27 June 1956

Last week I spoke to you about birth: how souls enter a body; and I told you that the body is formed in a very unsatisfactory way for almost everyone — exceptions are so rare that one can hardly speak of them.

I told you that due to this obscure birth one arrives with a whole physical baggage of things which generally have to be got rid of, if one truly wants to progress, and someone has quoted my own sentence which runs like this:

“You are brought here by force, the environment is imposed on you by force, the laws of atavism of the milieu by force…”

And now the person who wrote to me has asked me who does all that.

Of course I could have been more explicit, but I thought I had been clear enough.

The body is formed by a man and a woman who become the father and mother, and it is they who don’t even have the means of asking the being they are going to bring into the world whether it would like to come or whether this is in accordance with its destiny. And it is on this body they have formed that they impose by force, by force of necessity, an atavism, an environment, later an education, which will almost always be obstacles to its future growth.

Therefore, I said here and I am repeating it — I thought I had been clear enough — that it was about the physical parents and the physical body I was speaking, nothing else. And that the soul which incarnates, whether it be in course of development or fully developed, has to struggle against the circumstances imposed on it by this animal birth, struggle in order to
find its true path and again discover its own self fully. That’s all.

Now, if you have something else to ask.... Nobody has anything to say?

_Sweet Mother, is it possible for the mother and father to give birth to... to ask for the soul they want?_

To ask? For that they must have an occult knowledge which they don’t usually have. But anyway, what is possible is that instead of doing the thing like an animal driven by instinct or desire and most of the time, without even wanting it, they do it at will, with an aspiration, putting themselves in a state of aspiration and almost of prayer, so that the being they are going to form may be one fit to embody a soul which they _can_ call down to incarnate in that form. I knew people — not many, this does not often happen, but still I knew some who chose special circumstances, prepared themselves through special concentration and meditation and aspiration and sought to bring down, into the body they were going to form, an exceptional being.

In many countries of old — and even now in certain countries — the woman who was going to have a child was placed in special conditions of beauty, harmony, peace and well-being, in very harmonious physical conditions, so that the child could be formed in the best possible conditions. This is obviously what ought to be done, for it is within the reach of human possibilities. Human beings are developed enough for this not to be something quite exceptional. And yet it is quite exceptional, for very few people think of it, while there are _innumerable_ people who have children without even wanting to.

That was what I wanted to say.

It is possible to call a soul, but one must be at least a little conscious oneself, and must want to do what one does in the best conditions. This is very rare, but it is possible.
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Mother, when a body is formed, is the soul which incarnates in it compelled to incarnate in that body?

I don’t understand your question very well.

The formation of the body depends entirely on a man and a woman, but is the soul which manifests in the child, in the body which is being formed, compelled to manifest in this body?

You mean whether it can choose between different bodies?

Yes.

Well, it is very exceptional, after all, in the great mass of humanity, that a conscious soul incarnates voluntarily. It is something very unusual. I have already told you that when a soul is conscious, fully formed, and wants to incarnate, usually from its psychic plane it looks for a corresponding psychic light at a certain place upon earth. Besides, during its previous incarnation, before going away, before leaving the earth-atmosphere, usually as a result of the experience it had in the life that is coming to an end, the soul chooses more or less—not in all details but broadly—the conditions of its future life. But these are exceptional cases. Possibly we could speak of it for ourselves here, but for the majority, the vast majority of men, even those who are educated, it is out of the question. And what comes then is a psychic being in formation, more or less formed, and there are all the stages of formation from the spark which becomes a little light to the fully formed being, and this extends over thousands of years. This ascent of the soul to become a conscious being having its own will, capable of determining the choice of its own life, takes thousands of years.

So, you are thinking of a soul which would say, “No, I refuse this body, I am going to look for another”?... I don’t
say it is impossible — everything is possible. It does happen, in fact, that children are still-born, which means that there was no soul to incarnate in them. But it may be for other reasons also; it may be for reasons of malformation only; one can’t say. I don’t say it is impossible, but generally, when a conscious and free soul chooses to take a body on earth again, even before its birth it works on this body. So it has no reason not to accept even the inconveniences which may result from the ignorance of the parents; for it has chosen the place for a reason which was not one of ignorance: it saw a light there — it might have been simply the light of a possibility, but there was a light and that is why it has come there. So, it is all very well to say, “Ah! no, I don’t like it”, but where would it go to choose another it likes?... That may happen, I don’t say it is impossible, but it cannot happen very often. For, when from the psychic plane the soul looks at the earth and chooses the place for its next birth, it chooses it with sufficient discernment not to be altogether grossly mistaken.

It has also happened that souls have incarnated and then left. There are many reasons why they go away. Children who die very young, after a few days or a few weeks — this may be for a similar reason. Most often it is said that the soul needed just a little experience to complete its formation, that it had it during these few weeks and then left. Everything is possible. And as many stories would be needed to tell the story of souls as are needed to tell the story of men. That is to say, they are innumerable and the instances are as different as possible from one another.

