Q. “If the Divine that is all love is the source of the creation, whence have come all the evils abounding upon earth?”

“All is from the Divine; but the One Consciousness, the Supreme has not created the world directly out of itself; a Power has gone out of it and has descended through many gradations of its workings and passed through many agents. There are many creators or rather ‘formateurs’, form-makers, who have presided over the creation of the world. They are intermediary agents and I prefer to call them ‘Formateurs’ and not ‘Creators’; for what they have done is to give the form and turn and nature to matter. There have been many, and some have formed things harmonious and benignant and some have shaped things mischievous and evil. And some too have been distorters rather than builders, for they have interfered and spoiled what was begun well by others.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (30 June 1929)

You say, “Many creators or rather ‘formateurs’, form-makers, have presided over the creation of the world.” Who are these ‘formateurs’?

That depends. They have been given many names. All has been done by gradations and through individual beings of all kinds. Each state of being is inhabited by entities, individualities and personalities and each one has created a world around him or has contributed to the formation of certain beings upon earth. The last creators are those of the vital world, but there are beings of the Overmind (Sri Aurobindo calls this plane the Overmind), who have created, given forms, sent out emanations, and these
emanations again had their emanations and so on. What I meant
is that it is not the Divine Will that acted directly on Matter to
give to the world the required form, it is by passing through
layers, so to say, planes of the world, as for example, the mental
plane — there are so many beings on the mental plane who are
form-makers, who have taken part in the formation of some
beings who have incarnated upon earth. On the vital plane also
the same thing happens.

For example, there is a tradition which says that the whole
world of insects is the outcome of the form-makers of the vital
world, and that this is why they take such absolutely diabolical
shapes when they are magnified under the microscope. You saw
the other day, when you were shown the microbes in water?
Naturally the pictures were made to amuse, to strike the imagi-
nation, but they are based on real forms, so magnified, however,
that they look like monsters. Almost the whole world of insects
is a world of microscopic monsters which, had they been larger
in size, would have been quite terrifying. So it is said these are
entities of the vital world, beings of the vital who created that for
fun and amused themselves forming all these impossible beasts
which make human life altogether unpleasant.

Did these intermediaries also come out of the Divine
Power?

Through intermediaries, yes, not directly. These beings are not
in direct contact with the Divine (there are exceptions, I mean
as a general rule), they are beings who are in relation with other
beings, who are again in relation with others, and these with
still others, and so on, in a hierarchy, up to the Supreme.

If they came out of the Divine, why are they evil?

Evil? I think I have explained that to you once: just by not
remaining under the direct influence of the Divine and not
following the movement of creation or expansion as willed by the Divine; this rupture of contact is enough to produce the greatest of disorders, that of division. Well, even the most luminous, the most powerful beings may choose to follow their own movement instead of obeying the divine movement. And though in themselves they may be quite wonderful and if human beings saw them they would take them for the very Godhead, they can, because they follow their own will instead of working in harmony with the universe, be the source of very great evils, very great disorders, very great massive obstructions. But don’t you see, the question is badly put, I laughed just now when I read the question. It is a childish way of speaking. This person says: “If God is everything in the world, why are there evil things in the world?” Now, if she had told me that, I would have simply answered: there is nothing which is not God, only it is in a disorder. One must try to remedy it — God is not love alone, He is all things, and if that appears to us — to us — altogether wrong, it is because it is not arranged properly. There have been movements exactly of the kind I spoke to you about.

You may ask why it happened. Well, certainly it is not the mind, you know, which can say why it happened. It happened, that is all. In reality the only thing that concerns us is that it has happened. It is perhaps an accident to begin with.... If you look at the thing from a philosophical point of view, it is evident that the universe in which we live is a movement among many others and this movement follows a law which is its own (and which is perhaps not the same in the others), and if the Will was for the world to be built on the principle of choice, of the freedom of choice, then one cannot prevent disorderly movements from taking place until knowledge comes and the choice is enlightened. If one is free to choose, one can also choose bad things, not necessarily the good, for if it were a

1 “If the Divine who is all love be the source of the creation, whence have come all the evils abounding upon earth?”
Questions and Answers

thing decided beforehand, it would no longer be a free choice. You see, when such questions are put, the mind only answers and it reduces the problem, it reduces it to a more or less elementary mental formula; but that corresponds only very vaguely and superficially and incompletely with the reality of things.

To be able to understand, one must become. If you want to understand the why and how of the universe, you must identify yourself with the universe. It is not impossible but it is not very easy either, particularly for children.

