23 October 1957

Mother begins the reading of the last six chapters of *The Life Divine*.

“A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling Spirit, is then the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence. This significance is concealed at the outset by the involution of the Spirit, the Divine Reality, in a dense material Inconscience; a veil of Inconscience, a veil of insensibility of Matter hides the universal Consciousness-Force which works within it, so that the Energy, which is the first form the Force of creation assumes in the physical universe, appears to be itself inconscient and yet does the works of a vast occult Intelligence.”

*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 824

I didn’t understand, Sweet Mother, what this Consciousness-Force was, so I did not understand anything!

The first thing to understand is precisely this first sentence which states the fact, the *raison d’être* and the very principle of universal existence. You see, we are beginning here at the end of the volume, these are the last six chapters. Throughout the beginning of the book Sri Aurobindo has taken one after another all the theories explaining the how and why of the universe and of existence; he has carried them to their extreme limits in order to explain fully what they mean, and at the end he has shown how far they were incomplete or imperfect and given the true solution. All that is, as it were, finished with; it lies behind our reading. It would have taken us something like ten years to
go through all that! And you would have required all kinds of knowledge and a great intellectual development to be able to follow it with any profit. But for our part, we are beginning from where he has shown, from the purely intellectual point of view, what the purpose of existence is, and he formulates it like this: “the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence.” For he is not concerned with the entire universe, he has taken terrestrial life, that is, our life here on Earth, as a symbolic and concentrated representation of the purpose of the entire universe. In fact, according to very old traditions, the Earth, from the deeper spiritual point of view, has been created as a symbolic concentration of universal life so that the work of transformation may be done more easily, in a limited, concentrated “space” — so to say — where all the elements of the problem are gathered together so that, in the concentration, the action may be more total and effective. So here he speaks only of terrestrial existence, but we can understand that it is a symbolic existence, that is, that it represents a universal action. It is a symbolic, concentrated representation. And he says that “the central motive”, that is, the purpose of terrestrial existence is to awaken, to develop and finally to reveal in a total manifestation the Spirit which is hidden at the centre of Matter and impels this Matter from within outwards towards a progressive development which will liberate the Spirit working from within.

So, in the outer appearances as you see them, at first you find the mineral kingdom with stones, earth, minerals which to us, in our outer consciousness, appear absolutely unconscious. Yet, behind this unconsciousness there is the life of the Spirit, the consciousness of the Spirit, which is completely hidden, which is as if asleep — though that is only an appearance — and which works from within in order gradually to transform this Matter that is completely inert in appearance, so that its organisation may lend itself more and more to the manifestation of consciousness. And he says here that at first this veil of inert Matter is so total that, to a superficial glance, it is something
that has neither life nor consciousness. When you pick up a stone and look at it with your ordinary eyes and consciousness, you say, “It has no life, no consciousness.” For one who knows how to see behind appearances, there is, hidden at the centre of this Matter — at the centre of each atom of this Matter — there is, hidden, the Supreme Divine Reality working from within, gradually, through the millennia, to change this inert Matter into something that is expressive enough to be able to reveal the Spirit within. Then you have the progression of the history of Life: how, from the stone there suddenly appeared a rudimentary life and through successive species a sort of organisation, that is, an organic substance capable of revealing life. But between the mineral and vegetable kingdoms there are transitional elements; one doesn’t know whether they belong to the mineral or already to the vegetable kingdom — when one studies this in detail one sees some strange species which belong neither here nor there, which are not quite this and yet not quite that. Then comes the development of the vegetable kingdom where naturally life appears, for there is growth, transformation — a plant sprouts up, develops, grows — and with the first phenomenon of life comes also the phenomenon of decomposition and disintegration which is relatively much more rapid than in the stone: a stone, if protected from the impact of other forces, can last apparently indefinitely, whereas the plant already follows a curve of growth, ascent and decline and decomposition — but this with an extremely restricted consciousness. Those who have studied the vegetable kingdom in detail are well aware that there is a consciousness there. For instance, plants need sunlight to live — the sun represents the active energy which makes them grow — so, if you put a plant in a place where there is no sunlight, you see it always growing up and up and up, trying, making an effort to reach the sunlight. In a virgin forest, for instance, where man does not interfere, there is this kind of struggle among all the plants which are always growing straight upwards in one way or another in their effort to catch the sunlight. It is very
interesting. But even if you put a flower-pot in a fairly small courtyard surrounded by walls, where the sun doesn’t come, a plant which normally is as high as this (gesture), becomes as tall as that: it stretches up and makes an effort to find the light. Therefore there is a consciousness, a will to live which is already manifesting. And little by little, with species that are more and more developed, you again reach another transitional passage between what is no longer entirely a plant and still not yet an animal. There are several species like that, which are very interesting. There are those plants which are carnivorous, plants like an open mouth: you throw a fly inside, snap! they swallow it. It is no longer quite a plant, it is not yet an animal. There are many plants of this kind.

Then you come to the animal. The first animals, yes, it is difficult to distinguish them from plants, there is almost no consciousness. But there you see all the animal species, you know them, don’t you, right up to the higher animals which, indeed, are very conscious. They have their own completely independent will. They are very conscious and marvellously intelligent, like the elephant, for instance; you know all the stories about elephants and their wonderful intelligence. Therefore, it is already a very perceptible appearance of mind. And through this progressive development, we suddenly pass on to a species which has probably disappeared — traces of which have been found — an intermediate animal like a monkey or of the same line as the monkey — something close to it, similar, if not the monkey as we know it — but already an animal that walks on two legs. And from there we come to man. There is an entire beginning of the evolution of man; we can’t say, can we, that he shows a brilliant intelligence, but there is already an action of the mind, a beginning of independence, of independent reaction to the environment and the forces of Nature. And so, in man there is the whole range, right up to the higher being capable of spiritual life.

That is what Sri Aurobindo tells us on this page.

That is all. Now, if you have a question to ask?...
Sweet Mother, here he says: “This consciousness... reaches its climax of intelligence and exceeds itself in Man....”

Yes, that is what I have just told you: at his highest stage, man begins to be altogether independent of Nature — “altogether” is an exaggeration: he can become altogether independent. A man who has realised the spiritual consciousness in himself, who has a direct relation with the divine Origin is literally independent of Nature, of the force of Nature.

(It begins to rain.) Ah! That is to cool down our minds! (Laughter)

And that is what he calls “exceeding itself”, that is, that the Being, the inner divine Consciousness, the supreme spiritual Reality in its effort to develop... (It rains harder.) Oh, oh! We shall have to stop talking... in its effort to develop a conscious means of manifesting itself has arrived at a being capable of having a direct contact with It without going through the whole process of Nature.

Now, I think we are going to stop. No meditation, because...