18 November 1953

“In rebirth it is not the external being, that which is formed by parents, environment and circumstances,—the mental, the vital and the physical,—that is born again: it is only the psychic being that passes from body to body. Logically, then, neither the mental nor the vital being can remember past lives or recognise itself in the character or mode of life of this or that person. The psychic being alone can remember; and it is by becoming conscious of our psychic being that we can have at the same time exact impressions about our past lives.

Besides, it is much more important for us to fix our attention upon what we want to become than upon what we have been.”

Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 124

If it is not the mind, vital or physical which take birth again but only the psychic being, then the vital or mental progress made before is of no value in another life?

It happens only to the extent the progress of these parts has brought them close to the psychic, that is, to the extent the progress lies in putting all the parts of the being successively under the psychic influence. For all that is under the psychic influence and identified with the psychic continues, and it is that alone which continues. But if the psychic is made the centre of one’s life and consciousness, and if the whole being is organised around it, the whole being passes under the psychic influence, becomes united with it, and can continue — if it is necessary for it to continue. Indeed, if the physical body could be given the same movement — the same movements of progress and the same capacity to ascend that the psychic being has — well, it wouldn’t
be necessary for it to decompose. But that indeed is the difficulty.

And only that which is in contact with the psychic lasts, and only what can last can remember, for the rest disappears, is again dissolved into small pieces and utilised elsewhere — as the body is dissolved again to dust and used elsewhere. It goes back to the earth, plants use the soil, men eat the plants. It is in this way that it goes on. And then it returns to the earth and begins again. That's the way Nature progresses. In order to progress she makes a heap of forms, then, when that seems no longer important or necessary to her, she demolishes them, takes up all the elements again, chemical or other, and reconstitutes something else, and so it goes on changing all the time, coming and going. And she finds that very good, for she sees very far, her work extends over centuries, and a small human life is nothing, just a breath in eternity. So she takes up, shapes; she takes a certain time, it's fun for her, she finds it very good; and then, when it is no longer so good, she demolishes it — she takes up, mixes everything, begins another form, makes something else. And so perhaps with this process which is evidently very slow, finally the whole of matter progresses. It is possible — always in this way, intermingling, breaking up, remixing, breaking up again. Essentially, it is as though one made a heap of small objects and then destroyed them, remade something from the dust, remade other toys, and again broke them, and remade others out of that. Each time one adds something so that it mixes well. And then, one day, perhaps all that will produce something. In any case, she is in no hurry. And when we are in a hurry, she says: “Why are you in such a haste? It is sure to happen one day. You don't need to worry, it will surely come. Wait quietly.” Then we tell her: “But it is not I who am waiting!” — “Ah! that's because you call 'I' that thing which comes and goes away. If you were to call consciousness — the one, eternal and divine consciousness — if you were to call that 'I', then you would see everything, you would witness everything. Nobody prevents you from doing it! It is only because you identify yourself with this (indicating the
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“Justice is the strict logical determinism of the movements of Universal Nature.

“Illnesses are this determinism applied to the material body. The medical mind, basing itself upon this ineluctable Justice, strives to bring about the conditions which should lead logically to good health.

“The moral consciousness acts in the same way in the social body and tapasya in the spiritual domain.

“The Divine Grace alone has the power to intervene and change the course of Universal Justice.

“The great work of the Avatar is to manifest the Divine Grace upon earth. To be a disciple of the Avatar is to become an instrument of the Divine Grace. The Mother is the great dispensatrix — through identity — of the Divine Grace with a perfect knowledge — through identity — of the absolute mechanism of Universal Justice.

“And through her mediation each movement of sincere and confident aspiration towards the Divine calls down in response the intervention of the Grace.

“Who can stand before You, O Lord, and say in all sincerity: ‘I have never made a mistake’? How many times in a day we commit faults against Your work, and always Your Grace comes to efface them!

“Without the ceaseless intervention of Your Grace, who would not oftentimes have come under the merciless blade of the Law of Universal Justice?

