28 July 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 4 of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

“Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose.”

How does money manifest on other planes?

What other planes? He speaks of the vital and physical, doesn’t he?... that it is a force which manifests on the vital plane and the physical plane. The vital forces have a very great influence over money.

*(After a silence)* You see, when one thinks of money, one thinks of bank-notes or coins or some kind of wealth, some precious things. But this is only the physical expression of a force which may be handled by the vital and which, when possessed and controlled, almost automatically brings along these more material expressions of money. And that is a kind of power. *(Silence)* It is a power of attracting certain very material vibrations, which has a capacity for utilisation that increases its strength — which is like the action of physical exercise, you see — it increases its strength through utilisation.

For example, if you have a control over this force — it is a force which, in the vital world, has a colour varying between red, a dark, extremely strong red and a deep gold that’s neither
Questions and Answers

bright nor very pale. Well, this force — when it is made to move, to circulate, its strength increases. It is not something one can accumulate and keep without using. It is a force which must always be circulated. For example, people who are misers and accumulate all the money, all the wealth they can attract towards themselves, put this force aside without using its power of movement; and either it escapes or it lies benumbed and loses its strength.

The true method of being in the stream of this money-power is precisely what is written here: a sense of absolute impersonality, the feeling that it is not something you possess or which belongs to you, but that it is a force you can handle and direct where it ought to go in order to do the most useful work. And by these movements, by this constant action, the power increases — the power of attraction, a certain power of organisation also. That is to say, even somebody who has no physical means, who is not in those material circumstances where he could materially handle money, if he is in possession of this force, he can make it act, make it circulate, and if ever he finds it necessary, receives from it as much power as he needs without there being externally any sign or any reason why the money should come to him. He may be in conditions which are absolutely the very opposite of those of usual wealth, and yet can handle this force and always have at his disposal all the wealth that's necessary to carry on his work.

Therefore, it was like this, you see: this letter was written to someone who wanted to go out from here to collect money for Sri Aurobindo’s work, and this person had no means at all. So he began by saying to Sri Aurobindo, “But as I myself have no means, people will have no trust in me, and I won’t be able to get anything.” And Sri Aurobindo answered him something like this, that it is not the external force in its most material form which is necessary, it is the handling of the inner force which gives one control over money wherever it is: whether it is in public institutions or with individuals, one obtains control
over it and one can, when it is necessary, attract by a certain movement what is needed.

_Sweet Mother, in what way have the money-forces left the Divine?_

Eh?

_(The child repeats its question.)_

It is precisely the main word in your question which I don’t understand. In what manner, in what way have the money-forces...

... _left the Divine?_

Left? The money-power belongs to a world which was created deformed. It is something that belongs to the vital world; and he says this, doesn’t he? He says that it belongs to the vital and material worlds. And so at all times, always it was under the control of the Asuric forces; and what must be done is precisely to reconquer it from the Asuric forces.

That is why in the past, all those who wanted to do Yoga or follow a discipline, used to say that one should not touch money, for it was something — they said — diabolic or Asuric or at least altogether opposed to the divine life. But the whole universe, in all its manifestation, is the Divine Himself, and so belongs entirely to Him; and it is on this ground that he says that the money-forces belong to the Divine. One must reconquer them and give them to Him. They have been under the influence of the Asuric forces: one must win them back in order to put them at the disposal of the Divine so that He may be able to use them for His work of transformation.

_(Long silence)_

_Sweet Mother, it is men who have created money. Then how is it a divine power?_
Questions and Answers

Hm! (laughing) It is as though you told me: it is a man and woman who have created another person, then how can he be divine in essence? It is exactly the same thing! The whole creation is made externally by external things, but behind that there are divine forces. What men have invented — paper or coins or other objects — all these are but means of expression — nothing else but that.... I just said this a moment ago, it is not the force itself, it is its material expression as men have created it. But this is purely conventional. For example, there are countries where small shells are exchanged instead of money. There are even countries where... Someone has written a story like this: in the North wealth means having hooks for fishing; and the rich man is he who has the greatest number of fish-hooks. You know what these are, don’t you? — small iron hooks for catching fish which are fixed at the end of the line. So, the multimillionaire is one who has a huge number of hooks!

