9 February 1955

This talk is based upon Bases of Yoga, Chapter 4, “Desire — Food — Sex”.

_Sweet Mother, here we have: “The Sun and the Light may be a help, and will be...”?_

Obviously it is someone who had written an experience in which he was in contact with a sun and a light, and he wanted to take the support of these as a help in the sadhana. It is the answer to an experience.

_Sweet Mother, is desire contagious?_

Ah, yes, very contagious, my child. It is even much more contagious than illness. If someone next to you has a desire, immediately it enters you; and in fact it is mainly in this way that it is caught. It passes from one to another... Terribly contagious, in such a powerful way that one is not even aware that it is a contagion. Suddenly one feels something springing up in oneself; someone has gently put it inside. Of course, one could say, “Why aren’t people with desires quarantined?” Then we should have to quarantine everybody. (Mother laughs)

_Where does desire come from?_

The Buddha said that it comes from ignorance. It is more or less that. It is something in the being which fancies that it needs something else in order to be satisfied. And the proof that it is ignorance is that when one has satisfied it, one no longer cares for it, at least ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred. I believe, right at its origin it is an obscure need for growth,
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as in the lowest forms of life love is changed into the need to swallow, absorb, become joined with another thing. This is the most primitive form of love in the lowest forms of life, it is to take and absorb. Well, the need to take is desire. So perhaps if we went back far enough into the last depths of the inconscience, we could say that the origin of desire is love. It is love in its obscurest and most unconscious form. It is a need to become joined with something, an attraction, a need to take, you see.

Take for instance... you see something which is — which seems to you or is — very beautiful, very harmonious, very pleasant; if you have the true consciousness, you experience this joy of seeing, of being in a conscious contact with something very beautiful, very harmonious, and then that's all. It stops there. You have the joy of it — that such a thing exists, you see. And this is quite common among artists who have a sense of beauty. For example, an artist may see a beautiful creature and have the joy of observing the beauty, grace, harmony of movement and all that, and that's all. It stops there. He is perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied, because he has seen something beautiful. An ordinary consciousness, altogether ordinary, dull like all ordinary consciousness — as soon as it sees something beautiful, whether it be an object or a person, hop! “I want it!” It is deplorable, you know. And into the bargain it doesn’t even have the joy of the beauty, because it has the anguish of desire. It misses that and has nothing in exchange, because there is nothing pleasant in desiring anything. It only puts you in an unpleasant state, that’s all.

The Buddha has said that there is a greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it. It is an experience everybody can have and one that is truly very interesting, very interesting.

There was someone who was invited — it happened in Paris — invited to a first-night (a first-night means a first performance) of an opera of Massenet’s. I think... I don’t remember now whose it was. The subject was fine, the play was fine, and the music not displeasing; it was the first time and this person was invited
to the box of the Minister of Fine Arts who always has a box for all the first nights at the government theatres. This Minister of Fine Arts was a simple person, an old countryside man, who had not lived much in Paris, who was quite new in his ministry and took a truly childlike joy in seeing new things. Yet he was a polite man and as he had invited a lady he gave her the front seat and himself sat at the back. But he felt very unhappy because he could not see everything. He leaned forward like this, trying to see something without showing it too much. Now, the lady who was in front noticed this. She too was very interested and was finding it very fine, and it was not that she did not like it, she liked it very much and was enjoying the show; but she saw how very unhappy that poor minister looked, not being able to see. So quite casually, you see, she pushed back her chair, went back a little, as though she was thinking of something else, and drew back so well that he came forward and could now see the whole scene. Well, this person, when she drew back and gave up all desire to see the show, was filled with a sense of inner joy, a liberation from all attachment to things and a kind of peace, content to have done something for somebody instead of having satisfied herself, to the extent that the evening brought her infinitely greater pleasure than if she had listened to the opera. This is a true experience, it is not a little story read in a book, and it was precisely at the time this person was studying Buddhist discipline, and it was in conformity with the saying of the Buddha that she tried this experiment.