“Each one here represents an impossibility to be resolved, but as for Your Divine Grace all things are possible. Your work will be, in the detail as in the ensemble, the accomplishment of all the impossibilities transformed into divine realisations.”

Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, pp. 83–84
18 November 1953

What is the meaning of “Justice is the strict logical determinism of the movements of Universal Nature”?

You know the law of determinism, don’t you? You have not studied philosophy at all? (Turning to a professor) Pavitra, explain what determinism is to them. Try to be brief and clear.

Pavitra: I think determinism is this: when something happens, it always has the same effect.

If it is the same thing — on condition it is identically the same thing. Are there two identical things in the universe? No.

Nolini: The same cause produces the same effect.

Yes. The same cause produces the same effect. That is the principle on which science is founded. But I have used the word here in a little more general and precise a way at once. I mean that each thing (whether the same or not) always produces an effect and that this effect produces still another and that other produces yet another and so on — always a cause produces an effect and each effect becomes the cause of another effect, and so on, indefinitely. And so justice means that each thing, as Nolini said, the same cause always produces the same effect automatically. And hence one cannot say a word, make a movement without its being the cause of something else. And this something else is the cause of yet another thing. And all this follows automatically and strictly, and that is universal justice.

An act carried out has always a consequence and this consequence brings along another and so on. And this is absolutely ineluctable. That is universal justice. You have a bad thought, it has a result. And that result has yet another. And you cannot escape it except through the intervention of Grace. Grace is exactly something which has the power of changing all that. But only the Grace can change it. It is so strict a law and so terrible
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that once one has entered within it, one cannot get out. And the moment one is upon earth, one enters into this. The whole earthly existence is like that, constructed in this way. And each thing one does, each thing one says, each thing one thinks, each thing one feels has a consequence. And this consequence brings another, and so on. Now, if one wants to have a more practical point of view, one may take examples and say: “If you do this, it will automatically produce that.” For instance, in societies organised by men, if you commit a crime, you will be punished for your crime. In your own conscience, if you make a mistake, you suffer for the mistake you have made. And in the law as man has made it, it is always said that to be ignorant of the law is no excuse. If you are ignorant of the law, you are punished. If you make a mistake without knowing that it is a mistake, that does not protect you, you are punished. Well, in Nature it is the same thing. If you take poison without knowing that it is poison, it will poison you all the same. Do you understand?... Unless the Grace intervenes. And as the Grace is omnipotent, it can change everything. That is what I have explained. But without the Grace there is no hope. For precisely it is ignorance that’s the constant factor of mankind.

I was thinking today how many deplorable and frightful experiences man has had to go through before knowing how to make use of Nature’s things. It is possible that there was just this Grace which made him find things instinctively; but if he had to learn his lesson... I thought about that because... there are a certain number of fruits on the trees: there are fruits which are good, and then others which are poisoned — this is not written upon the tree. Now, there is always someone to tell you: “No, do not eat this, this will poison you.” But if there were nobody to tell you that, how would you know? — By eating it and poisoning yourself. And then it would be somebody else who would have the benefit of your experience.

I thought of that because some fruits, when ripe, are excellent; they have a great nourishing power, they are very useful.
But if they are not ripe they poison you. And it is the same fruit. Take, for instance, the avocado, (butterfruit, I think), take the butterfruit; if you eat an unripe butterfruit (you won’t eat it because it tastes very bad), but if you eat an unripe butterfruit, it poisons you radically, whilst as soon as it is ripe, it is excellent. Now, in some countries as in South America or certain parts of Africa, these trees grow as high as the tallest mango trees. And all the fruits hang down in the same way. Somebody who comes along not knowing the tree, not knowing anything and without anyone to warn him, takes the fruit, cuts it, eats it and dies. Then someone else comes by a month later, all the fruits are ripe; he takes them, eats them, finds himself well nourished — it is excellent, it is wonderful. Now, somebody tells him: “Ah! how is it you have eaten that fruit, and the other man is dead....” So how many experiences are necessary to learn that it is because one ate the unripe fruit and the other the ripe. And when it is not ripe, it is bad and when ripe, good.

