13 August 1958

_Sweet Mother, in July 1953 you told us that after five years you would give us lessons on spiritual life._¹ I have brought what you said, Sweet Mother.

Really! That is interesting!

_(Mother reads the text given by the child)_ Has it been printed?

_No, Mother._

Oh! I like the last sentence very much!

_(After a silence)_ So, what do you expect me to do?... To begin?

_Yes, Mother._

But I have already started, haven’t I? Even before the five years have passed! It seems that on that day, I... Oh! I _wrote_ here — it is something I wrote...

_It is written in Conversations,_² _Sweet Mother._

There I have written about the confusion made between asceticism and spiritual life, and then I promise that one day I shall speak to you about the confusion people make between what they call God and what I call the Divine.

But I have already spoken to you about that several times, haven’t I?

I did not remember my promise but I have kept it without remembering it and even before the day came!

¹ See _Questions and Answers 1953_ (15 July 1953).
² Presently entitled _Questions and Answers 1929–1931._
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Now, if you ask me a precise question on this subject, I shall see what I can say. What do you want to know about spiritual life?... Do you have a particular question?

You mean you have started the meditations, Mother?

Yes!... And giving you explanations on what I read. We have even begun, in the small class, to meditate on the disciplines which are necessary to lead a spiritual life. And when I took up the reading of the Dhammapada, we read many things leading to the knowledge of spiritual life. But if you have a precise question on a special point, you can ask it, I shall reply.

Sweet Mother, why don’t we profit as much as we should by our presence here in the Ashram?

Ah! That is very simple; it is because it is too easy!... When you have to go all round the world to find a teacher, when you have to give up everything to obtain only the first words of a teaching, then this teaching, this spiritual help becomes something very precious, like everything that is difficult to obtain, and you make a great effort to deserve it.

Most of you came here when you were very small, at an age when there can be no question of the spiritual life or spiritual teaching — it would be altogether premature. You have indeed lived in this atmosphere but without even being aware of it; you are accustomed to seeing me, hearing me; I speak to you as one does to all children, I have even played with you as one plays with children; you only have to come and sit here and you hear me speak, you only have to ask me a question and I answer you, I have never refused to say anything to anybody — it is so easy. It is enough to... live — to sleep, to eat, to do exercises and study at school. You live here as you would live anywhere else. And so, you are used to it.
If I had made strict rules, if I had said, “I shall not tell you anything until you have truly made an effort to know it”, then perhaps you might have made some effort, but that’s not in keeping with my idea. I believe more in the power of the atmosphere and of example than of a rigorous teaching. I count more on something awakening in the being through contagion rather than by a methodical, disciplined effort.

Perhaps, after all, something is being prepared and one day it will spring up to the surface.

That is what I hope for.

One day you will tell yourself, “Just think! I have been here so long, I could have learnt so much, realised so much and I never even thought of it! Only like that, now and then.” And then, on that day... well, on that day, just imagine, you are going to wake up all of a sudden to something you never noticed but which is deep within you and thirsts for the truth, thirsts for transformation and is ready to make the effort required to realise it. On that day you will go very fast, you will advance with giant strides.... Perhaps, as I said, that day has come now after five years? I said, “I give you five years....” Now the five years have passed, so perhaps the day has come! Perhaps you will suddenly feel an irresistible need not to live in unconsciousness, in ignorance, in that state in which you do things without knowing why, feel things without understanding why, have contradictory wills, understand nothing about anything, live only by habit, routine, reactions — you take life easy. And one day you are no longer satisfied with that.

It depends, for each one it is different. Most often it is the need to know, to understand; for some it is the need to do what must be done as it should be done; for others it is a vague feeling that behind this life, so unconscious, so futile, so empty of meaning, there is something to find which is worth being lived — that there is a reality, a truth behind these falsehoods and illusions.

One suddenly feels that everything one does, everything one
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sees, has no meaning, no purpose, but that there is something which has a meaning; that essentially one is here on earth for something, that all this — all these movements, all this agitation, all this wastage of force and energy — all that must have a purpose, an aim, and that this uneasiness one feels within oneself, this lack of satisfaction, this need, this thirst for something must lead us somewhere else.

And one day, you ask yourself, “But then, why is one born? Why does one die? Why does one suffer? Why does one act?”

You no longer live like a little machine, hardly half-conscious. You want to feel truly, to act truly, to know truly. Then, in ordinary life one searches for books, for people who know a little more than oneself, one begins to seek somebody who can solve these questions, lift the veil of ignorance. Here it is very simple. You only have to... do the things one does every day, but to do them with a purpose.

You go to the Samadhi, look at Sri Aurobindo’s picture, you come to receive a flower from me, sit down to a lesson; you do everything you do but... with one question within you: Why?

And then, if you ask the question, you receive the answer. Why?

Because we don’t want life as it is any longer, because we don’t want falsehood and ignorance any longer, because we don’t want suffering and unconsciousness any longer, because we do not want disorder and bad will any longer, because Sri Aurobindo has come to tell us: It is not necessary to leave the earth to find the Truth, it is not necessary to leave life to find one’s soul, it is not necessary to give up the world or to have limited beliefs in order to enter into relation with the Divine. The Divine is everywhere, in everything, and if He is hidden... it is because we do not take the trouble to discover Him.

We can, simply by a sincere aspiration, open a sealed door in us and find... that Something which will change the whole significance of life, reply to all our questions, solve all our problems and lead us to the perfection we aspire for without knowing it,
to that Reality which alone can satisfy us and give us lasting joy, equilibrium, strength, life.

All this you have heard many a time.

You have heard it — Oh! There are even some here who are so used to it that for them it seems to be the same thing as drinking a glass of water or opening a window to let in the sunlight.

But since I promised you that in five years you would be able to live these things, to have a concrete, real, convincing experience of them, well, that means you ought to be ready and that we are going to begin.

We have tried a little, but now we are going to try seriously!

The starting-point: to want it, truly want it, to need it. The next step: to think, above all, of that. A day comes, very quickly, when one is unable to think of anything else.

That is the one thing which counts. And then...

One formulates one’s aspiration, lets the true prayer spring up from one’s heart, the prayer which expresses the sincerity of the need. And then... well, one will see what happens.

Something will happen. Surely something will happen. For each one it will take a different form.

That’s all. I am glad you gave me this.