It is purely conventional. What is behind is the force I am speaking about, you see, and so it manifests in all sorts of ways. For example, even gold, you know... men have given a certain value to gold, because of all metals it deteriorates the least. It is preserved almost indefinitely. And this is the reason, there’s no other. But it is a mere convention. The proof is that each time a new gold-mine is found and exploited, the value of gold has fallen. These are mere conventions between human beings. But what makes money a power is not this, it is the force that’s behind. As I was saying a while ago, it is a force that is able to attract and use anything whatever, all material things and...

So this is used according to a convention. Now, it is understood that wealth is represented by bits of paper which become very dirty, and on which something is printed. They are altogether disgusting, most often good only for lighting the fire. But it is considered a great fortune. Why? Because that’s the convention. Yet one who is capable of attracting this and using it for something good, to increase the welfare of this world, the welfare and well-being of the world, that man has a hold on the
money-power, that is to say, the force that is behind money.

In French we call money “argent”. “Argent” is also the name of a white metal which is just a little more... a little prettier and a little more lasting than other metals, one which is less easily oxidised and spoilt. So this is called “argent”, money. And then, by expansion, all that is wealth is also called “argent”. It is really paper or gold or sometimes just written things... because many large fortunes are only numbers written on paper, not even these papers which circulate, only books! There are immense fortunes which govern the world and are just written on papers, like that, with some documents and conventions between men. The fortune may increase, become triple, fourfold, tenfold, or else it may be reduced to nothing. They sell everything, they sell cotton, they sell sugar, they sell corn, coffee, anything at all, but there is nothing! There is no cotton, no sugar, no corn, nothing. Everything is on paper! And so you buy millions of worth of cotton: you don’t have a wisp of cotton there! It is all on paper. And so, sometimes later, you sell it off again. If the price of cotton has increased, you gain a fortune, if it has gone down you lose a fortune. And you have with you neither money nor cotton nor anything, nothing but paper. (Laughter) It is entirely a convention.

How can one merge oneself one’s separative ego in the divine Consciousness?¹

How can one merge in the divine Consciousness?

How must one merge oneself one’s separative ego in the divine Consciousness?²

Eh? merge oneself?

¹ The French text here is wrongly spoken by the child.
Questions and Answers

... one’s separative ego...

I don’t understand what you mean. “Merge”?

... in the divine Consciousness.

Yes, that’s just what I mean.... How can one dissolve, you mean dissolve in the Divine, and lose one’s ego?

First of all, one must will it. And then one must aspire with great perseverance, and each time the ego shows itself, one must give it a little rap on the nose (*Mother taps her nose*) until it has received so many raps that it is tired of them and gives up the game.

But usually, instead of rapping it on the nose, one justifies its presence. Almost constantly, when it shows itself, one says, “After all, it is right.” And mostly one doesn’t even know that it is the ego, one thinks it is oneself. But the first condition is to find it essential not to have the ego any longer. One must really understand that one doesn’t want it. It is not so easy. It is not so easy! For one can very well turn words over in the head and say, “I don’t want the ego any more, I no longer want to be separated from the Divine.” All this goes on inside, like that. But it remains just there, it hasn’t much effect on your life. The next moment you do something purely egoistic, you see, and find it quite natural. It doesn’t even shock you.

One must first begin to understand truly what this means. The first method... you see, there are many stages... first, one must try not to be selfish — which is something quite different, isn’t it?... If you take the English words you understand the difference. In English, you see, there is the word “selfish”, and there is also the word “egoism”. The ego — “ego” — exists in English, and “selfish”. And these are two very different things; in French there is not this distinction. They say, “I don’t want to be selfish”, you see. But this is a very small thing, very small! People, when they stop being selfish, think they have made tremendous
progress! But it’s a very small thing. It is simply, oh, it is simply to have a sense of its ridiculousness. You can’t imagine how ridiculous these selfish people are!

