Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: “At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will or how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence.”


Not understood? What do you mean, “not understood”? It’s a fact, there is nothing to understand, it’s like that.

I have explained this to you I don’t know how many times. You think it is you who decide: these are impulses coming from outside. You think you are conscious of your will: it is a consciousness which is not yours. And everything... you are made up entirely of something which is the forces of Nature expressing a higher Will of which you are unconscious.

Only, one doesn’t understand this except when one can come out of one’s ego, though it be only for a moment; for the ego — and this is its strength — is convinced that it alone decides. But if one looks attentively, one notices that it is moved by all sorts of things which are not itself.

But then what is mental and vital will?

That is an expression of something which is not personal.

If you analyse carefully, you see, for instance, that all that you think has been thought by others, that these are things which circulate and pass through you, but you have not produced this thought, you are not the originator of this thought.
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All your reactions come from atavism, from those who gave you birth and from the environment in which you have lived, from all the impressions which have accumulated in you and constituted something which seems to you yourself, yet which is not produced by you, but merely felt and experienced; you become aware of it in passing, but it is not you who created it, not you who gave it birth.

It could be said that these are like sounds — any kind of sounds: words, music, anything — recorded by an instrument, then reproduced by another instrument which plays them back like a gramophone, for instance. You wouldn’t say that the gramophone has created the sound you hear, would you? That would never occur to you. But as you are under the illusion of your separate personality, these thoughts which cross your mind and find expression, these feelings which pass through your vital and find expression, you think, have come from you; but nothing comes from you. Where is the “you” which can create all that?

You must go deep, deep within, and find the eternal essence of your being to know the creative reality in yourself. And once you have found that, you will realise that it is one single thing, the same in all others, and so where is your separate personality? Nothing’s left any longer.

Yes, these are recording and reproducing instruments, and there are always what might be called distortions — they may be distortions for the better, they may be distortions for the worse, they may be fairly great changes; the inner combinations are such that things are not reproduced exactly as they passed from one to the other because the instrument is very complex. But it is one and the same thing which is moved by a conscious will, quite independent of all personal wills.

When the Buddha wanted to make his disciples understand these things, he used to tell them: every time you send out a vibration, a desire for example, the desire for some particular thing, your desire starts circulating from one person to another, from one to another across the universe and will go right round
and come back to you. And as it is not only one thing but a world of things, and as you are not the only transmitting centre — all individuals are transmitting centres — it is such a confusion that you lose your bearings in there. But these vibrations move about in a single, absolutely identical field; it is only the complication and interception of the vibrations which give you the impression of something independent or separate.

But there's nothing separate or independent; there is only one Substance, one Force, one Consciousness, one Will, which moves in countless ways of being.

And it is so complicated that one is no longer aware of it, but if one steps back and follows the movement, no matter which line of movement, one can see very clearly that the vibrations propagate themselves, one following another, one following another, one following another, and that in fact there is only one unity — unity of Substance, unity of Consciousness, unity of Will. And that is the only reality. Outwardly there is a kind of illusion: the illusion of separation and the illusion of difference.

Desires and all those things also?

This is not personal. Not at all personal. And that is very easy to find out; of all things this is the easiest to discern, because ninety times out of a hundred it comes to you from someone else or from a certain circumstance or a set of circumstances, or from a vibration coming from another person or several other people. It is very easy to discern, it is the first thing one can discern: it is a vibration which suddenly awakens something similar in you. You know, something makes an impact on you, and this impact brings up a response, as when you play a note. Well, this vibration of desire comes and strikes you in a certain way and you respond.

It is not very difficult to discern; even when one is very young, even when one is a child, if one pays attention, one becomes aware of this. One lives amidst constant collective
suggestions, constantly; for example, I don’t know if you have been present at funerals, or if you have been in a house where someone has died—naturally you must observe yourself a little, otherwise you won’t notice anything—but if you observe yourself a little, you will see that you had no special reason to feel any sorrow or grief whatever for the passing away of this person; he is a person like many others; this has happened and by a combination of social circumstances you have come to that house. And there, suddenly, without knowing why or how, you feel a strong emotion, a great sorrow, a deep pain, and you ask yourself, “Why am I so unhappy?” It is quite simply the vibrations which have entered you, nothing else.

And I tell you it is easy to observe, for it is an experience I had when I was a little child—and at that time I was not yet doing conscious yoga; perhaps I was doing yoga but not consciously—and I observed it very, very clearly. I told myself, “Surely it is their sorrow I am feeling, for I have no reason to be specially affected by this person’s death”; and all of a sudden, tears came to my eyes, I felt as though a lump were in my throat and I wanted to cry, as though I were in great sorrow—I was a small child—and immediately I understood, “Oh! it is their sorrow which has come inside me.”

It is the same thing for anger. It is very clear, one receives it suddenly, not even from a person, from the atmosphere—it is there—and then all of a sudden it enters you and usually it gets hold of you from below and then rises up and pushes you, and so off you go. A minute earlier you were not angry, you were quite self-possessed, you had no intention of losing your temper. And this seizes you so strongly that you can’t resist—because you are not sufficiently conscious, you let it enter you, and it makes use of you—you... what you call “yourself”, that is to say, your body; for apparently (I say apparently) it is something separate from your neighbour’s body. But that is only an optical illusion, because in fact all the time there are what may be called particles, even physical particles, like a sort
of radiation which comes out of the body and gets mixed with others; and because of this, when one is very sensitive, one can feel things at a distance.

