9 January 1957

“God cannot cease from leaning down towards Nature, nor man from aspiring-towards the Godhead. It is the eternal relation of the finite to the infinite. When they seem to turn from each other, it is to recoil for a more intimate meeting.

“In man nature of the world becomes again self-conscious so that it may take the greater leap towards its Enjoyer. This is the Enjoyer whom unknowingly it possesses, whom life and sensation possessing deny and denying seek. Nature of the world knows not God, only because it knows not itself; when it knows itself, it shall know unalloyed delight of being.

“Possession in oneness and not loss in oneness is the secret. God and Man, World and Beyond-world become one when they know each other. Their division is the cause of ignorance as ignorance is the cause of suffering.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 382

According to what Sri Aurobindo says here, the reality of the universe is what is called God or godhead, but essentially it is Delight. The universe is created in Delight and for Delight. But this Delight can exist only in the perfect oneness of the creation with its creator, and Sri Aurobindo describes this oneness as the Possessor — that is, the Creator — the Possessor being possessed by his creation, a sort of reciprocal possession which is the very essence of the Oneness and the source of all delight.

And it is because of division — because the Possessor no longer possesses and because the possessed no longer possesses the Possessor, division is created and the essential Delight is changed into ignorance, and this ignorance is the cause of all suffering. “Ignorance”, not in the sense in which it is usually
understood, for that is what Sri Aurobindo calls Nescience: that ignorance is a consequence of the other. True ignorance is ignorance of the oneness, the union, the identity. And that is the cause of all suffering.

Ever since division began and creation lost its direct contact with the Creator, ignorance has reigned, and all suffering is its result.

All those who have had the inner experience have had this experience, that the moment one re-establishes the union with the divine source, all suffering disappears. But there has been a very persistent movement, about which I spoke to you last week, which put at the source of creation not this essential divine Delight but desire. This delight of creation, self-manifestation, self-expression — there is an entire line of seekers and sages who have considered it not as a delight but as a desire; the whole line of Buddhism is of this kind. And instead of seeing the solution in a Oneness which restores to us the essential Delight of the manifestation and the becoming, they consider that the goal and also the way are a total rejection of all desire to be and a return to annihilation.

This conception amounts to an essential misunderstanding. The methods recommended for self-liberation are methods of development which can be very useful, but this conception of a world that's essentially bad, for it is the result of desire, and from which one must escape at all costs and as quickly as possible, has been the greatest and most serious distortion of all spiritual life in the history of mankind.

It might have been useful, perhaps, at a particular time, for everything is useful in the world’s history, but this utility has passed, it is outworn, and it is time for this conception to be superseded and for us to return to a more essential and higher Truth, to go back to the Delight of existence, the Joy of union and manifestation of the Divine.

This new orientation — I mean new in its terrestrial realisation — must replace all the former spiritual orientations and
open the way to the new realisation which will be a supramental realisation. That is why I told you last week that only Delight, the true divine Delight can bring about the Victory.

Naturally, there must be no confusion about what this Delight is, and that is why from the beginning Sri Aurobindo puts us on our guard, telling us that it is only when one has passed beyond enjoyings that one can enter into Bliss. Bliss is precisely that state which comes from the manifestation of this Delight. But it is quite the opposite of all that is usually called joy and pleasure, and these must be completely given up in order to have the other.

(To a child) Do you have a question?

I have a question, but we haven’t read that yet.

What is it?

It is about God and Nature.

So?

Why do God and Nature “run from each other when glimpsed”?¹

In order to play. He says so: “They are at play.” It is in play.

(A young disciple) Mother, does Nature know it is a game? God knows it is a game, but does Nature know it?

I think Nature knows it too, it is only man who does not know!

¹ “God and Nature are like a boy and a girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured.”

Thoughts and Glimpses, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 382
Questions and Answers

(Another child) Sweet Mother, where can Nature hide?

Where can she hide? She hides in the inconscience, my child. That is the greatest hiding-place, the inconscience. Besides, God also hides in the inconscience.

Perhaps, when one knows it is a game and plays it for fun, it is amusing. But when one doesn’t know it is a game, it is not amusing. You see, it is only when one is on the other side, on the divine side, that one can see it like that; that is, as long as we are in the ignorance, well, inevitably we suffer from what should amuse and please us. Fundamentally, it comes to this: when one does something deliberately, knowing what one is doing, it is very interesting and may even be very amusing. But when it is something you don’t do deliberately and don’t understand, when it is something imposed on you and endured, it is not pleasant. So the solution, the one which is always given: you must learn, know, do it deliberately. But to tell you my true feeling, I think it would be much better to change the game.... When one is in that state, one can smile, understand and even be amused, but when one sees, when one is conscious of all those who, far from knowing that they are playing, take the game very seriously and find it rather unpleasant, well... I don’t know, one would prefer it to change. That is a purely personal opinion.

I know very well: the moment one crosses over to the other side... instead of being underneath and enduring, when one is above and not only observes but acts oneself, it is so total a reversal that it is difficult to recall the state one was in when carrying all the weight of this inconscience, this ignorance on one’s back, when one was enduring things without knowing why or how or where one was going or why it was like that. One forgets all that. And then one can say: it is an “eternal game in an eternal garden”. But for it to be an amusing game, everybody should be able to play the game knowing the rules of the game; as long as one does not know the rules of the game, it is not pleasant. So the solution you are given is: “But learn the
rules of the game!”... That is not within everybody’s reach.