When one sees them thinking all the time about themselves, referring everything to themselves, governed simply by their own little person, placing themselves in the centre of the universe and trying to organise the whole universe including God around themselves, as though that were the most important thing in the universe. If one could only see oneself objectively, you know, as one sees oneself in a mirror, observe oneself living, it is so grotesque! (Laughing) That’s enough for you to... One suddenly feels that he is becoming — oh, so absolutely ridiculous!

I remember I read in French — it was a translation — a sentence of Tagore’s which amused me very much. He was speaking of a little dog. He said... he compared it with something... I don’t remember the details now, but what struck me was this: the little dog was sitting on its mistress’s lap and fancying itself the centre of the universe! This struck me very strongly. It is true! I used to know a little dog like this! But there are many like that, almost all are like that. You see, they want everybody to pay attention to them, and in fact they succeed very well. Because when there is a little dog, as when there is a little child — it’s almost the same thing — everyone attends to them.

Haven’t you noticed that when a child of this height (Mother indicates the height) comes along, everything else stops? Before that, people could speak, say interesting things, be busy with something higher; but as soon as a child comes along, everybody begins to smile, to mimic a baby, to try to make it speak, to attend to it. One can’t bring along a child without everybody fussing over it, wanting to take it, to make it speak. So naturally the child feels itself the centre of the universe! It is quite natural!

For a puppy it is the same thing, for a kitten it is the same. It is a kind of... it is a very poor deformation of a kind of need to protect something that’s smaller than oneself. And this is one of the forms, one of the earliest forms of unegoistic manifestation of
Questions and Answers

the ego! It feels so comfortable when it can protect something, busy itself with something much smaller, much weaker than itself, which is almost at its mercy, almost—even entirely—at its mercy, which has no power to resist. And so one feels good and generous because one doesn’t crush it!

This is the first manifestation of generosity in the world. But all this, when one can see behind it and a little above, it cures you from being selfish, for truly it is ridiculous! It is truly ridiculous!

So there is a long, long, long way to go before merging one’s ego in the Divine.

Merge one’s ego in the Divine! But first, one can’t merge one’s ego in the Divine before becoming completely individuated. Do you know what it means to be completely individuated? Capable of resisting all outer influences?

Some days ago I received a letter from someone who told me that he was very hesitant about reading books of ordinary literature, for example, novels or dramas, because his nature had an almost insuperable tendency to receive imprints of the characters in these books and to begin living the feelings and thoughts of these characters, the nature of these persons. There are many more people than one would think who are like that. They read a book and while they are reading it they feel within themselves all kinds of emotions, thoughts, desires, intentions, plans, even ideals. They are simply just absorbed in the reading of the book. They are not even aware of it, because at least ninety-nine parts of an individual’s character are made of soft butter—inedible of course... but on which if one presses one’s thumb, an imprint is made.

Now, everything is a “thumb”: an expressed thought, a sentence read, an object looked at, an observation of what someone else does, and of one’s neighbour’s will. And all these wills... you know, when one sees them they are all there, like this, intermingled (Mother intercrosses her fingers), each one trying to get the uppermost and causing a kind of perpetual conflict within,
outside.... It goes in and out of people like that, you see, like electric currents. One is not at all aware of all this, and it is a perpetual conflict of all the wills which are trying to express themselves; and the strongest one will succeed. But as there are many of these and as one has to fight alone against a great number, it is not easy.

So one is tossed like a cork on the waves of the sea.... One day one wants this, the next day one wants that, at one moment one is pushed from this side, at another from that, now one lifts one’s face to the sky (Mother makes the movement), now one is sunk deep in a hole. And so this is the existence one has!

