8 February 1951

“The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, ‘I am here and I am yours’, then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)

Have you ever thought of unifying your being? Have you been disturbed, sometimes, to see that now you are one person, at other times another, at one time you want to do one thing, at another time you cannot do it, that you find yourself facing an individuality which you can call yourself and yet at the same time there are many parts of this individuality which escape you?

I have not attempted the unification of the different personalities which may be in me, but I have tried to put them face to face, the good opposite the bad, and I have never found in the good a sufficient dynamism to fight against the bad.

Have you never thought that your judgment of what is “good” and “bad” was a purely human judgment? And that it might not necessarily tally with the judgment of the divine Presence within you? The “bad” things you could not get rid of were probably things not in their place, things not properly balanced, and it would be a great pity if they were eliminated because, perhaps, a part of your energy and of your divine Presence would disappear at the same time. People who do not do yoga under the direction
of a guide follow ordinary moral notions and at times they feel very perplexed because with all their goodwill they do not get the expected result; that happens because generally they wish to approve of their being instead of transforming it and because moral notions are very bad. In the work of unification of the being, you must needs have imagination enough to be able to put the movements you have, the movements you wish to keep, to put them before what you are capable of imagining as most akin to the divine Presence; naturally, at first it is only an imagination quite far from the truth, but it would help you to get out a little from moral narrowness and also from the limitations of your consciousness. For example, you have the idea of putting what you are and what you do before a consciousness which is at once infinite and eternal. These two words do not perhaps make much sense at the beginning, but they compel you to break the limits and to put yourself in front of something which surpasses you so much on every side that its judgment cannot be the same as that of a human mentality. One must begin absolutely like that. If you try to analyse yourself according to moral principles, you may be sure of going contrary to the divine plan. Not that the Divine is amoral, mark that, but this is not a kind of morality that mankind understands at all, it is not the same.

“Ambition has been the undoing of many Yogis....

“A story is told of a Yogi who had attained wonderful powers. He was invited by his disciples to a great dinner. It was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but the seed of ambition was there in him and he thought, ‘After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God.’ So he said, ‘Take away the table, but only the table, let the table-cloth remain as it is with all the dishes upon it.’ The disciples cried out, ‘Oh, that cannot be done, everything will fall
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down.’ But he insisted and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. The disciples wondered. But all of a sudden the Master jumped up and rushed out screaming and crying, ‘Nevermore shall I have a disciple, nevermore! Woe is me! I have betrayed my God.’ ”

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This is a temptation that every teacher meets at each step, for the very simple reason that ordinary humanity, in a general way, not being in personal contact with the divine powers, understands nothing of what an illumined consciousness may be and asks for material proofs. It is on this demand that most religions are established and, for reasons which I may very frankly call “political”, they have put at the origin of their religion a more or less considerable number of miracles as having been performed by the founders, and they have thus more or less cruelly encouraged among ignorant people the taste, the necessity for seeing what they call “miracles” in order to believe in the divine power of a person. This is an extraordinary ignorance, because it is not at all necessary to have a divine power or consciousness to perform miracles. It is infinitely more easy to perform miracles with the help of small entities of the vital world who are material enough to be in touch with the physical world and act upon it, than to live in the consciousness of the higher regions and to work upon Nature only through the intermediary of all the other domains. It has been repeated over and over again to all human intellects that the proof of a being’s divinity is that he can raise the dead, cure maladies, and do many other things of the same kind (except making a fool wise). Well, I guarantee that

1 Mother added later: This is a Mohammedan story, I believe. As it was said that Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick, made the dumb speak, gave sight to the blind, one day an idiot was brought to him, to be made intelligent and Jesus ran away! ‘Why did you run away?’ he was asked. ‘I can do everything,’ he answered, ‘except give intelligence to an idiot.’

