16 November 1955

Mother reads from The Synthesis of Yoga, “The Four Aids”.

(To a child) Have you prepared a question for your Birthday?

What is the significance of 18?

Of the number 18?
   It depends on how it is read.
   It can be read as 10+8; it can be read as 9+9; it can be read as 12+6. And each of these readings has a different meaning.

   If we take 10+8, it can indicate something quite immobile: because 10 indicates a static perfection, something which has reached its perfection and stops there; and 8 is a double enclosure, that is, something which is framed in, surrounded, demarcated, and which naturally stops there. So if we put 10 and 8 together it truly makes something which can be an accomplishment but one that is terminated.

   On the other hand, if we take 9+9: 9 is the process of creation — not the creation itself but its process — and 9+9 is a process of creation which continues and follows another process of creation, that is, a creation which is dual and implies the idea that it continues indefinitely. This gives us two meanings which are almost contradictory.

   And if we take 12 and 6, then it becomes something very good. 12, you know what it is, don’t you? It is the number of perfection in conception and creation; and 6 is the number of the new creation. So if you put 12 and 6 together, you truly have something absolutely remarkable.

   Now we can have other combinations. But it becomes a little more complicated.
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18 itself — as 18 — was the number of the consciousness in its effort for material realisation: the consciousness trying to realise itself materially, express itself materially.

So now you have something...

From the social point of view it is the first number for attaining majority, the first majority; that is, from eighteen onwards one has one’s own will, one has the right to have one’s own will, from the social point of view. It is clearly a very interesting starting-point.

There, then.

_Sweet Mother, has each person’s number a different significance for each one?_

If one wants to give it, yes.

If one doesn’t think about it, it doesn’t signify anything at all. It’s the importance one gives it which counts.

Numbers are a way of speaking. It is a language, as all the sciences, all the arts, everything that man produces; it is always a way of speaking, it is a language. If one adopts this language it becomes living, expressive, useful. As we need words to make ourselves understood usually — unfortunately it is liable to all kinds of confusions, but still we haven’t yet reached the state where we can communicate in silence, which, obviously, would be a very much higher state — well, if you want to give numbers a meaning in your life, they can reveal to you quite a lot of things. But it’s like that. It is like astrology: if one wants to study the relation between his life and the movement of the stars, one can also find all kinds of useful information.

Fundamentally it is a way of knowing, nothing else — a process. True knowledge is beyond words, beyond systems, beyond languages; it is in a silent identity. It is in fact the only one which does not err.

What else?
In the prayer you gave us this time for Kali Puja, you have written something in Sanskrit.

It is Sri Aurobindo who has written a mantra.¹

Then why has he written like this?

Why has he written this?
  Why don’t you ask him? Perhaps he will tell you.
  It is an evocation. You know what it means? Did you find someone to explain it to you? No? Ah, that’s the first thing you should have done, ask what the meaning of these four words is.
  The transcription underneath: there are only two of them. He had begun transcribing and then his paper... it was on a tiny little scrap of paper, and there wasn’t any more space to write everything; so he stopped.
  Have you read it? You don’t know how to read Sanskrit? So now you must find someone to show you how to read it; and then to give you the significance. And after that you will ask me why he wrote it. Not now!

Sweet Mother, has that Chaldean legend² which you have written any relation with Kali Puja?

Yes, my child, because on Kali Puja day I always distribute the flowers of “Divine’s Love”; for Kali is the most loving of all the aspects of the Mahashakti; hers is the most active and most powerful Love. And that is why every year I distribute the petals of “Divine’s Love” on Kali’s Day. And so naturally this explanation of why these flowers were chosen to express the Divine’s Love — it is a sufficient explanation.

¹ OM anandamayi chaitanyamayi satyamayi parame
² See Appendix at the end of the talk.
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*Mother, who was this man you have spoken about?*

Who told you that it was a man?

I haven’t said whether it was a man or a woman. I took care to put only “a divine being”.

**Who?**

It is a prehistoric story, so you cannot find any information about it. It isn’t written anywhere. There are no written documents.  
Haven’t you any questions to ask on what we read today?

*Sweet Mother, is personal effort always egoistic?*

There we are, you see. French is not as rich a language as we could hope for. In English there are two words: “selfish” and “egoistic”. And they don’t mean the same thing. You know the difference in English, don’t you? Well, in this case, the French word “egoisme” is in the sense of egoism in English, not in the sense of “selfishness”.