First one must become a conscious, well-knit, *individualised* being, who exists in himself, by himself, independently of all his surroundings, who can hear anything, read anything, see anything without changing. He receives from outside only what he wants to receive; he automatically refuses all that is not in conformity with his plan and nothing can leave an imprint on him unless he agrees to receive the imprint. Then one begins to become an individuality! When one is an individuality, one can make an offering of it.

For, unless one possesses something, one cannot give it. First, one must be, and then afterwards one can give oneself.

*So long as one does not exist, one can give nothing.* And for the separative ego to disappear, as you say, one must be able to give oneself entirely, totally without reservation. And to be able to give oneself, one must first exist. And to exist one must be individualised.

If your body were not made in the rigid form it is — for it is terribly rigid, isn’t it? — well, if all that were not so fixed, if you had no skin, here, like this, solid, if externally you were the reflection of what you are in the vital and mental fields, it would be worse than being a jelly-fish! Everything would fuse into everything else, like this.... Oh, what a mess it would be!

That is why it was at first necessary to give a very rigid form. Afterwards we complain about it. We say, “The physical is fixed,
it is a nuisance; it lacks plasticity, it lacks suppleness, it hasn’t
that fluidity which can enable us to merge into the Divine.” But
this was absolutely necessary, for without this... if you simply
went out of your body (most of you can’t do it because the
vital being is hardly more individualised than the physical), if
you came out of your body and went into the vital world, you
would see that all things there intermingle, they are mixed, they
divide; all kinds of vibrations, currents of forces come and go,
struggle, try to destroy one another, take possession of each
other, absorb each other, throw each other out... and so it goes
on! But it is very difficult to find a real personality in all this.
These are forces, movements, desires, vibrations.

There are individualities, there are personalities! But these
are powers. People who are individualised in that world are
either heroes or devils!

And now, in the mind... (Silence) If only you become con-
sscious of your physical mind in itself... Some people have called
it a public square, because everything comes there, goes across,
passes, comes back.... All ideas go there, they enter at one place,
leave by another, some are here, some there, and it is a public
square, not very well organised, for usually ideas meet and knock
into one another, there are accidents of all kinds. But then one
becomes aware: “What can I call my mind?” or “What is my
mind?”

One needs years of very attentive, very careful, very reason-
able, very coherent work, organisation, selection, construction,
in order to succeed simply in forming, oh, simply this little thing,
one’s own way of thinking!

One believes one has one’s own way of thinking. Not at
all. It depends totally upon the people one speaks with or the
books one has read or on the mood one is in. It depends also
on whether you have a good or bad digestion, it depends on
whether you are shut up in a room without proper ventilation
or whether you are in the open air; it depends on whether you
have a beautiful landscape before you; it depends on whether
there is sunshine or rain! You are not aware of it, but you think all kinds of things, completely different according to a heap of things which have nothing to do with you!

And for this to become a coordinated, coherent, logical thought, a long thorough work is necessary. And then, the best part of it is that when you have succeeded in making a beautiful, well-formed, very strong, very powerful mental construction, the first thing you will be told is, “You must break this so that you can unite with the Divine!” But so long as you haven’t made it, you cannot unite with the Divine because you have nothing to give to the Divine except a mass of things which are not yourself! One must first exist in order to be able to give oneself. I am repeating what I said a while ago.

Truly, in the present state of the world, the only thing one can give the Divine is one’s body. But that’s what one doesn’t give Him. Yes, one can try to consecrate one’s work! But still, here there are so many elements which are not true!

You want to merge your body in the Divine, eh? Just try! How are you going to do this? You can merge your mind, you can merge your vital, you can fuse all your emotions, you can fuse all your aspirations, you can fuse all that, but your body — how are you going to do that? You are not going to melt it in a boiling-pot! (Laughter) And yet it is the only thing about which you can say with certitude, “It is”, and give a name to it; yet even your name is a convention... but still, you are in the habit of calling yourself by a certain name — say, “This, this is I.” You look at yourself in a mirror, and although what you were twenty years ago is very different from what you are now... it is unrecognisable... still something makes you say all the same, “Yes, this is I.” Yes? “I am so-and-so” — Peter, Louis, Jack, André, whoever it may be....

