Straight away we are leaping into the greatest difficulty! I believe this one paragraph alone will be enough for this evening:

“*What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being.*”

_Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 378_

Do you know why this seems paradoxical to you? It is simply because Sri Aurobindo has not put in the guide marks of the thought, hasn’t led you step by step from one thought to another. It is nothing else. It is almost elementary in its simplicity.

And I am simply going to ask you a question — but in fact I expect no answer — to tell you something very simple: When does something seem impossible to you? — It is when you try to do it. If you had never tried to do it, it would never have seemed impossible to you.

And how is it that you tried to do it? — Because it was somewhere in your consciousness. If it had not been in your consciousness, you would not have tried to do it; and the moment it is in your consciousness, it is quite obvious that it is something you will realise. That alone which is not in your consciousness you cannot realise. It’s as simple as that!

Only, instead of telling you the thing in this way, Sri Aurobindo puts it in a way that stimulates your thought. That is the virtue of paradoxes, they compel you to think.

_Then, Sweet Mother, what does “impossible” mean?_

There is nothing impossible in the world except what is outside
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your consciousness. And as your consciousness can grow, as what is not in your consciousness today may be in your consciousness after some time, for the consciousness can become wider, so in the eternity of time nothing is impossible.

At the present moment — I have explained this to you once — at the present moment, at a given moment, in certain circumstances, there are impossibilities. But from the eternal point of view in the infinity of time, nothing, nothing is impossible. And the proof is that everything will be. All things, not only those which are conceivable at present, but all those which at present are inconceivable, all things are not only possible, but will be realised. For what we call the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the Absolute — we give him many names, but in fact He is eternal, infinite, absolute — contains in himself not only all that is, but also all that will be, eternally, infinitely; and therefore nothing is impossible. Only, for the consciousness of the temporal and objective being, all things are not possible at the same time; it is necessary to conceive of space and time to make them possible. But outside the manifestation, everything is, simultaneously, eternally, potentially, in its possibility. And it is this All, inconceivable, for He is not manifest, who manifests in order to become conceivable.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo tells us. This temporal universe, that is, a universe which is unfolding, a universe which does not exist all at the same time at the same place outside time and space, a universe which becomes temporal and spatial, which is successive — for That which is beyond the manifestation it is truly an absurdity, don’t you think so, and a paradox; it is its very contradiction. For the temporal consciousness, it is That which is unthinkable and incomprehensible, and for That, which is incomprehensible to the temporal consciousness, this temporal consciousness is incomprehensible!... We cannot conceive of something which is not in time and space, for we ourselves are in time and space; we attempt an approximation to attain some small understanding of a “Something” which is
not expressible and is simultaneously everything, eternally and beyond time. We may try, yes, and we use all sorts of words, but we are not able to understand it unless we go outside time and space. Well, to reverse the problem, for That which is beyond time and space, time and space are something paradoxical and incomprehensible: they don’t exist, they are not there. And Sri Aurobindo says: “Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being”, that is, He changed his non-existence into existence — if you like to put it humorously, in order to know what it is! For so long as He had not become time and space, He could not know it!

But if we go back to the beginning, then it becomes extremely practical, concrete and very encouraging.... For we say this: in order to have the idea of the impossible, that something is “impossible”, you must attempt it. For example, if at this moment you feel that what I am telling you is impossible to understand (laughing), this means that you are trying to understand it; and if you try to understand it, this means it is within your consciousness, otherwise you could not try to understand it — just as I am in your consciousness, just as my words are in your consciousness, just as what Sri Aurobindo has written is also in your consciousness, otherwise you would have no contact with it. But for the moment it is impossible to understand, for want of a few small cells in the brain, nothing else, it is very simple. And as these cells develop through attention, concentration and effort, when you have listened attentively and made an effort to understand, well, after a few hours or a few days or a few months, new convolutions will be formed in your brain, and all this will become quite natural. You will wonder how there could have been a time when you did not understand: “It is so simple!” But so long as these convolutions are not there, you may make an effort, you may even give yourself a headache, but you will not understand.