There may be an effort which is not at all selfish and is yet egoistic, because the moment it becomes personal it is egoistic — that means, it is based on the ego. But this does not mean that it is not generous, compassionate, unselfish nor that it is for narrow personal ends. It is not like that. It may be for a very unselfish work. But so long as an ego is there it is egoistic. And so long as the sense of one’s own personality is there, it is naturally something egoistic; it is founded on the presence of the ego.

And this must last for a fairly long time, because it must last until the individuality is completely formed, until it has reached a certain state of individual perfection; then the presence of the ego is no longer necessary — but not before one has attained the maximum individual development.

It is not just a tiny little job. It asks for much time and much effort. And when one has attained the perfection of his
own development, when one is an individual being who is truly personal, that is, who has all the characteristics of something different from all others — for in principle there are no two individualities exactly alike in the world — then, when one has succeeded in expressing the individuality one is, is exclusively, represents exclusively in the universal creation, then one is ready for the ego to disappear — but not before.

It asks for a certain length of time, not a little effort, a fairly complete education. But one may be quite unselfish long before being ready not to have the ego any longer. That is something else.

For years, all the time I have been translating from English into French — that is, for a very long time, something like thirty years of this work, perhaps thirty-five — I have tried to find two words to say that, to make a difference. I haven’t found them yet, because in French one can’t fabricate words, it is not allowed; that’s the misfortune! In English you can make as many words as you like and if they are fine and well made they are accepted. In French, unless it is recognised by the French Academy in its dictionary, you will be told, “This is not correct.” So I haven’t yet found them.

(Looking at a child) He is up to some mischief! (Laughter)

_Sweet Mother, a rich man is never satisfied, he wants to have more riches; a scholar wants to have more knowledge. Does this show that they are seeking the Divine?_

He is in search of an absolute in life, that’s obvious. Perhaps it is analogous, I don’t know.

_It is this: “To enjoy him in all experience of passivity and activity, of peace and of power, of unity and of difference, is the happiness which the jiva, the individual soul manifested in the world, is obscurely seeking.”_
Yes. But you are not told anything about the love of riches or the love of power or the love of knowledge. You are told about the divine Love; it is not altogether the same thing. Nothing is said about enjoying ambition or desire or even aspiration; what is spoken of is the enjoying of the divine Presence. That’s completely different; there is no similarity.

I admit that I don’t quite catch the meaning of your question. I think you are mixing up the Divine with growth and increase and development, no? perhaps at best with progress. But it is not the same thing. Progress is perhaps the base upon which the present world was constructed, one can take it like that; but it is not the Divine.

What were you trying to say?

For each being there is a thirst for something.

That the thirst for something is the Divine? No, my child. It can be quite simply a desire. How can the thirst for something be the Divine?

I see clearly what you are trying to say, but truly you do not say it: that is, this inner flame of aspiration is what you call the Divine; this inner flame of aspiration which never dies out, which always burns, burns more and more; what in India is called Agni, you know, the will to progress, the power of aspiration; this is what you call the Divine. It is an aspect of the Divine, that’s true, but it is not the Divine. It is only one aspect, that is, a divine way of being.

Sweet Mother, in the individual do the past evolution and the present nature always decide the final intervention of a higher plane which brings about a change?

What kind of question is this, I don’t understand it very well. Past evolution?...
And the present nature...

And the present nature? It is not the same thing, they are two different things.

No, Mother, because here it is written: “The mind’s door of entry to the conception of him must necessarily vary according to the past evolution and the present nature.”

Yes, these two things are completely different. That is, the evolution in former lives and the present nature, that is, the nature of the present body, determine one’s approach to the Divine.

We can take a very... an over-simple example. If one is born in any particular religion, quite naturally the first effort to approach the Divine will be within that religion; or else if in former lives one has passed through a certain number of experiences which determined the necessity of another kind of experiences, quite naturally one will follow the path which leads to those experiences.

You see, the life of the psychic being is made up of successive experiences in successive physical existences. So, it may be put a little childishly or romantically: you have a psychic which for some reason or other has incarnated so as to be able to have all the experiences which royalty gives — for instance, supreme power. After it has had its experience, has had what it wanted, it can, before leaving the body, decide that in the next life it will take birth in obscure conditions, because it needs to have experiences which can be had in a modest condition and with the freedom one feels when he has no responsibilities, you see, responsibilities like those the heads of states have, for instance. So quite naturally, in its next life it will be born in certain conditions which fulfil its need. And it is in accordance with this experience that it will approach the Divine.

