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“When you come to the Divine, you must abandon all mental conceptions; but, instead of doing that, you throw your conceptions upon the Divine and want the Divine to obey them. The only true attitude for a Yogi is to be plastic and ready to obey the Divine command whatever it may be....”

Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)

What is “plasticity”?

That which can easily change its form is “plastic”. Figuratively, it is suppleness, a capacity of adaptation to circumstances and necessities. When I ask you to be plastic in relation to the Divine, I mean not to resist the Divine with the rigidity of preconceived ideas and fixed principles. I knew a man who declared: “I am wholly consecrated to the Divine, I am ready to do whatever He tells me to do; but I am not at all worried, for I know that He would never tell me to kill anybody!” I answered, “How do you know that?” He was indignant. This is a lack of plasticity.

If one is plastic in all circumstances, isn’t it a weakness?

But you are not asked to be plastic to the will of others! Nobody asked you to be plastic in relation to others. You are asked to be plastic to the divine Will — which is not quite the same thing! And that requires a great strength because the very first thing that will happen to you is to be exposed to the will of almost everyone around you. If you have a family, you will see the attitude of the family! The more plastic you are to the divine Will, the more opposition you will meet from the will of others who are not accustomed to be in contact with that Will.
Questions and Answers

If everybody expressed the divine Will, there would be no conflict any longer, anywhere, all would be in harmony. That is what one tries to do, but it is not very easy.

But it is difficult to know the divine Will, isn’t it?

We have already studied the subject at length. Don’t you remember what we said? There are four conditions for knowing the divine Will:

- The first essential condition: an absolute sincerity.
- Second: to overcome desires and preferences.
- Third: to silence the mind and listen.
- Fourth: to obey immediately when you receive the order.

If you persist you will perceive the divine Will more and more clearly. But even before you know what it is, you can make an offering of your own will and you will see that all circumstances will be so arranged as to make you do the right thing. But you must not be like that person I knew who used to say, “I always see the divine Will in others.” That can lead you anywhere, there is nothing more dangerous, for if you think you see the divine Will in others, you are sure to do their will, not the divine Will. There too we can say that not one among many, many human beings acts in accord with the divine Will.

You know the story of the irritable elephant, his mahout, and the man who would not make way for the elephant. Standing in the middle of the road, the man said to the mahout, “The divine Will is in me and the divine Will wants me not to move.” The driver, a man of some wit, answered, “But the divine Will in the elephant wants you to move!”

Mother passes on to another question: illnesses. During the talk in 1929 someone asked whether illnesses were not due to microbes rather than to “adverse forces” or to fluctuations of yoga. Mother answered:
“Where does Yoga begin and where does it end? Is not the whole of your life Yoga? The possibilities of illness are always there in your body and around you; you carry within you or there swarm about you the microbes and germs of every disease. How is it that all of a sudden you succumb to an illness which you did not have for years? You will say it is due to a ‘depression of the vital force’. But from where does the depression come? It comes from some disharmony in the being, from a lack of receptivity to the divine forces. When you cut yourself off from the energy and light that sustain you, then there is this depression, there is created what medical science calls a ‘favourable ground’ and something takes advantage of it. It is doubt, gloominess, lack of confidence, a selfish turning back upon yourself that cuts you off from the light and divine energy and gives the attack this advantage. It is this that is the cause of your falling ill and not microbes.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)

One thing that is now beginning to be recognised by everyone, even by the medical corps, is that hygienic measures, for example, are effective only to the extent that one has confidence in them. Take the case of an epidemic. Many years ago we had a cholera epidemic here — it was bad — but the chief medical officer of the hospital was an energetic man: he decided to vaccinate everybody. When he discharged the vaccinated men, he would tell them, “Now you are vaccinated and nothing will happen to you, but if you were not vaccinated you would be sure to die!” He told them this with great authority. Generally such an epidemic lasts a long time and it is difficult to check it, but in some fifteen days, I think, this doctor succeeded in checking it; in any case, it was done miraculously fast. But he knew very well that the best effect of his vaccination was the confidence it gave to people.
Questions and Answers

Now, quite recently, they have found something else and I consider it wonderful. They have discovered that for every disease there is a microbe that cures it (call it a microbe if you like, anyway, some sort of germ). But what is so extraordinary is that this “microbe” is extremely contagious, even more contagious than the microbe of the disease. And it generally develops under two conditions: in those who have a sort of natural good humour and energy and in those who have a strong will to get well! Suddenly they catch the “microbe” and are cured. And what is wonderful is that if there is one who is cured in an epidemic, three more recover immediately. And this “microbe” is found in all who are cured.