It is very encouraging because, fundamentally, the only thing
necessary is to want it and to have the necessary patience. What is incomprehensible for you today will be quite clear in a short time. And note that it is not necessary that you should give yourself a headache every day and at every minute by trying to understand! One very simple thing is enough: to listen as well as you can, to have a sort of will or aspiration or, you might even say, desire to understand, and then that’s all. You make a little opening in your consciousness to let the thing enter; and your aspiration makes this opening, like a tiny notch inside, a little hole somewhere in what is shut up, and then you let the thing enter. It will work. And it will build up in your brain the elements necessary to express itself. You no longer need to think about it. You try to understand something else, you work, study, reflect, think about all sorts of things; and then after a few months—or perhaps a year, perhaps less, perhaps more—you open the book once again and read the same sentence, and it seems as clear as crystal to you! Simply because what was necessary for understanding has been built up in your brain.

So, never come to me saying, “I am no good at this subject, I shall never understand philosophy” or “I shall never be able to do mathematics” or... It is ignorance, it is sheer ignorance. There is nothing you cannot understand if you give your brain the time to widen and perfect itself. And you can pass from one mental construction to another: this corresponds to studies; from one subject to another: and each subject of study means a language; from one language to another, and build up one thing after another within you, and contain all that and many more things yet, very harmoniously, if you do this with care and take your time over it. For each one of these branches of knowledge corresponds to an inner formation, and you can multiply these formations indefinitely if you give the necessary time and care.

I do not believe at all in limits which cannot be crossed.

But I see very clearly people’s mental formations and also a sort of laziness in face of the necessary effort. And this laziness and these limits are like diseases. But they are curable
diseases — unless you have a really defective cerebral structure and lack something; if something was “forgotten” when you were formed, then it is more difficult. It is much more difficult, but it is not impossible. There are people like that, really incomplete, who are like an ill-made object — logically it would be better if they didn’t continue to exist; but still (laughing) it is not the custom, it is not the ordinary human way of thinking. But if you are a normal person, well, provided you take the trouble and know the method, your capacity for growth is almost unlimited.

There is the idea that everyone belongs to a certain type, that, for example, the pine will never become the oak and the palm never become wheat. This is obvious. But that is something else: it means that the truth of your being is not the truth of your neighbour’s. But in the truth of your being, according to your own formation, your progress is almost unlimited. It is limited only by your own conviction that it is limited and by your ignorance of the true process, otherwise...

There is nothing one cannot do, if one knows how to do it.

(Silence)

I have a question here which is more childish. Someone has asked:

“Why are some people intelligent and others not? Why can some people do certain things while others can’t?”

It is as though you asked why everybody was not the same! Then it would mean that there would only be one single thing, one single thing indefinitely repeated which would constitute the whole universe.... I don’t know, but it seems to me that it wouldn’t be worth the trouble having a universe for that, it would be enough to have just one thing!

But the moment one admits the principle of multiplicity and
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that no two things are alike in the universe, how can you ask why they are not the same! It is just because they are not, because no two things are alike.

Behind that there is something else which one is not conscious of, but which is very simple and very childish. It is this: “Since there is an infinite diversity, since some people are of one kind and others of a lesser kind, well” — here of course one doesn’t say this to oneself but it is there, hidden in the depths of the being, in the depths of the ego — “why am I not of the best kind?” There we are. In fact it amounts to complaining that perhaps one is not of the best kind! If you look attentively at questions like this: “Why do some have much and others little?” “Why are some wise and not others? Why are some intelligent and not others?” etc., behind that there is “Why don’t I have all that can be had and why am I not all that one can be?...” Naturally, one doesn’t say this to oneself, because one would feel ridiculous, but it is there.

There then. Now has anyone anything to add to what we have just said?... Have you all understood quite well? Everything I have said? Nobody wants to say...

(A teacher) Our daily routine seems a little “impossible” to us.