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this is not a proof; it proves only one thing, that these “Masters” are in contact with the powers of the vital world and that with the help of those beings they can perform these miracles, that’s all. If one relies upon that to recognise the superiority of a man, one would make a glaring mistake. Naturally, there are other religions which are established on revelations made to their founders. These revelations are more or less happy mental transcriptions of the knowledge they received. This is already of a higher order but it is not yet a proof. And I would finally say, the human demand for proofs is not at all favourable to one’s development. Because the true divine power has organised the world according to a certain plan and in this plan there was no question of things happening in an illogical way; otherwise from the very beginning the world would have been illogical and it is not so. Men imagine for the most part one of two things, either that there is a material world to which they belong, that all comes from there, all returns there and all ends there — these are the unbelievers — or, the believers, most of them, that there is something which they call “God” and then the physical world, and that this physical world is the creation of that God who knows what he is doing or does what he wants; and the confusion lies in saying that everything happens by a kind of arbitrariness, natural or supernatural. There are very few people who know that there exists in the universe an infinite number of gradations and that each one of these gradations has its own reality, its own life, its own law, its own determinism, and that the creation did not come about “like that”, by an arbitrary will, in an arbitrary way but is a deploying of consciousness and each thing has evolved as a logical result of the preceding one. I am telling you all this as simply as I can, you see, it is a very incomplete expression, but if I wanted to tell you the story exactly as it is, it would be a little difficult to make you understand. Only I would like you to know my conclusion (I have already spoken about it several times, more or less in detail), it is this: each one of these numberless regions has its own very logical determinism
— everything proceeds from cause to effect; but these worlds, although differentiated, are not separate from each other and, by numerous processes which we may study, the inner or higher worlds are in constant contact with the lower or external worlds and act upon these, so that the determinism of one changes the determinism of the other. If you take the purely material domain, for instance, and if you notice that the material laws, the purely material laws are altered by something all of a sudden, you ought to say that it was a “miracle”, because there is a rupture of the determinism of one plane through the intervention of another, but usually we do not call this a miracle. For example, when the human will intervenes and changes something, that seems to you quite natural, because you have been accustomed to it from your childhood; you remember, don’t you, the example I gave you the other day: a stone falls according to the law of its own determinism, but you wish to interrupt its fall and you stretch out your hand and catch it; well you ought to call this a “miracle”, but you don’t because you are used to it (but a rat or a dog would perhaps call it a miracle if they could speak). And note that it is the same for what people call a “miracle”; they speak of a “miracle” because they are absolutely ignorant, unaware of the gradations between the will which wants to express itself and the plane on which it expresses itself. When they have a mental or a vital will, the thing seems quite natural to them, but when it is a question of the will of a higher world — the world of the gods or of a higher entity — which all of a sudden upsets all your little organisation, that seems to you a miracle. But it is a miracle simply because you are unable to follow the gradations by which the phenomenon took place. Therefore, the Supreme Will, that which comes from the very highest region, if you saw it in its logical action, if you were aware of it continually, it would seem to you altogether natural. You can express this in two ways: either say, “It is quite natural, it is like this that things must happen, it is only an expression of the divine Will”, or, each time you see on the material plane an intervention coming
from another plane, you ought to say, “It is miraculous!” So I may say with certainty that people who want to see miracles are people who cherish their ignorance! You understand my logic, don’t you? These people love their ignorance, they insist upon seeing miracles and being astounded! And that is why people who have done yoga seriously consider it altogether fatal to encourage this tendency; hence it is forbidden.

There is a “miracle” because you do not give people time to see the procedure by which you do things, you do not show them the stages. Thus, some men have reached higher mental regions and do not need to follow step by step all the gradations of thought; they can jump from one idea to a far distant conclusion without the intermediary links; this is usually called intuition (it is not altogether an “intuition”; it is that the idea, to begin with, is at a great height and from there these people can see while descending the whole totality of things and consequences without passing through all the gradations as ordinary human thought is obliged to do). It is an experience I have had; when I used to speak with Sri Aurobindo, we never had the need to go through intermediary ideas; he said one thing and I saw the far off result; we used to talk always like that, and if a person had happened to be present at our conversations he would have said, “What are they talking about!” But for us, you know, it was as clear as a continuous sentence. You could call that a mental miracle — it was not a miracle, it was simply that Sri Aurobindo had the vision of the totality of mental phenomena and hence we had no need to waste a good deal of time in going through all the gradations. For any person capable of following the line, the thing would have been quite natural and logical; for ignorant people it was a “miracle”.

“They [powers] have to be used in the same way as they came. They come by union with the Divine. They must be used by the will of the Divine and not for display.”

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If you use power to show that you possess it, it becomes so full of falsehood and untruth that finally it disappears. But it is not always thus, because, as I said at the beginning, when it concerns a power like the power of healing or the power of changing an altogether external thing — of making an unfavourable circumstance favourable, of finding lost objects, all these countless little “miracles” which are found in all religions — it is much more easy and even more effective to do these “miracles” with the help of the entities of the vital world which are not always recommendable, far from it; and then these beings make fun of you. This begins very well, very brilliantly, and usually finishes very badly.