I have the impression, a very powerful impression, that a practical joker came and spoilt the game and made it into something dramatic, and this practical joker is obviously the cause of the division and the ignorance which is the result of this division, and of the suffering which is the result of ignorance. Indeed, in spite of all the spiritual traditions, it is difficult to conceive that this state of division, ignorance and suffering was foreseen at the beginning of creation. In spite of everything, one doesn’t like to think that it could have been foreseen. Indeed, I refuse to believe it. I call it an accident — a rather terrible accident, but still, you see, it is especially terrible to the human consciousness; for the universal consciousness, it may only be quite a reparable accident. And after all, when it has been set right, we shall even be able to recall it and say, “Ah! it has given us something we wouldn’t have had otherwise.” But we must first wait for it to be put right.

Anyway, I don’t know if there are people who say that it was foreseen and willed, but I tell you it was neither foreseen nor willed, and this is precisely why when it happened, quite unexpectedly, immediately something else sprang forth from the Source, which probably would not have manifested if this accident had not taken place. If Delight had remained Delight, conceived as Delight, and everything had come about in Delight and Union instead of in division, there would never have been any need for the divine Consciousness to plunge into the unconsciousness as Love. So, when one sees this from very far and from high above, one says, “After all, something has perhaps been gained from it.” But one must see it from a great distance and a great height to be able to say that. Or rather, when it is left far behind, when one has gone beyond this state, entered into Union and Delight, when division and unconsciousness and suffering have disappeared, then one may very wisely say, “Ah, yes, we have gained an experience we would never have had otherwise.” But the experience must be behind, we must not be right in the midst
Questions and Answers

of it. For, even for someone who — this is something I know —
even for someone who has come out of this state, who lives in
the consciousness of Oneness, for whom ignorance is something
external, no longer something intimate and painful, even for that
person it is impossible to look on the suffering of all those who
have not come out of it with a smile of indifference. That seems
impossible to me. Therefore, it is really necessary that things in
the world should change and the acute state of sickness should
disappear, so that we can say, “Ah! yes, we have benefited by
it.” It is true that something has been gained, but it is a very
costly gain.

That is why, I believe, because of that, so many initiates
and sages have been attracted by the solution of the void, of
Nirvana, for this is obviously a very radical way of escaping
from the consequences of an ignorant manifestation.

Only, the solution of changing this manifestation into a true,
truly divine reality is a far superior solution. And this is what
we want to attempt now, with a certitude of succeeding one
day or another, for, in spite of everything, despite everything,
what is true is eternally true, and what is true in essence must
necessarily become true in the realisation, one day or another.
Sri Aurobindo told us that we had taken the first step on the path
and that the time had come to accomplish the work, therefore
one has only to set out. That’s all.

So, your question? (To the child who asked about the game
of hide-and-seek) Was this what you wanted to know?
Actually what you were asking was: Why this image?

Yes.

One could reverse the thing. Instead of saying that the universe
is like this, that is, the Divine and man are like this, look like
this, one should say that this is perhaps an outer, superficial
expression of what the essential relation between the Divine
and man is at the present moment.
In fact, this would amount to saying that when one plays one is much more divine than when one is serious! (Laughing) But it’s not always good to say this. Perhaps there is more divinity in the spontaneous play of children than in the erudition of the scholar or the asceticism of the saint. That’s what I have always thought. Only (smiling) it is a divinity which is quite unconscious of itself.

As for me, I must confess to you that I feel much more essentially myself when I am joyful and when I play — in my own way — than when I am very grave and very serious — much more. Grave and serious — that always gives me the impression that I am dragging the weight of all this creation, so heavy and so obscure, whereas when I play — when I play, when I can laugh, can enjoy myself — it gives me the feeling of a fine powder of delight falling from above and tinting this creation, this world with a very special colour and bringing it much closer to what it should essentially be.

Mother, when and why are you grave?

Oh! well, you have seen me sometimes, haven’t you? Perhaps when I come down a rung, I don’t know — when someone is drowning or in difficulty, then one must come down from the bank into the water to pull him out. Perhaps that is the reason. When the creation is in a special difficulty, one comes down a little, one pulls, so one becomes serious. But when all is going well, one can laugh and enjoy oneself.

In fact, it could be said that all preaching, all exhortations, even all prayers and invocations come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the lower hemisphere, that is to say, one is still down below. It may be the summit, may be the frontier, it may be just the edge of this lower hemisphere, but one is still in the lower hemisphere. And as soon as one passes to the other side, all this seems, to say the least, useless and almost childish in the bad sense of the word — ignorant, still ignorant. And it is very interesting to be still in
Questions and Answers

this state where one is at times on one side, at times just on the border of the other. Well, this border of the other, which for the human consciousness is an almost inaccessible summit, for one who can live consciously and freely in the higher hemisphere, is in spite of everything a descent.

Later I would like us to take up and read here the last chapters of The Life Divine. I think you are becoming old enough, mature enough, to be able to follow it. And then there are all kinds of things you will be able to understand and subjects we shall be able to take up, based on this text, which will help us to go one step further, a serious step towards realisation. He describes so precisely and marvellously the difference between these two states of consciousness, how all that seems to man almost the ultimate of perfection, at least of realisation, how all that still belongs to the lower hemisphere, including all the relations with the gods as men have known them and still know them — how all these things are still far below — and what is the true state, the one which he describes as the supramental state, when one passes beyond.

And in fact, as long as one has not consciously passed beyond, there is a whole world of things one cannot understand.

So I would like us now to open the way and pass beyond, all together, a little.

There we are.