Well, wait a century or two and it will become possible! (Laughter)

You are told that today’s impossibility is the possibility of tomorrow — but these are very great tomorrows!

(Silence)

I have another question about what I told you the other day, when we discussed the distinction between will and willings. I told you that willings — what Sri Aurobindo calls willings — are movements arising not from a higher consciousness coming
down into the being and expressing itself in action, but from impulses or influences from outside. We reserved the word will to express what in the individual consciousness is the expression of an order or impulse coming from the truth of the being, from the truth of the individual — his true being, his true self, you understand. That we call will. And all the impulses, actions, movements arising in the being which are not that, we said were willings. And I told you in fact that without knowing it or at times even knowing it, you are moved by influences coming from outside which enter in without your even being aware of them and arouse in you what you call the will that a certain thing may happen or another may not, etc.

So I am asked:

“What is the nature of these influences from outside?
Could you give us an explanation of their working?”

Naturally these influences are of very diverse kinds. They may be studied from a psychological point of view or from an almost mechanical standpoint, the one usually translating the other, that is, the mechanical phenomenon occurs as a sort of result of the psychological one.

In very few people, and even in the very best at very rare moments in life, does the will of the being express that deep inner, higher truth.

(After a silence Mother continues:) The individual consciousness extends far beyond the body; we have seen that even the subtle physical which is yet material compared with the vital being and in certain conditions almost visible, extends at times considerably beyond the visible limits of the physical body. This subtle physical is constituted of active vibrations which enter into contact or mingle with the vibrations of the subtle physical of others, and this reciprocal contact gives rise to influences — naturally the most powerful vibrations get the better of the others. For example, as I have already told
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you several times, if you have a thought, this thought clothes itself in subtle vibrations and becomes an entity which travels and moves about in the earth-atmosphere in order to realise itself as best it can, and because it is one among millions, naturally there is a multiple and involved interaction as a result of which things don’t take place in such a simple and schematic fashion.

What you call yourself, the individual being enclosed within the limits of your present consciousness, is constantly penetrated by vibrations of this kind, coming from outside and very often presenting themselves in the form of suggestions, in the sense that, apart from a few exceptions, the action takes place first in the mental field, then becomes vital, then physical. I want to make it clear that it is not a question of the pure mind here, but of the physical mind; for in the physical consciousness itself there is a mental activity, a vital activity and a purely material activity, and all that takes place in your physical consciousness, in your body consciousness and bodily activity, penetrates first in the form of vibrations of a mental nature, and so in the form of suggestions. Most of the time these suggestions enter you without your being in the least conscious of them; they go in, awaken some sort of response in you, then spring up in your consciousness as though they were your own thought, your own will, your own impulse; but it is only because you are unconscious of the process of their penetration.

These suggestions are very numerous, manifold, varied, with natures which are very, very different from each other, but they may be classified into three principal orders. First — and they are hardly perceptible to the ordinary consciousness; they become perceptible only to those who have already reflected much, observed much, deeply studied their own being — they are what could be called collective suggestions.

When a being is born upon earth, he is inevitably born in a certain country and a certain environment. Due to his physical parents he is born in a set of social, cultural, national,
sometimes religious circumstances, a set of habits of thinking, of understanding, of feeling, conceiving, all sorts of constructions which are at first mental, then become vital habits and finally material modes of being. To put things more clearly, you are born in a certain society or religion, in a particular country, and this society has a collective conception of its own and this nation has a collective conception of its own, this religion has a collective “construction” of its own which is usually very fixed. You are born into it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts on your formation — that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without even being aware of it and this forms the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious basis will act on you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to free yourself from it, you must first of all become aware of it; and the first step is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (laughing) and it all happened without your participating in the least in it. Therefore, it does not even occur to you that there could be something to know there, and still less something you must get rid of. And it is quite remarkable that when for some reason or other you do become aware of the hold of this collective suggestion, you realise at the same time that a very assiduous and prolonged labour is necessary in order to get rid of it. But the problem does not end there.