And truly this was so concrete an experience, you know, so real that... ah, two seconds later, you see, the play, the music, the actors, the scene, the pictures and all that were gone like absolutely secondary things, completely unimportant, while this joy of having mastered something in oneself and done something not simply selfish, this joy filled all the being with an incomparable serenity — a delightful experience... Well, it is not just an individual, personal experience. All those who want to try can have it.
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There is a kind of inner communion with the psychic being which takes place when one willingly gives up a desire, and because of this one feels a much greater joy than if he had satisfied his desire. Besides, most usually, almost without exception, when one satisfies a desire it always leaves a kind of bitter taste somewhere.

There is not one satisfied desire which does not give a kind of bitterness; as when one has eaten too sugary a sweet it fills your mouth with bitterness. It is like that. You must try sincerely. Naturally you must not pretend to give up desire and keep it in a corner, because then one becomes very unhappy. You must do it sincerely.

*How is the psychic need realised?*

*(Silence)*

I heard you clearly. But it is the meaning of your question which I don't understand.

*When one realises in the mind?*

Oh, oh, no, not at all. “The psychic need is realised”, you mean, “How is it realised? How is it expressed in the outer life?” What do you call “realising”? Not clear? It is not very clear in your thought? “Psychic need” to begin with, what do you call “the psychic need”? The need to know one’s psychic being or the need of the psychic to express itself?

*The psychic’s need to express itself.*

It expresses itself by realising itself, expressing itself.

*In what way?*

You mean whether it needs to go through the mind? Thank God,
no, because it would be a very difficult operation. The psychic need is an expression of the divine Grace and it is expressed by the divine Grace.

Psychic life in the universe is a work of the divine Grace. Psychic growth is a work of the divine Grace and the ultimate power of the psychic being over the physical-being will also be a result of the divine Grace. And the mind, if it wants to be at all useful, has only to remain very quiet, as quiet as it can, because if it meddles in it, it is sure to spoil everything.

So there will be no need of the mind?

Ah, excuse me, I did not say that one doesn’t need the mind. The mind is useful for something else. The mind is an instrument for formation and organisation, and if the mind lets the psychic make use of it, that will be very good. But it is not the mind which will help the psychic to manifest. The roles are reversed. The mind can be an instrument for the manifestation of the psychic later, when it has already taken possession of the outer consciousness. It is rarely so before that. Usually it is a veil and an obstruction. But surely it can’t help in the manifestation. It can help in the action if it takes its true place and true movement. And if it becomes completely docile to the psychic inspiration, it can help to organise life, for this is its function, its reason of existence. But first of all the psychic being must have taken possession of the field, must be the master of the house. Then, later, things can be arranged.

There is only one way for the outer being. Let us take the physical being — the physical being, the poor little physical being, the outer being, which knows nothing, can do nothing by itself. Well, for it there is only one way of allowing the psychic being to manifest: with the candid warmth of a child (Mother speaks very softly) to aspire, pray, ask, want with all its strength, without reasoning or trying to understand. One can’t imagine how great an obstruction reasoning and this effort to
understand put in the experience. At the moment when you
are on the point of reaching a state in which something will
happen, some vibration will be changed in the consciousness of
the being... you are all tense in an aspiration and have succeeded
in fastening your aspiration, and you are standing there awaiting
the answer, if this wretched mind begins to stir and to wonder,
“What is happening, and what’s going to happen, when is it
going to happen, how is it going to happen, and why is it like
that, and in what order will things manifest?” it is all over,
you may get up and sweep out your room, you are not fit for
anything else.

Sweet Mother, can the psychic express itself without the
mind, the vital and the physical?

It expresses itself constantly without them. Only, in order that
the ordinary human being may perceive it, it has to express
itself through them, because the ordinary human being is not in
direct contact with the psychic. If it was in direct contact with the
psychic it would be psychic in its manifestation — and all would
be truly well. But as it is not in contact with the psychic it doesn’t
even know what it is, it wonders all bewildered what kind of a
being it can be; so to reach this ordinary human consciousness it
must use ordinary means, that is, go through the mind, the vital
and the physical.

One of them may be skipped but surely not the last, other-
wise one is no longer conscious of anything at all. The ordinary
human being is conscious only in his physical being, and only
in relatively rare moments is he conscious of his mind, just a
little more frequently of his vital, but all this is mixed up in
his consciousness, so much so that he would be quite unable to
say “This movement comes from the mind, this from the vital,
this from the physical.” This already asks for a considerable
development in order to be able to distinguish within oneself the
source of the different movements one has. And it is so mixed
that even when one tries, at the beginning it is very difficult to classify and separate one thing from another.