And we benefit by all the experiences of those who were upon earth before us. But if we had to come to a country about which we knew nothing, and had to learn everything by ourselves, we would have very unpleasant experiences. There are other fruits like that, this is not the only one, there are many such. For example, the fig — the unripe fig — if you touch the white juice that oozes from the fig — but it’s awful — you have boils all over the mouth and become quite ill, and you get ulcers in the stomach also. But when the fig is ripe and you take care not to touch the white juice, it is a perfect food. I could give you a great many examples of this kind. But now we know this because we have been told. Those who told us learnt it from others. But who first made the experiment, who learnt all that, all the things in Nature?... There are many, there are countless things in Nature. Well, take plant life in Nature, we don’t yet know everything today. For instance, some people tell you: “The remedy is always there along with the illness, in Nature; Nature has made it thus.” I don’t know if this is strictly so, but in any
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case, in a way it works, it is true. It is said, for instance, that if a snake has its hole somewhere, you may be sure you will find beside it a plant which will cure you if bitten. But which plant? There are so many there and who will teach you? There are people who go up to the mountains in the moonlight and collect herbs which cure diseases generally considered incurable. How have they learnt that? Who has made the experiment?

And mushrooms?...

Ah! yes, it is the same thing. You have side by side, just next to one another, a mushroom that’s an excellent food and another which will send you to the other world immediately. We benefit by an accumulated knowledge. And I dare say much of this knowledge must have been lost, for many men have discovered things like these and never noted them down; and we too, we may make discoveries but don’t always take care to note them down and make them accessible to others. And Nature is an almost infinite field of study and discovery.

Pavitra: Those who discovered explosives — how many died and how many had accidents....

That’s man, it is his own fault. If he had not meddled with that, it would not have happened.

Often he may have touched it accidentally, without knowing it, without doing it on purpose.

But it is still an explosive. It is always the fault of another man, isn’t it?

Those who studied chemistry and alighted upon explosives.

If they didn’t know what it was, yes. For instance, you take some
potassium chlorate, quite harmless, white, pretty, crystallised, charming. But then you take a hammer and start hitting it with all your might, and suddenly it explodes. Yes, it is like that.

But the number of plants—nobody has ever known and nobody will probably ever know the number of different plants there are upon earth. Yet when a list is made of the number of plants men know and use, it is ridiculously small. I believe, when I was in Japan, the Japanese used to tell me that Europeans eat only three hundred and fifty types of different plants, whilst they use more than six hundred. That makes a considerable difference. They used to say: “Oh, how you waste your food! Nature produces infinitely more than you know; you waste all that.” Have you ever eaten (not here, but in Europe) bamboo sprouts?... You have eaten bamboo sprouts? You have eaten palm-tree buds? Coconut buds?—That, indeed, makes a marvellous salad, coconut buds. Only, this kills the tree. For a salad, one kills a tree. But when there is a cyclone, for instance, which knocks down hundreds of coconut trees, the only way of utilising the catastrophe is to eat all the buds and make yourself a magnificent dish. Haven’t you ever eaten coconut buds? As for me, I was not surprised, for I had eaten bamboo sprouts before they sprang up from the ground — somewhat like the asparagus. It is quite a classical dish in Japan. And their bamboos are much more tender than the bamboos here. Their bamboos are very tender and their sprouts are wonderful.

Still, that’s how it is. It seems in Europe one knows how to use only three hundred and fifty varieties of vegetables from the vegetable kingdom, whilst in Japan they use six hundred of them and more. But perhaps if people knew, they would not die of hunger, at least those who live in the countryside. Voilà.

