it not possible to know the universe in its reality as it is in itself, independently of the observer or thinker?

Yes, there is a way: it is by identification. But obviously it is a means which eludes absolutely all physical methods. I think that this weakness comes solely from the method used, because one has remained in an absolutely superficial consciousness; and the phenomenon which took place the first time takes place again a second time. If you push your investigation far enough, you suddenly come to a point where your physical methods are no longer of any worth. And in fact one can know only what one is. So if you want to know the universe, you must become the universe. You cannot become the universe physically, you know; but perhaps there is a way of becoming the universe: it is in the consciousness.

If you identify your consciousness with the universal consciousness, then you know what is happening.

But that’s the only way; there are no others. It is an absolute fact that one knows only what one is, and if one wants to know something, one must become that. So you see, there are many people who say, “It is impossible”, but that’s because they remain on a certain plane. It is obvious that if you remain only on the material plane or even on the mental plane, you cannot know the universe, because the mind is not universal; it is only a means of expression of the universe; and it is only by an essential
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identification that you can then know things, not from outside inwards but from inside outwards. This is not impossible. It is altogether possible. It has been done. But it can’t be done with instruments, however perfected they may be. Here one must once again make something else intervene, other regions, other realities than purely material ones, including the mind which belongs to the physical life, the terrestrial life.

One can know everything, but one must know the way. And the way is not learnt through books, it cannot be written in numbers. It is only by practising... And here then, it demands an abnegation, a consecration, a perseverance and an obstinacy — still more considerable than what the sincerest, most honest, most unselfish scientists have ever shown. But I must say that the scientific method of work is a marvellous discipline; and what is curious is that the method recommended by the Buddha for getting rid of desires and the illusion of the world is also one of the most marvellous disciplines ever known on the earth. They are at the two ends, they are both excellent; those who follow one or the other in all sincerity truly prepare themselves for yoga. A small click, somewhere, is enough to make them leave their fairly narrow point of view on one side or the other so as to be able to enter into an integrality which will lead them to the supreme Truth and mastery.

I don’t know whether ignorance is the greatest obstacle on the path of humanity... We said that it was an almost exclusively mental obstacle and that the human being is much more complex than a mental being, though he is supremely mental, for he is its new creation in the world. He represents the last possibility of Nature, and in that, naturally his mental life has taken immense proportions, because he has the pride of being the only one upon earth to have it. He does not always make a good use of it, still it is like this. But it’s not here that he will find the solution. He must go beyond. There we are.

Now, has someone else a question? No? No one? (To a child) Do you have a question?
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Mother, from the Stone Age to our times, if we see, man has made progress only in the mind, that is, in the scientific field, and why no progress in his...

You think so? Who has told you this?

It is here (in the text), it is said that we are almost in the Stone Age...

Ah, ah! It’s he (pointing to Pavitra) who has said it. (Laughter)

Perhaps man had to prepare his mind first. In the Stone Age his mind was a little rustic, eh! there wasn’t much stuff there. He had to develop it before being able to go beyond it. It has taken a long time but we have all the same come to something.

It is quite obvious that from the purely mental point of view, of the physical mind, well, we have come a long way since the Stone Age. It is said that we haven’t made much progress because there’s something else which has not been much developed; just because we were much too occupied in playing with a new instrument; yes, it is so interesting to have a new game here! People played with it, they tried all the ways of using it. From the practical point of view their games were above all applications of this, yes! Even the atomic bomb is yet a way of playing; it is a little macabre but still it is a game. It is not with a clear, definite vision, a plan, an organisation to make the whole thing advance towards the goal, the true goal. It is not that. It was absolutely... it is still... like children in a recreation courtyard: they invent, they search, play, find out, they jostle one another, fight, make up, quarrel, discover, destroy, construct. But there is a plan behind; there was a plan; there is still a plan; there is more and more of a plan. And perhaps all this that is playing on the surface, despite all, is leading to something which will come forth one day; perhaps if we speak of it now and think so much about it, it is perhaps... at a given moment surely it must come about, eh! It may take place slowly, by stages, but still there is
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a moment when it begins to take place. So it is perhaps that we have reached this moment.
However, we must not anticipate, we shall speak about it next time.
There, then, is that all?
No more questions? Nothing? (To a child) You have nothing to say this evening?...