You live surrounded by people. These people themselves have desires, stray wishes, impulses which are expressed through them and have all kinds of causes, but take in their consciousness an individual form. For example, to put it in very practical
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terms: you have a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, friends, comrades; each one has his own way of feeling, willing, and all those with whom you are in relation expect something from you, even as you expect something from them. That something they do not always express to you, but it is more or less conscious in their being, and it makes formations. These formations, according to each one’s capacity of thought and the strength of his vitality, are more or less powerful, but they have their own little strength which is usually much the same as yours; and so what those around you want, desire, hope or expect from you enters in this way in the form of suggestions very rarely expressed, but which you absorb without resistance and which suddenly awaken within you a similar desire, a similar will, a similar impulse.... This happens from morning to night, and again from night to morning, for these things don’t stop while you are sleeping, but on the contrary are very often intensified because your consciousness is no longer awake, watching and protecting you to some extent.

And this is quite common, so common that it is quite natural and so natural that you need special circumstances and most unusual occasions to become aware of it. Naturally, it goes without saying that your own responses, your own impulses, your own wishes have a similar influence on others, and that all this becomes a marvellous mixture in which might is always right!

If that were the end of the problem, one could yet come out of the mess; but there is a complication. This terrestrial world, this human world is constantly invaded by the forces of the neighbouring world, that is, of the vital world, the subtler region beyond the fourfold earth-atmosphere;¹ and this vital world which is not under the influence of the psychic forces or the psychic consciousness is essentially a world of ill-will, of disorder, disequilibrium, indeed of all the most anti-divine things

¹ Consisting of the four principles: physical, vital, mental and psychic.
one could imagine. This vital world is constantly penetrating the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very often quite imperceptible except to a few rare individuals. There are entities, beings, wills, various kinds of individualities in that world, who have all kinds of intentions and make use of every opportunity either to amuse themselves if they are small beings or to do harm and create disorder if they are beings with a greater capacity. And the latter have a very considerable power of penetration and suggestion, and wherever there is the least opening, the least affinity, they rush in, for it is a game which delights them.

Besides, they are very thirsty or hungry for certain human vital vibrations which for them are a rare dish they love to feed upon; and so their game lies in exciting pernicious movements in man so that man may emanate these forces and they be able to feed on them just as they please. All movements of anger, violence, passion, desire, all these things which make you abruptly throw off certain energies from yourself, project them from yourself, are exactly what these entities of the vital world like best, for, as I said, they enjoy them like a sumptuous dish. Now, their tactics are simple: they send you a little suggestion, a little impulse, a small vibration which enters deep into you and through contagion or sympathy awakens in you the vibration necessary to make you throw off the force they want to absorb.

There it is a little easier to recognise the influence, for, if you are the least bit attentive, you become aware of something that has suddenly awakened within you. For example, those who are in the habit of losing their temper, if they have attempted ever so little to control their anger, they will find something coming from outside or rising from below which actually takes hold of their consciousness and arouses anger in them. I don’t mean that everybody is capable of this discernment; I am speaking of those who have tried to understand their being and control it. These adverse suggestions are easier to distinguish than, for instance, your response to the will or desire of a being who is of the same
nature as yourself, another human being, who consequently acts on you without this giving you a clear impression of something coming from outside: the vibrations are too alike, too similar in their nature, and you have to be much more attentive and have a much sharper discernment to realise that these movements which seem to come out from you are not really yours but come from outside. But with the adverse forces, if you are in the least sincere and observe yourself attentively, you become aware that it is something in the being which is responding to an influence, an impulse, a suggestion, even something at times very concrete, which enters and produces similar vibrations in the being.

There, now. That is the problem.

The remedy?... It is always the same: goodwill, sincerity, insight, patience — oh! an untiring patience and a perseverance which assures you that what you have not succeeded in doing today, you will succeed in doing another time, and makes you go on trying until you do succeed.

And this brings us back to Sri Aurobindo’s sentence: if this control seems to you quite impossible today, well, that means that not only will it be possible, but that it will be realised later.