This was one of the most childish questions that she put — altogether childish: “If He is just, why is there injustice? If He is good, why is there wickedness? If He is love, why is there hatred?” — But He is all! So He is not merely this or that, or only, exclusively this — He is all. That is, to be more correct, it should be said that all is He. There are notions about creation, very widespread upon earth, which have been accepted more or less for a long time in human thought, that are quite simplistic! There is “something” (truly speaking, one does not know what), and then there is a God who puts this something into form and creates the world out of it. So if you have such notions, you have a justifiable right to say to this God: “Well, you have indeed created a world, it’s a pretty one, that world of yours!” Although, according to the story, after seven days of labour, he declared that it was very good — but it was good for him. Perhaps it may have amused him immensely, but as for us who are in the world, we do not find it good at all! Don’t you see, the conception and the way of putting it are altogether childish. It is just like the story of the potter who puts his pot in shape — this God is a human being, formidable in proportions and power, but looking strangely like a man. It is man who makes God in his image, not God who makes man in his image! So each time a question is put in an incomplete or childish way, it is impossible to give an answer to it truly, for the question is badly put. You say something, you affirm it. But what right have you to assert it? Because you affirm that, you conclude: “Since that
is this, how does it happen that it is so?” But “that is this” is your statement. It does not mean that it is so!

There is only one single solution to the problem — not to make any distinction between God and the universe at the origin. The universe is the Divine projected in space, and God is the universe at its origin. It is the same thing under one aspect or another. And you cannot divide them. It is the opposite conception to that of the “creator” and his “work”. Only, it is very convenient to speak of the creator and his work, it makes explanations very easy and the teaching quite elementary. But it is not the truth. And then you say: “How is it that God who is all-powerful has allowed the world to be like this?” But it is your own conception! It is because you yourself happen to be in the midst of a set of circumstances that seems to you unpleasant, so you project that upon the Divine and you tell him: “Why have you made such a world?” — “I did not make it. It is you yourself. And if you become Myself once again, you will no longer feel as you do. What makes you feel as you do is that you are no longer Myself.” This is what He could tell you in answer. And the fact is that when you succeed in uniting your consciousness with the divine consciousness, there is no problem left. Everything appears quite natural and simple and all right and exactly what it had to be. But when you cut yourself off from the origin and stand over against Him, then truly everything goes wrong, nothing can go right!

But if you ask for a logic that pushes things to the extreme end, you question how it is that the Divine has tolerated parts of his own self to be separated from him and all this disorder to be created. You may say that. And I then will reply: “If you want to know, it is better to unite yourself with the Divine, for that is the only way of knowing why He has done these things.” It is not by questioning Him mentally, for your mind cannot understand. And I repeat it, when you reach such an identification, all problems are solved. And this feeling that things are not all right and that they should be otherwise, comes just because there
Questions and Answers

is a divine will for a constant unfolding in perpetual progress and things that were must give place to things that shall be and shall be better than what the others were. And the world that was good yesterday is no longer good tomorrow. The whole world that could appear absolutely harmonious and perfect at one time, well, today it is discordant, no longer harmonious, because now we conceive and see the possibility of a better world. And if we were to find it all right we would not do what we ought to do, that is, make the effort needed for it to become better.

There comes a time when all these notions appear so childish! And this happens solely because one is shut up within oneself. With this consciousness which is your own, which is like a grain of sand in the infinite vastness, you want to know and judge the infinite? It is impossible. You must first of all come out of yourself, and then unite with the infinite and only afterwards can you begin to understand what it is, not before. You project your consciousness — what you are, the thoughts you have, the capacity of understanding you have — you project this upon the Divine and then say: “That is all wrong.” I quite understand! But there is no possibility of knowing unless you identify yourself. I do not see how, for example, a drop of water could tell you what the ocean is like. That’s how it is.

“When one takes up the human body, one accepts along with it a mass of these general suggestions, race ideas, race feelings of mankind, associations, attractions, repulsions, fears.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (30 June 1929)

When one takes up a human body, is it necessary to accept suggestions of fear?

It seems more inevitable than necessary!... One doesn’t even perceive that one is accepting them. We said the other day that
when a psychic being enters a body, it is as though it fell on its head — it is a little stunned for a time. So during this period it is under the influence of these suggestions without even knowing it. But as soon as it wakes up, it can come out of that; it is not at all necessary to accept them. Only, one must know that they are suggestions. One must be able to separate oneself from the purely human consciousness, the body consciousness. And once you can look at it from above, you can free yourself from these suggestions quite well. You can free yourself from all suggestions, but for that you must rise above them. If that were not possible, it would be impossible to do yoga.