It is as when one works with colours, takes three or four or five different colours and puts them in the same water and beats them up together, it makes a grey, indistinct and incomprehensible mixture, you see, and one can’t say which is red, which blue, which green, which yellow; it is something dirty, lots of colours mixed. So first of all one must do this little work of separating the red, blue, yellow, green — putting them like this, each in its corner. It is not at all easy.

I have met people who used to think themselves extremely intelligent, by the way, who thought they knew a lot, and when I spoke to them about the different parts of the being they looked at me like this (gesture) and asked me, “But what are you speaking about?” They did not understand at all. I am speaking of people who have the reputation of being intelligent. They don’t understand at all. For them it is just the consciousness; it is the consciousness — “It is my consciousness” and then there is the neighbour’s consciousness; and again there are things which do not have any consciousness. And then I asked them whether animals had a consciousness; so they began to scratch their heads and said, “Perhaps it is we who put our consciousness in the animal when we look at it,” like that...

_Sweet Mother, when the psychic being will be able to manifest itself perfectly, will it have any need of the mind?_

It will not be able to manifest perfectly unless all the parts of the being collaborate. But I don’t think that the mind was fashioned with the intention of making it disappear. It is a part of the general structure.

Your body, you see, if it were without a mind it would be quite at a loss. It would perhaps be more like a plant than a
body. There is nothing that you do from morning to evening in which the mind does not have its action.

But if the psychic guided it?

Well, if the psychic guides the mind, the mind will act in a psychic way. Then it will be a remarkable mind, absolutely harmonious and doing the right thing in the right way.

But the vital — it is the same thing, exactly the same phenomenon for the vital. The vital as it is at present is said to be the cause of all the troubles and all the difficulties, the seat of the desires, passions, impulses, revolts, etc., etc. But if the vital is entirely surrendered to the psychic, it becomes a wonderful instrument, full of enthusiasm, power, force of realisation, impetus, courage.

And then there remains the poor physical... The poor physical being has been accused of all the misdeeds. In the days of old it was always said that it was impossible, one could do nothing with something so inert, so obscure, so little receptive. But if it too was surrendered to the psychic it also would do the right thing in the right way, and then it would have a stability, a quietude, an exactness in its movements which the other parts of the being don’t have, a precision in the execution which one can’t have without a body. You have only to see when the body is just a little out of order, when it is ill, how many things you can no longer do, even with a strong will, a great concentration of the vital and the mind. Even when one has the precise knowledge of what ought to be done, if the body is out of order one can no longer do it. Even... I mean, even an activity which is not purely physical, as for instance, writing something.

If your brain is a little unwell — fever, cold — it is very difficult to make it work properly. There is lassitude and something vague, a difficulty in catching things with precision; there occur even very strange phenomena, ideas get mixed up before one is able to express them, things enter into conflict and
contradict each other; instead of joining together and coming in this way (gesture); you see, they begin to do this (gesture), so then it creates a disorder. So one tries to catch this one and it escapes. One goes to look for that one, hop! It runs away. And all this just because there is fever which has disturbed things a little, or a cold, you know, what is called a cold in the head, which has slightly disturbed the functioning. If you rise above it, you are absolutely lucid, you are fully conscious, have complete lucidity. Even if you are extremely ill, it makes no difference. Up there you know everything perfectly, you see everything perfectly, you understand everything perfectly, there is no change.

But if you want to put all that on paper, take pencil and paper and begin to write and formulate it, you will see that a slight disturbance comes in like that, as I said; instead of things being grouped together and directed as it usually happens in one's normal state, they do this or go like that or like that (gestures), there is disorder... why, strangely it resembles ultramodern painting. It is like that.

I always think that the artists who do this painting must be doing it in a fit of pretty high fever. Things come up in this way and when you try to put them in some reasonable order, there are always some which escape or hide themselves or run away like that, or come and knock against others, and all this creates an incoherence.