In any case, things are like that. We don’t know how it would be if it were only justice reigning over the world. But I believe it wouldn’t be fun! For, as I have said, there is not a single person who can stand before the Lord and tell him: “I have never made a mistake.” And when I speak of making a
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mistake, ignorance is not an excuse; for whether you touch the fire through ignorance or knowing it, the difference is rather in favour of the stupidity of touching it when one knows, for one can take precautions. But when one touches the fire through ignorance, without knowing, one burns oneself completely. And then one can’t tell Nature: “Oh! I should not have been burnt, for I did not know that it burnt.” It burns, nobody will listen to you!

*Does the intervention of the Grace come through a call?*

When one calls? I think so. Anyway, not exclusively and solely. But certainly, yes, if one has faith in the Grace and an aspiration and if one does what a little child would when it runs to its mother and says: “Mamma, give me this”, if one calls with that simplicity, if one turns to the Grace and says “Give me this”, I believe it listens. Unless one asks for something that is not good for one, then it does not listen. If one asks from it something that does harm or is not favourable, it does not listen.

*What is the cause of this effect? of the call?*

Perhaps one was destined to call. That is: Did the hen produce the egg or the egg the hen? I don’t know whether it is the Grace which makes you call the Grace or whether because the Grace is called the Grace comes. It is difficult to say.

Essentially, it is quite possible that what is most lacking is faith. There is always a tiny corner in the thought which doubts and debates. So that spoils everything. It is only just when one is in an absolutely critical situation, when the mind realises that it can do nothing, absolutely nothing, when it stands there quite stupid and incapable, then, at that moment, if one aspires for a higher help, the aspiration has exactly that kind of intensity which comes from despair, and that takes effect. But if your thought continues to argue, if it says: “Yes, yes, I have aspired, I
have prayed, but God knows if this is the moment, and whether it will come and whether it is possible”, well, then it is finished, it doesn’t work. This is one of the commonest of things. People are told: “If you want to advance in the yoga, you must have no desires”. One goes even a little further and says: “You must not have any needs.” One goes a little further still and says: “Never ask anything from the Divine.” Well, I don’t know, more than ninety-nine times out of a hundred, people’s reaction is: “Ah! if I don’t ask, I won’t have what I need.” They don’t see that they cut the whole movement at the very root! They don’t have faith. “I need this....”

I am not even discussing the idea of need, for it is quite arbitrary. I knew a Dutch painter who had come here, and done Sri Aurobindo’s portrait (it seems this portrait is still existent). This Dutch painter was practising a yoga. And so, one day, he told me this: “Oh! as for me, I think I can do without anything. Truly I believe one can reduce one’s needs to a minimum. But all the same, I must have a tooth-brush.” I had not yet lived in India at that time, otherwise I would have told him: “There are millions of people who have never had a toothbrush and whose teeth are quite clean. This is not the only way of keeping one’s teeth clean.” But at that time he was quite convinced that one could do without everything except keeping one’s mouth clean. And for him, to keep one’s mouth clean meant having a tooth-brush. That gives a very exact picture of what goes on in people’s minds. They cling to something and think they need it. And surely it is a complete ignorance, for perhaps there is a real necessity like that of having a clean mouth (that seems to be in any case quite necessary), but that association of the tooth-brush with the necessity of having a clean mouth is quite arbitrary. For it is not so very long ago that tooth-brushes were invented.

There was someone else also who told me: “Oh! I can absolutely do without anything at all”—we were speaking of a walking-tour with a minimum of baggage on the back (when
you are compelled to carry it for miles on end, four or five kilometres a day, you try to reduce the weight of your bag as much as possible); so we discussed about what was indispensable and had to be put in the bag. He said his tooth-brush. Another told me he needed a piece of soap (usually this spins round very simple tiny things of this kind). But here how many people there are who have never used soap, and that doesn’t prevent them from being clean! There are other ways of being clean. That’s how it is, one is fixed in all kinds of small ideas and believes these are indispensable needs. And then, if you travel a little around the world, you notice that what is a need for you is for others something they don’t even know of, something they have never seen in their life, which doesn’t exist and hasn’t the slightest importance of any kind. Hence it is not indispensable. It is just the result of an education and life in a particular environment. And these things are quite relative, and not only relative but transitory.

Voilà.