But you do not become aware of it, it is a constant thing. For example, there is that formidable collective suggestion of death. But how can you get rid of that idea unless you are able to create in you an immortal consciousness? Once you have created in you the immortal consciousness, you can be freed of the suggestion. Otherwise it is not possible. And you are not aware of it because you live in it quite normally — you are full of the movements and ideas belonging to the human race, which are not personal to you at all. You are not aware of them because they are very intimately bound up with your consciousness. But the moment you can free yourself from this human consciousness and enter a domain where, for example, life in the body becomes almost an accident — it can be here, it can be there, it can be over there — you are no longer tied to the body. You look at it and say: it is almost like an accident (it may be a choice also, but most often it is an accident). Then, from that moment you are no longer tied down, for you are conscious in a being which is no longer merely, exclusively human. But till that moment you are not even aware. You have no means of becoming aware. And if you come to the purely mental domain, there are such strong ideas; for example, that the infinite cannot be within the finite, that what begins will surely have an end — ideas of this kind which seem wonderfully luminous, and yet are idiocies. But all that belongs to the collective human mentality and there
Questions and Answers

is nothing more difficult than to drive this out of the head of people who think themselves very clever... Perhaps you have not yet put these problems to yourselves because you have not yet begun studying philosophy, but when you begin, you will see. And this will be given to you as immortal truths which cannot be touched! Yet this is nonsense. One day I would like... (turning to Nolini) You don’t have the Advent here? It is in the Advent, that text of Sri Aurobindo’s. One day we shall translate it together from English into French. He has made a wonderful observation upon logic and reason... And all that never even crossed your mind: that these are collective suggestions and one must come out of them. Not only does it not appear to you as slavery, but it appears to you as an illumination. Well, it’s not that at all!

Mother, sometimes we are terribly afraid. What should we do in such a case?

Ah! that depends on the nature of the fear. Is it a fear without a cause or is it based on a cause? Because the remedy differs.

It is based on a cause.

Ah! For example, when someone is ill, one is afraid of catching the illness....

No, someone is dead.

And one is afraid to die.

There are two remedies. There are many, but two at least are there. In any case, the use of a deeper consciousness is essential.

2 Perhaps the reference is to the following Aphorism of Sri Aurobindo quoted in the Advent of August 1953:

“Logic is the worst enemy of Truth, as self-righteousness is the worst enemy of virtue; for the one cannot see its own errors nor the other its own imperfections.”

Thoughts and Aphorisms, SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 84
One remedy consists in saying that it is something that happens to everyone (let us take it on that level), yes, it is a thing that happens to everybody, and therefore, sooner or later, it will come and there is no reason why one should be afraid, it is quite a normal thing. You may add one more idea to this, that according to experience (not yours but just the collective human experience), circumstances being the same, absolutely identical, in one case people die, in another they do not — why? And if you push the thing a little further still, you say to yourself that after all it must depend on something which is altogether outside your consciousness — and in the end one dies when one has to die. That is all. When one has to die one dies, and when one has not to die, one does not die. Even when you are in mortal danger, if it is not your hour to die, you will not die, and even if you are out of all danger, just a scratch on your foot will be enough to make you die, for there are people who have died of a pin-scratch on the foot — because the time had come. Therefore, fear has no sense. What you can do is to rise to a state of consciousness where you can say, “It is like that, we accept the fact because it seems to be recognised as an inevitable fact. But I do not need to worry, for it will come only when it must come. So I don’t need to feel afraid: when it is not to come, it will not come to me, but when it must come to me, it will come. And as it will come to me inevitably, it is better I do not fear the thing; on the contrary, one must accept what is perfectly natural.” This is a well-known remedy, that is to say, very much in use.

There is another, a little more difficult, but better, I believe. It lies in telling oneself: “This body is not I”, and in trying to find in oneself the part which is truly one’s self, until one has found one’s psychic being. And when one has found one’s psychic being — immediately, you understand — one has the sense of immortality. And one knows that what goes out or what comes in is just a matter of convenience: “I am not going to weep over a pair of shoes I put aside when it is full of holes! When my pair of shoes is worn out I cast it aside, and I do not weep.” Well, the
psychic being has taken this body because it needed to use it for its work, but when the time comes to leave the body, that is to say, when one must leave it because it is no longer of any use for some reason or other, one leaves the body and has no fear. It is quite a natural gesture — and it is done without the least regret, that's all.

And the moment you are in your psychic being, you have that feeling, spontaneously, effortlessly. You soar above the physical life and have the sense of immortality. As for me, I consider this the best remedy. The other is an intellectual, common-sense, rational remedy. This is a deep experience and you can always get it back as soon as you recover the contact with your psychic being. This is a truly interesting phenomenon, for it is automatic. The moment you are in contact with your psychic being, you have the feeling of immortality, of having always been and being always, eternally. And then what comes and goes — these are life’s accidents, they have no importance. Yes, this is the best remedy. The other is like the prisoner finding good reasons for accepting his prison. This one is like a man for whom there’s no longer any prison.