It must be the most favourable condition for painting in the latest style, it must be the very height of fever. Oh, I suspect they produce this by artificial means. God knows what drug they take or what kind of hashish they eat or smoke, in what opium dreams they live — surely. People who smoke opium say they have marvellous visions. It must be something like that. (Laughter)

I am speaking to you about this because soon perhaps you will be shown a collection of coloured photographs which we have received from a photographer in... I think it's California.
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Los Angeles is in California, isn’t it? *(Mother asks Pavitra)* I still know my geography!

Well, you see, it is absolutely ultra-modern painting. It is photography. There is no painting there, it is photography. They are negatives printed on photographic paper in colour. The colour is admirable. I don’t know any painter who can produce such beautiful, living warm colours, so marvellously beautiful. But the composition is ultra-modern. What is most... oh, let us call it “reasonable” — if I say “reasonable” they immediately think: “Then it must be ugly”, but it is true, from a certain point of view it is true, yet — the most reasonable thing which is still not reasonable enough to be ugly, is, I think, the portrait of the photographer-artist; I don’t know, he doesn’t say that it is his photo but he gives a small name, you see: “So-and-so is concentrating”, I think, or something like that: “Someone is concentrating, reflecting, going within”, something like that. The titles are very fine, they are also ultra-modern. There is this one: so we see the gentleman a bit tenuous as though seen through a veil, a light veil, but it is still a man’s head. We see that it’s the photograph of a head, and the head is not distorted. It is completely there, only a little withdrawn in the background, you see; and then right in the foreground there are brilliant lines with tortuous forms, zigzags, intercrossing things, others which sprout up like the beginnings of branches and leaves, with brilliant colours. All this is in the front, because you see he came out of the physical, went into the background and entered within himself — inside himself — that’s it, these zigzags, twistings, efflorescences. And the colour is marvellous, exquisite. This is “Mr. So-and-so goes within”. It’s the thing we can understand best, we poor people who are not ultra-modern. That’s what we can understand best. There are others. We wonder why there’s the title on the picture. You should ask the author, he would explain it to you. But just imagine, it is beautiful; it doesn’t make sense, it has a false feel, but it is beautiful. It is so beautiful that I said we had to have an exhibition, that it gave me the idea
of making photographs like that... not I, I am no photographer, I know nothing about it, but to have photographs like this made by a photographer; but then unfortunately with an idea at the back. So that will not be at all ultra-modern. But if one could find, you see, how to use these colours for something which I call expressive, it could become wonderful, truly wonderful. That will take a year, perhaps more to be realised. But still, the guilty one is this gentleman with his photography.

It seems that he is famous all over the world — but I understand nothing of all this, you see — and that it means a considerable labour to do something like this. Of course, these are superimpositions of negatives, a negative taken of these superimpositions, and this is still very complicated. I am not trying to explain it to you, I don't understand anything about it, but I am told that it was a lot of work, very difficult, the mastery of an extremely complicated technique and an effect which has never been achieved before. These are coloured photographs as large as this, that's very large for coloured photographs. And there's a red in them... Oh, the most beautiful reds that Nature has been able to produce in flowers or sunsets — this is still more beautiful. But how he has done it I don't know. There is brown, there is green, there is yellow, there are all kinds of things. Some are more pretty, some less pretty, there are mixtures more or less happy; some photographs seem to have been taken with the help of a microscope: infinitely small things which, becoming large, look extraordinary; things like that. And we can see very clearly that there are superimpositions, but there are exceptional colour effects. There we are.

I don't know when they will show this to you — one of these days, unless they have been sent back already, I don't know, I must find out. I know I asked that they should be shown to you. Well, I find this better... oh, my goodness, happily there is no painter here... (laughter), better than modern painting. And this is photography. For modern painting has not yet been able to use colours with such transparency and brilliance. Water-colour
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becomes something completely dull beside this. Oil colour is like mud. The stained glass could perhaps do something; but there, you see, it is the sun playing behind which is the great master. But that is more difficult.

Stained glasses — I had thought of making them. You see, what I wanted were visions which I would have liked to give. I tried several times to reproduce visions in painting — it becomes stupid. It becomes stupid because the means of expression is bad. I had thought of stained glass, but you see, stained glass — these are bits of coloured glass and they have to be joined. So they are joined with a small leaden thread; but that’s horrible. All these little leaden threads are like that, it is frightful.

But this is quite good, we shall be able to do something.

There we are.

*Au revoir*, my children.