(After a silence) And even this, if one were to look at oneself, every seven years all the cells are changed, and it is only by a kind of habit that it remains the same. Does it remain the same? Do you have photographs of the time you were very young? And
the photographs when you were ten, twenty, thirty years old — it is because one very much wants to do so that one recognises oneself; otherwise, truly, one is not at all the same.... When you were this height and now when you are this height, that makes a considerable difference! So, there we are...

All this... it is not in order to swamp you that I tell you all this. It is only in order to tell you that before speaking of merging one's ego in the Divine, one must first know a little what one is. The ego is there. Its necessity is that you become conscious, independent beings, individualised — I mean in the sense of independent — that you may not be the public square where everything goes criss-cross! That you may exist in yourselves. That is why there is an ego. It is like that; that is why also there is a skin, like that... though truly, even physical forces pass through the skin. There is a vibration which goes a certain distance. But still, it's the skin that prevents us from blending into one another. But everything else must be like that too.

(After a silence) And then, later, one offers all this to the Divine. Years of work are needed. You must not only... (silence)... become conscious of yourself, conscious in all details, but you must organise what you call “yourself” around the psychic centre, the divine centre of your being, so that it would make a single, coherent, fully conscious being. And as this divine centre is itself already consecrated (Mother makes a gesture of offering) entirely to the Divine, if everything is organised harmoniously around it, everything is consecrated to the Divine. And so, when the Divine thinks it proper, when the time has come, when the work of individualisation is complete, then the Divine gives you permission to let your ego merge in Him, to live henceforward only for the Divine.

But it is the Divine who takes this decision. You must first have done all this work, become a conscious being, solely and exclusively centred around the Divine and governed by Him. And after all that, there is still an ego; because it is
the ego which serves to make you an individual. But once this work is perfect, fully accomplished, then, at that moment, you may tell the Divine, “Here I am, I am ready. Do you want me?” And the Divine usually says, “Yes.” All is over, everything is accomplished. And you become a real instrument for the Divine’s work. But first the instrument must be constructed.

You think that you are sent to school, that you are made to do exercises, all this just for the pleasure of vexing you? Oh, no! It is because it’s indispensable for you to have a frame in which you can learn how to form yourself. If you did your work of individualisation, of total formation, by yourself, all alone in a corner, nothing at all would be asked of you. But you don’t do it, you wouldn’t do it, there’s not a single child who would do it, he wouldn’t even know how to do it, where to begin. If a child were not taught how to live, he could not live, he wouldn’t know how to do anything, anything. I don’t want to speak about disgusting details, but even the most elementary things he would not do properly if he were not taught how to do them. Therefore, one must, step by step... That is to say, if everyone had to go through the whole experience needed for the formation of an individuality, he would be long dead before having begun to live! This is the contribution — accumulated through centuries — of those who have had the experience and tell you, “Well, if you want to go quickly, to know in a few years what has been learnt through centuries, do this!” Read, learn, study and then, in the material field, you will be taught to do this in this way, that in that way, this again in this way (gestures). Once you know a little, you can find your own method, if you have the genius for it! But first one must stand on one’s own feet and know how to walk. It is very difficult to learn it all alone. It’s like that for everyone. One must form oneself. Therefore, one needs education. There we are!

(To a child) Do you have something to ask? No? Is there anyone who has something to ask?
Questions and Answers

Mother, last time you said that often there is in us a dark element which... which suggests to us... which makes us commit stupidities. So you said that when one is conscious of this element, it must be pulled out. But does pulling it out mean... For example, when one is conscious that this element comes to make us do stupid things, then, if by an effort of will one abstains from doing it, can one say that one has pulled it out?

That one doesn’t commit stupidities?