It is said, for instance, that the blind develop such a sensitivity, so delicate a sense-perception, that when they are nearing an object they feel an impact at a distance. But one can quite easily make the experiment. For example, drawing near to someone without making any noise, then bringing one’s hand quite close — sensitive people feel it at once. You haven’t put your will for them to feel it, you haven’t brought in any psychological element, you have only made a purely physical experiment of approaching noiselessly and without being heard — a sensitive person will feel it at once.

That means that the body seems to end there, but it’s simply the way our eyes are made. If we had a little more subtle vision, with a little wider range, well, we would see that there is something which comes out, as something comes out from other bodies — and that all this gets mixed up and interacts.

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by “oneness in dynamic force”?

That’s what I was saying. There is a dynamic force which moves all things, and when you become conscious of it, you see that it is one single Force which moves all things; and as you become conscious, you can even follow its movement and see how it works through men and things.

From the minute you become conscious of the Unity — unity of Force, unity of Consciousness and unity of Will — well, you no longer have the perception which makes you quite separate from others, so that you do not know what goes on in them, they are strangers to you, you are shut up as it were in your own skin, and have no contact with others except quite externally and superficially. But this happens precisely because you have not realised in yourself the perception of this
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oneness of Consciousness, Force and Will—even of material vibrations.

It is the complexity which makes this perception difficult—for our faculties of perception are quite linear and very one-sided; so when we want to understand, we are immediately assailed by countless things which are almost inconsistent with each other and intermix in such an intricate way that one can no longer make out the lines and follow things—one suddenly enters a whirlwind.

But this is because... For instance, most men think one thought after another, even as they have to say one word after another—they can’t say more than one word at the same time, you know, or else they stammer. Well, most people think like that, they think one thought after another, and so their whole consciousness has a linear movement. But one begins to perceive things only when one can see spherically, globally, think spherically, that is, have innumerable thoughts and perceptions simultaneously.

Naturally, up to now, if one wanted to describe things, one had to describe them one after another, for one can’t say ten words at once, one says one word after another; and that is why all one says is practically quite incapable of expressing the truth, quite incapable. For we have to say one thing after another—the minute we say them one after another, they are no longer true. They must all be said at the same time, just as they can all be seen at the same time, and each one in its place.

So, when one begins to see like this—to see, to discern, to feel, to think, to will like this—one draws near the Truth. But so long as one sees as one speaks, oh, what a lamentable poverty!

*Sri Aurobindo writes: “As long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief
Yes. There are people who have a happy and comfortable life, and people who have a miserable one. That depends... how shall I put it? — upon individual destiny, that depends perhaps on what they have to do upon earth, on the stage they have reached, on many things. It's quite obvious that it is not they who choose. For most people would always choose the same thing. If they were asked what they wanted, there would be differences, yes, but not so great. It would be rather monotonous.

Most people want to be what they call “quiet”, what they call “peaceful”, to have a small organisation in their own measure — which is generally microscopic, and consists of a regular routine of almost the same activities always, within almost the same bounds, in almost the same surroundings — and all that repeated without much difference; with a sufficient variety not to become completely boring, but with nothing that might disturb this regular round which makes what is called a peaceful life. For the vast majority of people this is the ideal.

And so, the realisation of this ideal in its details depends solely on the country where they are born, the society in which they are born, and the customs of their environment. Their ideal is fashioned by the manners of the country and society in which they live.

Of course, there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule. Generally speaking, the most common ideal is to be born in an environment comfortable enough to avoid too many difficulties in life, to marry someone who won't give you too much trouble, to have healthy children who grow up normally — again to avoid trouble — and then a quiet and happy old age, and not be too ill, again to avoid trouble. And then to pass away when one is tired of life, again because one does not want any trouble.
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Indeed, this is the most widespread ideal. Naturally, there are exceptions, one may even find the exact opposite. But existence, as men conceive it, would be rather monotonous. The differences would come in the details, for in one country people prefer one thing and in another, another; and then, in the society in which one is born, there are certain customs and an ideal of happiness, and in another society there are other customs and another ideal of happiness — and that’s all.

If one speaks to Europeans, for example, they will say there is nothing more beautiful than Europe. I knew Frenchmen — not one but hundreds — who used to say that there were no women in the world more beautiful than French women! And I knew a Negro who had been entirely educated in France and who, when asked which women were the most beautiful, said, “There is no woman more beautiful than a Negress.” That was quite natural, wasn’t it? Well, that’s how it is. There is no house more beautiful than the one you are used to living in — the houses of the country you live in, where you are born — and for the landscape it is the same thing, for food the same thing, for habits it’s the same thing. And provided that this goes on fairly harmoniously, without any very violent knocks, you are perfectly satisfied.

That is the usual mentality. And one turns round and round — and sometimes it is an iron circle, sometimes a golden one — but one turns round and round and round, and the children will turn round and round and the grandchildren will turn round and round — and so it will go on. There you are.

That’s enough for today.