I know the story of a man who had a few small powers and indulged in all kinds of so-called “spiritualist” practices, and through repeated exercises he had succeeded in coming into conscious contact with what he called a “spirit”. This man was doing business; he was a financier and was even a speculator. His relations with his “spirit” were of a very practical kind! This spirit used to tell him when the stocks and shares would go up and when they would come down; it told him, “Sell this”, “Buy that” — it gave him very precise financial particulars. For years he had been listening to his “spirit” and had followed it, and was fantastically successful; he became tremendously rich and naturally boasted a lot about the spirit which “guided” him. He used to tell everybody, “You see, it is really worthwhile learning how to put oneself in contact with these spirits.” But one day he met a man who was a little wiser, who told him, “Take care.” He did not listen to him, he was swollen with his power and ambition. And it was then that his “spirit” gave him a last advice, “Now you can become the richest man in the world. Your ambition will be fulfilled. You have only to follow my direction. Do this: put all that you have into this transaction and you will become the richest man in the world.” The stupid fool did not even realise the trap laid for him: for years he had followed his “guide” and succeeded, so
he followed the last direction; and he lost everything, to the last penny.

So you see, these are small entities who make fun of you, and to make sure of you they work these little miracles to encourage you, and when they feel that you are well trapped, they play a fine trick upon you and it is all over with you.

We have said that there is only one safety, never to act except in harmony with the divine Will. There is one question: how to know that it is the divine Will which makes you act? I replied to the person who put to me this question (although this person did not agree with me) that it is not difficult to distinguish the voice of the Divine: one cannot make a mistake. You need not be very far on the path to be able to recognise it; you must listen to the still, small peaceful voice which speaks in the silence of your heart.

I forgot one thing: to hear it you must be absolutely sincere, for if you are not sincere, you will begin by deceiving yourself and you will hear nothing at all except the voice of your ego and then you will commit with assurance (thinking that it is the real small voice) the most awful stupidities. But if you are sincere, the way is sure. It is not even a voice, not even a sensation, it is something extremely subtle — a slight indication. When everything goes well, that is, when you do nothing contrary to the divine Will, you will not perhaps have any definite impression, everything will seem to you normal. Of course, you should be eager to know whether you are acting in accordance with the divine Will, that is the first point, naturally, without which you can know nothing at all. But once you are eager and you pay attention, everything seems to you normal, natural, then all of a sudden, you feel a little uneasiness somewhere in the head, in the heart or even in the stomach — generally one doesn’t give it a thought; you may feel it several times in the day but you reject it without giving it any attention; but it is no longer quite the same; then, at that moment, you must stop, no matter what you may be doing, and look, and
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if you are sincere, you will notice a small black spot (a tiny wicked idea, a tiny false movement, a small arbitrary decision) and that's the source of the uneasiness. You will notice then that the little black spot comes from the ego which is full of preferences; generally it does what it likes; the things it likes are called good and those it does not are called bad — this clouds your judgment. It is difficult to judge under these conditions. If you truly want to know, you must draw back a step and look, and you will know then that it is this small movement of the ego which is the cause of the uneasiness. You will see that it is a tiny thing curled back upon itself; you will have the impression of being in front of something hard which resists or is black. Then with patience, from the height of your consciousness, you must explain to this thing its mistake, and in the end it will disappear. I do not say that you will succeed all at once the very first day, but if you try sincerely, you will always end with success. And if you persevere, you will see that all of a sudden you are relieved of a mass of meanness and ugliness and obscurity which was preventing you from flowering in the light. It is those things which make you shrivel up, prevent you from widening yourself, opening out in a light where you have the impression of being very comfortable. If you make this effort, you will see finally that you are very far from the point where you had begun, the things you did not feel, did not understand, have become clear. If you are resolved, you are sure to succeed.

This is the first step towards unifying yourself, becoming a conscious being who has a central will and acts only according to this will, which will be a constant expression of the divine Will. It is worth trying.

And I may tell you from my personal experience that there is nothing in the world more interesting. If you begin making this effort you will find that your life is full of interest — you know, of the ordinary life of people at least a third is a kind of dull boredom (I say a third, but for some two-thirds of the day is a
dull boredom), and all that gets volatilised! Everything becomes so interesting, the least little thing, the least casual meeting, the least word exchanged, the least thing displaced — everything is full of life and interest.