By an effort of will. For example, one doesn’t do that action which one shouldn’t do.

Yes, yes.

Then, can one say that one has pulled out the element which was the cause?

One has sat upon it.

Then, how to pull it out?

For that, first of all, you must become conscious of it, you see, put it right in front of you, and cut the links which attach it to your consciousness. It is a work of inner psychology, you know. One can see, when one studies oneself very attentively... For example, if you observe yourself, you see that one day you are very generous. Let us take this, it is easy to understand. Very generous: generous in your feelings, generous in your sensations, generous in your thoughts and even in material things; that is, you understand the faults of others, their intentions, weaknesses, even nasty movements. You see all this, and you are full of good feelings, of generosity. You tell yourself, “Well... everyone does the best he can!” — like that.
Another day — or perhaps the very next minute — you will notice in yourself a kind of dryness, fixity, something that is bitter, that judges severely, that goes as far as bearing a grudge, has rancour, would like the evil-doer punished, that almost has feelings of vengeance; just the very opposite of the former! One day someone harms you and you say, “Doesn’t matter! He did not know”... or “He couldn’t do otherwise”... or “That’s his nature”... or “He could not understand!” The next day — or perhaps an hour later — you say, “He must be punished! He must be made to feel that he has done wrong!” — with a kind of rage; and you want to take things, you want to keep them for yourself, you have all the feelings of jealousy, envy, narrowness, you see, just the very opposite of the other feeling.

This is the dark side. And so, the moment one sees it, if one looks at it and doesn’t say, “It is I”, if one says, “No, it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself”, one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face; and with the knowledge and light of the other, one doesn’t try so much to convince — because that is very difficult — but one compels it to remain quiet... first to stand farther away, then one flings it very far away so that it can no longer return — putting a great light on it. There are instances in which it is possible to change, but this is very rare. There are instances in which one can put upon this being — or this shadow — put upon it such an intense light that it transforms it, and it changes into what is the truth of your being.

But this is a rare thing.... It can be done, but it is rare. Usually, the best thing is to say, “No, this is not I! I don’t want it! I have nothing to do with this movement, it doesn’t exist for me, it is something contrary to my nature!” And so, by dint of insisting and driving it away, finally one separates oneself from it.

But one must first be clear and sincere enough to see the conflict within oneself. Usually one doesn’t pay any attention to
these things. One goes from one extreme to the other. You see, you can say, to put it in very simple words: one day I am good, the next day I am bad. And this seems quite natural.... Or even, sometimes for one hour you are good and the next hour you are wicked; or else, sometimes the whole day through one is good and suddenly one becomes wicked, for a minute very wicked, all the more wicked as one was good! Only, one doesn’t observe it, thoughts cross one’s mind, violent, bad, hateful things, like that... Usually one pays no attention to it. But this is what must be caught! As soon as it manifests, you must catch it like this (Mother makes a movement) with a very firm grip, and then hold it, hold it up to the light and say, “No! I don’t want you! I — don’t — want — you! I have nothing to do with this! You are going to get out of here, and you won’t return!”

(After a silence) And this is something — an experience that one can have daily, or almost... when one has those movements of great enthusiasm, great aspiration, when one suddenly becomes conscious of the divine goal, the urge towards the Divine, the desire to take part in the divine work, when one comes out of oneself in a great joy and great force... and then, a few hours later, one is miserable for a tiny little thing; one indulges in so petty, so narrow, so commonplace a self-interestedness, has such a dull desire... and all the rest has evaporated as if it did not exist. One is quite accustomed to contradictions; one doesn’t pay attention to this and that is why all these things live comfortably together as neighbours. One must first discover them and prevent them from intermingling in one’s consciousness: decide between them, separate the shadow from the light. Later one can get rid of the shadow.

There we are, and now it is time. Anything urgent to ask? No?

Sweet Mother...

Ah!

264
... between mental preference and vital insistences, which are the more dangerous for yoga?

Those that one has! (Laughter)