So, to decide arbitrarily: “It is like that, not like this; this is what happens and not that”, this is childishness. Everything can happen. There are instances which occur more frequently than others, one can generalise, but one can never say, “This is not possible and it is always like this or always like that.” That is not how things happen.

But anyway — anyway — even in the best cases, even when
the soul has come consciously, even when it has consciously participated in the formation of the physical body, still so long as the body is formed in the usual animal way, it will have to struggle and correct all those things which come from this human animality.

Inevitably, parents have a particular formation, they are particularly healthy or unhealthy; even taking things at their best, they have a heap of atavisms, habits, formations in the subconscious and even in the unconscious, which come from their own birth, the environment they have lived in, their own life; and even if they are remarkable people, they have a large number of things which are quite opposed to the true psychic life — even the best of them, even the most conscious. And besides, there is all that is going to happen. Even if one takes a great deal of trouble over the education of one's children, they will come in contact with all sorts of people who will have an influence over them, especially when they are very young, and these influences enter the subconscious, one has to struggle against them later on. I say: even in the best cases, because of the way in which the body is formed at present, you have to face innumerable difficulties which come more or less from the subconscious, but rise to the surface and against which you have to struggle before you can become completely free and develop normally.

Is that all?

(Silence)

Now, since the end of February, I have received a considerable number of questions on:

*How is the Supermind going to act? What should be done to receive it? In what form will it manifest?...*

I have answered as best I could. But it so happens that in Sri Aurobindo's book *On the Veda* there is a note on a certain
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page, and in this note he answers these questions. I always tell people: if you were to take a little trouble to read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions would become useless, for Sri Aurobindo has already answered them. However, people probably have neither the time nor the patience nor the will, nor all that is needed, and they don’t read. The books are published, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but few read them. Anyway, here is Sri Aurobindo’s answer. Try to think, and if you have a special question to ask I shall answer it.

Listen:

“The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting.”

That is to say, to hope to receive, use and form in oneself a supramental being, and consequently a supramental world, there must first of all be an expansion of consciousness and a constant personal progress: not to have sudden flights, a little aspiration, a little effort, and then fall back into somnolence. This must be the constant idea of the being, the constant will of the being, the constant effort of the being, the constant preoccupation of the being.

If for five minutes in the day you happen to remember that there is something in the universe like the supramental Force, and that, after all, “it would be nice if it manifested in me”, and

1 This note occurs in Sri Aurobindo’s commentary on the fourth hymn to Agni in the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda, “The Divine Will, Priest, Warrior and Leader of Our Journey”:

“O Knower of the Births, the man perfect in his works
for whom thou createst that other blissful world,*
reaches a felicity that is peopled happily with his
life’s swiftnesses, his herds of Light, the children
of his soul, the armies of his energy.”

The Secret of the Veda, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 375

* The footnote occurs here.
then all the rest of the time you are thinking of something else
and are busy with other things, there is not much chance that it
would come and do any serious work in you. Sri Aurobindo says
this quite clearly and precisely. He does not tell you that you will
do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don’t come and say, “Ah! I
can’t.” No one is asking you to do it. But there must be enough
aspiration and adhesion in the being to make the expansion of
the being, the expansion of consciousness possible. For, to tell
the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is
not enough room to put any supramental in! It is so small that
it is already quite filled up with all the ordinary little human
movements. There must be a great widening to make room for
the movements of the Supermind.

And then there must also be an aspiration for progress: not
to be satisfied with what one is, how one is, what one does,
what one knows or thinks one knows; but to have a constant
aspiration for something more, something better, for a greater
light, a vaster consciousness, a truer truth and a more universal
goodness. And over and above all this, a goodwill which never
fails.

That can’t be done in a few days.

Moreover, I believe that I had taken my precautions in this
matter and that, when I announced that it had been granted to
the earth to receive the supramental Force in order to manifest
it, this did not mean that the manifestation would be instant-
taneously apparent, and that everybody would suddenly find
himself transported to a peak of light and of possibilities and
realisation, without any effort. I said immediately that it would
not be like that. I even said that it would take quite a long time.
But still, people have complained that its advent has not made
things easier, and that even, in some cases, they have become
more difficult. I am very sorry, but I can do nothing about it.
For it is not the fault of the supramental Force, the fault lies
in the way in which it was received. I know instances in which
truly the aspiration was sincere and the collaboration complete,
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and in which many things that had seemed very difficult in the past at once became infinitely easier.

However, there is a very great difference, always, between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with words and ideas, and a true aspiration of the being which means that truly, really, it is *that* which counts, essentially, and nothing else — that aspiration, that inner will because of which nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation; nothing counts except *that*; there is no other reason for existence, for living, than *that*.

And yet it is this that’s needed if one wants the Supramental to become visible to the naked eye.

And mark that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for this everyone knows: you don’t expect to become luminous and plastic overnight, to lose your weight, be able to displace yourself freely, appear in a dozen places at the same time and what not.... No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect this to happen right away. It will take some time.