But I am going to tell you something: what people take to be a microbe is simply the materialisation of a vibration or a will from another world. When I learned of these medical discoveries, I said to myself, “Truly, science is making progress.” One might almost say with greater reason, “Matter is progressing,” it is becoming more and more receptive to a higher will. And what is translated in their science as “microbes” will be perceived, if one goes to the root of things, as simply a vibratory mode; and this vibratory mode is the material translation of a higher will. If you can bring this force or this will, this power, this vibration (call it what you will) into certain given circumstances, not only will it act in you, but also through contagion around you.

During the talk in 1929, a disciple asked why we drank filtered water since we did not believe in microbes here. Mother answered:

“Is any one of you pure and strong enough not to be affected by suggestions? If you drink unfiltered water and think, ‘Now I am drinking impure water’, you have every chance of falling sick. And even though such suggestions may not enter through the conscious mind, the whole of your subconscious is there, almost helplessly...
open to any kind of suggestion.... The normal human condition is a state filled with apprehensions and fears; if you observe your mind deeply for ten minutes, you will find that for nine out of the ten it is full of fears.... And even if by discipline and effort you have liberated your mind and your vital of apprehension and fear, it is more difficult to convince the body.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)

Why is it so difficult to convince the body, when one has succeeded in liberating oneself mentally and vitally?

Because in the large majority of men, the body receives its inspirations from the subconscient, it is under the influence of the subconscient. All the fears driven out from the active consciousness go and take refuge there and then, naturally, they have to be chased out from the subconscient and uprooted from there.

Why does one feel afraid?

I suppose it is because one is egoistic.

There are three reasons. First, an excessive concern about one’s security. Next, what one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling which is translated in the consciousness by fear. And above all, one doesn’t have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. If you look into things sufficiently deeply, this is the true reason. There are people who do not even know that That exists, but one could tell them in other words, “You have no faith in your destiny” or “You know nothing about Grace” — anything whatever, you may put it as you like, but the root of the matter is a lack of trust. If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid.

The first movement of fear comes automatically. There was a
great scientist who was also a great psychologist (I don’t remem-
ber his name now); he had developed his inner consciousness but
wanted to test it. So he undertook an experiment. He wanted to
know if, by means of consciousness, one could control the reflex
actions of the body (probably he didn’t go far enough to be able
to do it, for it can be done; but in any case, for him it was still
impossible). Well, he went to the zoological garden, to the place
where snakes were kept in a glass cage. There was a particularly
aggressive cobra there; when it was not asleep, it was almost
always in a fury, for through the glass it could see people and
that irritated it terribly. Our scientist went and stood in front of
the cage. He knew very well that it was made in such a way that
the snake could never break the glass and that he ran no risk of
being attacked. So from there he began to excite the snake by
shouts and gestures. The cobra, furious, hurled itself against the
glass, and every time it did so the scientist closed his eyes! Our
psychologist told himself, “But look here, I know that this snake
cannot pass through, why do I close my eyes?” Well, one must
recognise that it is difficult to conquer the reaction. It is a sense
of protection, and if one feels that one cannot protect oneself,
one is afraid. But the movement of fear which is expressed by
the eyes fluttering is not a mental or a vital fear: it is a fear in
the cells of the body; for it has not been impressed upon them
that there is no danger and they do not know how to resist. It
is because one has not done yoga, you see. With yoga one can
watch with open eyes, one would not close them; but one would
not close them because one calls upon something else, and that
“something else” is the sense of the divine Presence in oneself
which is stronger than everything.
This is the only thing that can cure you of your fear.

Years afterwards this talk was followed up by a question from
a disciple (19 May 1965):

You say, “If one always had the feeling that it is the
"best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid." Is it really the best that happens in all circumstances?

It is the best, given the state of the world — it is not an absolute best.

There are two things: in a total and absolute way, at each moment, it is the best possible for the divine Goal of the whole; and for one who is consciously connected with the divine Will, it is the most favourable for his own divine realisation.