Now, a third thing also one must know, but for this one has to be a mighty yogi. For this means knowing that death is not an inevitable thing, it is an accident which has been occurring till now (which seems in any case to have always occurred till now), and that we have put it into our head and our will to conquer this accident and overcome it. But it is so terrible, so formidable a battle against all the laws of Nature, against all collective suggestions, all earthly habits, that unless, as I have said, you are a first-rate warrior whom nothing frightens, it is better not to begin the battle. You must be an absolutely intrepid hero, for at every step, at every second you have to fight a battle against all established things. So it is not a very easy thing. And even as an individual it is a battle against oneself, because (I think I have already told you this once), if you want your physical consciousness to be in a state which admits of physical
immortality, you must be free to such an extent from everything which at present represents the physical consciousness that it becomes every second a battle. All feelings, all sensations, all thoughts, all reflexes, all attractions, all repulsions, all existing things, all that forms the fabric of our physical life must be overcome, transformed and freed from all their habits. This is a battle of every second against thousands and millions of enemies. Unless you feel you are a hero, it is better not to try. Because this solution, well... I do not know, but I believe I was asked this question once before: “Has anyone succeeded so far?” To tell you the truth I don’t know, for I have not met such a person.... I do not have the feeling that anyone has succeeded till now. But it is possible. Only, he or she who has done it has not declared it, at least, not till now.

The other two solutions are safe and sure and within your reach. Now, there is a small remedy which is very very easy. For it is based on a simple personal question of one’s common sense.... You must observe yourself a little and say that when you are afraid it is as though the fear was attracting the thing you are afraid of. If you are afraid of illness, it is as though you were attracting the illness. If you are afraid of an accident, it is as though you were attracting the accident. And if you look into yourself and around yourself a little, you will find it out, it is a persistent fact. So if you have just a little common sense, you say: “It is stupid to be afraid of anything, for it is precisely as though I were making a sign to that thing to come to me. If I had an enemy who wanted to kill me, I would not go and tell him: ‘You know, it’s me you want to kill!’ ” It is something like that. So since fear is bad, we won’t have it. And if you say you are unable to prevent it by your reason, well, that shows you have no control over yourselves and must make a little effort to control yourselves. That is all.

Oh! There are many ways of curing oneself of fear. But in reality everyone finds his own way, the one good for him. There are people to whom you have simply to say: “Your fear is a
Questions and Answers

weakness”, and they would immediately find the means to look at it with contempt, for they have a horror of weakness. There are others, you tell them: “Fear is a suggestion from hostile forces, you must push it away, as you drive off hostile forces”, and this is very effective. For each one it is different. But first of all you must know that fear is a very bad thing, very bad, it is a dissolvent; it is like an acid. If you put a drop of it on something, it eats into the substance. The first step is not to admit the possibility of fear. Yes, that’s the first step. I knew people who used to boast about their fear. These are incurable. That is, quite naturally they would say, “Ah, just imagine, I was so frightened!” And then what! It is nothing to be proud of. With such people you can do nothing.

However, when once you recognise that fear is neither good nor favourable nor noble nor worthy of a consciousness a little enlightened, you begin to fight against it. And I say, one man’s way is not another’s; one must find one’s own way; it depends on each one. Fear is also a terribly contagious collective thing — contagious, it is much more catching than the most contagious of illnesses. You breathe an atmosphere of fear and instantly you feel frightened, without even knowing why or how, nothing, simply because there was an atmosphere of fear. A panic at an accident is nothing but an atmosphere of fear spreading round over everybody. And it is quite curable. There have been numerous cases of a panic being stopped outright simply because some people refused the suggestion and could counteract it with an opposite suggestion. For mystics the best cure as soon as one begins to feel afraid of something is to think of the Divine and then snuggle in his arms or at his feet and leave him entirely responsible for everything that happens, within, outside, everywhere — and immediately the fear disappears. That is the cure for the mystic. It is the easiest of all. But everybody does not enjoy the grace of being a mystic.

Sometimes there are latent powers in us of which we are
How can one know whether one is capable of doing it or not?
By trying. That’s the best thing. And if you do not succeed immediately, persevere. And you must know that if a strong urge, a very strong urge to do something comes to you, that means this work has something to do with you and you are capable of doing it. But one can have powers which are so well hidden that one has to dig long before finding them. So you must not get discouraged at the first setback, you must persist.