Then, in addition, it is the product of the union of two physical natures, you know, and sometimes of two vital natures.
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The result of this is more or less a kind of mixture of these natures; but it brings about a tendency, what is called a character. Well, this character will make it fit for a certain field, a certain category of experiences.

So with what has been determined, decided in former lives or in a former life, and then the environment in which it is born — that is, the conditions in which its present body has been formed — its approach to and search for the Divine will be in accordance with a definite line which is its own, and which, naturally, is not at all the same as that of its neighbour or any other being.

I said a while ago: each individual is a special manifestation in the universe, therefore his true path must be an absolutely unique path. There are similarities, there are resemblances, there are categories, families, churches, ideals also, that is, a certain collective way of approaching the Divine, which creates a kind of church, not materialised but in a more subtle world — there are all these things — but for the details of the path, the details of yoga, it will be different according to each individual, necessarily, and conditioned physically by his present bodily structure, and vitally, mentally and psychically, of course, by former lives.

_The present structure, Mother, is it that which decides the intervention of the higher planes or not, in order to work miracles?_

That is to say, whether it is predestined that the higher planes...

_The other day you said that it can change completely._

Yes

_Then, if the present remains like this..._

But look here! Let us take an altogether ordinary example which
is very partial and very superficial. You are born in India. Being born in India you are born with a certain religious and philosophic attitude. But if for some reason or other you want to free yourself from this atavism and influence, if you begin to follow, study, practise the religion or philosophy of another country, you can change the conditions of your inner development. It is a little more difficult, that is, it asks for a greater effort for liberation, but it is very far from being impossible. In fact there are many people who do it, who love to free themselves from what comes to them from their present birth; by some sort of special taste they like to seek elsewhere what they think they won’t be able to find at home. And in this way you change the consequences of your birth completely.

Now you may tell me that this taste for the new or the unknown can come to you from a former life; this is probable. But it depends on what dominates in your being: whether it is the result of former psychic lives and psychic resolutions or whether it is the immediate consequence of your present constitution.

But sometimes these present structures are contradictory to what was...

Contradictory? In what way contradictory? To former influences? It is never contradictory. It can be only complementary. When things seem contradictory to you, it is always because you have remained on too low a plane. If you know how to climb up a few rungs of the ladder, all contradictions disappear, everything becomes complementary.

But what prevents me from going on is the nature, isn’t it?

What prevents you?...

It prevents many people. It is not very easy. This is a part of the liberation. Liberation is obtained
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through austerities, we know that. But there are certain auster-
ities which people refuse to practise, for example this (Mother
puts her finger on her lips.) They talk, talk, talk — much too
much.

(Noises of the wind in the mike)

We are going to enact a storm-scene! That’s how thunder is
created on the stage.

There you are, my children. That’s all?
Who has a very interesting question to ask?
To ask an interesting question one must begin by thinking
in an interesting way.

Mother, what do you call an interesting question?

Ah! A question worth answering. (Laughter) Something which
raises the possibility of a new answer and an opening on a new
field of knowledge.

For example, when you ask me for the explanation of a
word, I find that this is not an interesting question, because you
have only to open a dictionary. When you ask me the answer to a
question which has been given by Sri Aurobindo or by someone
else in published books, it doesn’t seem to be an interesting
question to me, because you have only to open the book and
read.

But when, for instance, you have a personal experience
which you do not understand very well and for which you need
clarification, then your question can become interesting.

(Silence)

No interesting question?

So nobody has an interesting question according to the
definition just given...?
APPENDIX

An Old Chaldean Legend

Long, long ago, in the dry land which is now Arabia, a divine being incarnated upon earth to awaken in it the supreme love. As expected it was persecuted by men, misunderstood, suspected, pursued. Mortally wounded by its assailants, it wanted to die quietly in solitude in order to be able to accomplish its work, and being pursued, it ran away. Suddenly, in the vast desert land there appeared a small pomegranate bush. The saviour crept in under the low branches, to leave its body in peace; and immediately the bush spread out miraculously, it grew higher, larger, became deep and thick, so that when the pursuers passed by, they did not even suspect that the One whom they were chasing was hidden there, and they went their way.

While drop by drop the sacred blood fell, fertilising the soil, the bush was covered with marvellous flowers, scarlet, large, crowded with petals... innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers which express and contain for us the Divine’s Love.