I believe this is the correct explanation.

For the whole, it is always, at every moment, what is most favourable for the divine evolution. And for the elements consciously linked with the Divine, it is the best for the perfection of their union.

Only you must not forget that it is constantly changing, that it is not a static best; it is a best which if preserved would not be the best a moment later. And it is because the human consciousness always has the tendency to preserve statically what it finds good or considers good, that it realises that it is unseizable. It is this effort to preserve which falsifies things.

(Silence)

I saw this when I wanted to understand the position of the Buddha who blamed the Manifestation for its impermanence; for him perfection and permanence were one and the same thing. In his contact with the manifested universe he had observed a perpetual change, therefore he concluded that the manifested world was imperfect and had to disappear. And change (impermanence) does not exist in the Unmanifest, hence the Unmanifest is the true Divine. It was by considering and concentrating on this point, that in fact I saw that his finding was right: the Manifestation is absolutely impermanent, it is a perpetual transformation.
But in the Manifestation, perfection consists in having a movement of transformation or an unfolding identical with the divine Movement, the essential Movement; whereas all that belongs to the inconscient or tamasic creation seeks to preserve exactly the very same existence instead of trying to last through constant transformation.

That is why some thinkers have postulated that the creation was the result of an error. But one finds all possible concepts: perfect creation, then a “fault” which introduced error; the creation itself as a lower movement which must have an end since it had a beginning; then the Vedic concept, as Sri Aurobindo has explained it, of an unfolding or a progressive and infinite discovery — indefinite and infinite — of the All by Himself.... Naturally, all these are human interpretations. For the moment, as long as you express yourself in human terms, it is a human translation. But according to the initial position of the human translator (that is to say, whether it is the position which admits “original sin” or an “accident” in the creation or a supreme conscious Will from the beginning in a progressive unfolding), in the yogic attitude, the conclusions or “descents” are different.... There are Nihilists, Nirvanists, Illusionists; there are all the religions which admit the devil’s intervention under one form or another; then there is the pure Vedism which is the eternal unfolding of the Supreme in a progressive objectification. And according to taste, one places oneself here, another there or elsewhere, with all the nuances between. But according to what Sri Aurobindo has felt to be the most total truth, according to this conception of a progressive universe, one is led to say that at every minute what happens is the best possible for the unfolding of the whole. It is absolutely logical. And I believe that all contradictions can arise only from a more or less pronounced tendency towards this or that, for one position or another. All who admit the intrusion of a “sin” or an “error” and the conflict resulting from it between forces which pull back and those which pull forward, may naturally contest the possibility. But one has to say that for him who is
spatially linked with the supreme Will or the supreme Truth, for him it is necessarily, at every instant, the best that happens for his personal realisation. In all instances it is like that. An unconditional best can be admitted only by one who sees the universe as an unfolding, as the Supreme’s self-awareness of Himself.

(Silence)

To tell you the truth, all these things are of no importance; for that which is, goes in every way entirely and absolutely beyond everything that human consciousness can think about it. It is only when you are no longer human that you know; but as soon as this knowledge is expressed, human limits reimpose themselves and then you cease to know.

This is incontestable.

And because of this incapacity, there is a kind of futility also in wanting to reduce the problem altogether to something which human reason can understand. In this case it is very wise to say like someone I knew: “We are here, we have a work to do, and what is needed is to do it as well as we can, without worrying about the why and how.” Why is the world as it is?... When we are capable of understanding, we shall understand.

From the practical point of view, this is evident.

Only, each one takes a position.... I have all the examples here. I have a sample collection of all attitudes and see very clearly their reactions. I see the same Force — the same, one Force — acting in this sample collection and producing naturally different effects; but these “different” effects, to a deeper vision, are very superficial: it is only “It pleases them to think in this way, that’s all, it just pleases them to think thus.” But as a matter of fact, the inner journey, the inner development, the essential vibration is not affected — not at all. One aspires with all his heart for Nirvana, another aspires with all his will for the supramental manifestation, and in both of them the vibratory
result is almost the same. And it is a whole mass of vibrations which is prepared more and more to... to receive what must be.

There is a state, a state essentially pragmatic, spiritually pragmatic, in which of all human futilities, the most futile is metaphysics.