But still, simply, the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over one’s body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity of identification and a clear vision — instead of that hazy and vague sight which sees only the mere appearances that are so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised — a more direct perception, an inner perception, this ought to be able to come and come quickly if one has prepared oneself.

Simply to have that feeling that the air one breathes is more living, the strength one has more lasting. And instead of always grooping like a blind man to know what should be done, to have a clear, precise, inner intimation: it is this — not that: *this*.

These are things one can acquire immediately if one is ready.

(Silence)

Today I received some other questions which have nothing to do with the subject before us at present, questions as old as the earth, which I have already answered hundreds of times; but
still, it seems that it couldn’t have gone in, for again I am asked:

*Why do bad thoughts come?*

Haven’t I told you why bad thoughts come?… For as many reasons as there are bad thoughts! Each one comes for its own special reason: it may be through affinity, it may be just to tease you, it may be because you call them, it may be because you expose yourself to attacks, it may be all this at once and many more things besides.

Bad thoughts come because there is something corresponding somewhere within you; otherwise you might see something *passing* like that, but they would not come inside you. I suppose the question means: why do you suddenly think something bad?

Because the stages are very different. I have already explained to you that the mental atmosphere is worse than any public place when a crowd is there: innumerable ideas, thoughts of all kinds and all forms criss-cross in such a complicated tangle that it is impossible to make out anything precise. Your head is in the midst of it, and your mind even more so: it bathes in it as one bathes in the sea. And all this comes and goes, passes, turns, collides, enters, goes out…. If you were conscious of the mental atmosphere in which you live, obviously it would be a little maddening! I think personal cerebral limits are quite necessary as a filter, for a very long time in life.

To be able to get out of all that and live fully in the mental atmosphere as it is, seeing it as it is — it is the same for the vital atmosphere, by the way; that is perhaps yet uglier! — to live in it and see it as it is, one must be strong, one must have a very steady sense of inner direction. But in any case, whether you see it or not, whether you feel it or not, it is a fact, it is like that. So one cannot ask where bad thoughts come from — they are everywhere. Why do they come? — where would they go? You are right in the midst of them!

What governs this filter of consciousness which makes you
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conscious of certain thoughts and not conscious of others, is your inner attitude, your inner affinities, your inner habits — I am speaking of the mind, not of the psychic — it is your education, your cerebral development, etc. That is a kind of filter formed by your ego, and certain thoughts pass through it and others don’t — automatically. That is why the nature of the thoughts you receive may be quite an important indication for you of the kind of character you have — it may be quite subconscious for you, for a man is not in the habit of really knowing himself, but it is an indication of the general tendency of your character. To put things in a very simplified way, if you take an optimist, for instance, well, in general, optimistic ideas will come to him; for a pessimist they will generally be pessimistic ideas — I am speaking very broadly — for a person with a rebellious nature, they will be rebellious ideas; and for a very sheepish person, they will be sheepish ideas! Granting that sheep have ideas! That is the usual normal condition.

Now, if it so happens that you have decided to progress and if you enter the path of yoga, then a new factor intervenes. As soon as you want to progress, you immediately meet the resistance of everything that does not want to progress both in you and around you. And this resistance naturally expresses itself in all the thoughts that correspond to it.

Suppose that you want to make a progress regarding attachment to food, for example; well, almost constantly there will come to you thoughts particularly interested in food, about what should be taken, what should not be taken, how it should be taken, how it should not be taken; and these ideas will come to you, they will seem quite natural to you. And the more you say within yourself, “Oh! how I would like to be free from all that, what a hindrance to my progress are all these preoccupations”, the more will they come, quietly, until the progress is truly made within and you have risen to a level of consciousness where you can see all these things from above and put them in their place — which is not a very big place in the universe! And so on, for all
things. Therefore, your occupations and affinities are going to put you almost contradictorily into contact not only with ideas having an affinity and relation with your way of being, but with the opposite. And if you don’t take care from the beginning to keep an attitude of discernment, you will be turned into a mental battlefield.

If you know how to rise to a higher level, simply into a region of the speculative mind which is not quite the ordinary physical mind, you can see all this play and all this struggle, all this conflict, all these contradictions as a curiosity which does not touch or affect you. If you rise a step higher still and see the goal towards which you want to go, you will gradually come to discern between ideas favourable to your progress which you will keep, and ideas opposed to this progress which harm and impair it; and from above you will have the power to set them aside, calmly, without being otherwise affected by them. But if you remain there, at that level in the midst of that confusion and conflict, well, you risk getting a headache!

The best thing to do is to occupy yourself with something practical which will compel you to concentrate specially: studies, work or some physical occupation for the body which demands attention — anything at all that forces you to concentrate on what you are doing and no longer be a prey to these ramblings. But if you have the misfortune to remain there and look at them, then surely, as I said, you will get a headache. For it is a problem which must be resolved either by a descent into practical life and a concentration on some practical effort or else by rising above and looking from above at all this chaos so as to be able to bring some order into it and set it right.

But one must never remain on the same plane, it is a plane which is no good either for physical or moral health.