Conversations
with Sri Aurobindo
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Pavitra
(Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire)

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry
Publisher's Note

The conversations in this book were recorded in 1925 and 1926 by the Frenchman Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, to whom Sri Aurobindo gave the name Pavitra. At the end of 1925 Saint Hilaire journeyed to Pondicherry, South India, to meet Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. For almost a year he had regular private conversations with Sri Aurobindo and, towards the end of this period, with the Mother. He was also a participant in the "evening talks" in which Sri Aurobindo spoke informally with the disciples who had gathered around him. Pavitra noted down these conversations from memory soon after they took place.

This book contains Pavitra’s record of his private conversations with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, along with eight "evening talks" with Sri Aurobindo. The Introduction is a talk presented by Pavitra in 1964 in which he spoke about his life before coming to Pondicherry. A sketch of his life, a note on the texts, and a glossary of Sanskrit terms have been provided at the end of the book.

Pavitra’s record was never shown to Sri Aurobindo for verification or revision. The reader should bear in mind that these conversations represent not Sri Aurobindo’s exact words but a reasonably faithful transcription of them.
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INTRODUCTION

A Talk by Pavitra

In 1964, Pavitra spoke informally about his life before coming to India – his upbringing in France, his experiences during the First World War, his visits to Japan and Mongolia, and his journey to Pondicherry. He shared these reminiscences with the students and teachers of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram International Centre of Education. Pavitra was the principal of this school. He was seventy years old at the time of this talk.
How difficult it is to be completely sincere!

I will try my best to be accurate, but what I will tell you is only the broad outlines of the voyage. I will not be able to convey to you all the stages of thinking, all the movements of feeling or even all the experiences, inner and outer.

I don’t know if you have seen a film on the First World War. You have seen some on the Second, and perhaps you know the main difference, at least the practical difference, for those engaged in the fighting. In the First World War, much of the four years it lasted consisted in what is called trench warfare; that is, the two armies faced each other in trenches. They had dug trenches, shelters, and they lived day after day, night after night, in conditions that were often difficult and sometimes dangerous, though not always, with the cold and the rain as enemies and, of course, sometimes enemy shells, bullets, illness and boredom.

Well, at that time I was a young officer. I was just twenty in 1914. I had completed – I am obliged to speak about myself because you have asked me to speak about myself! – I had completed my scientific studies. I was at the École Polytechnique. I had done a year at the École Polytechnique and, like all the young men there, I had undergone some military training even before entering the school. So in 1914, when war broke out in the month of August, I had to go for training as a private in an artillery regiment, after a year of school in which we had mostly done mathematics, physics and chemistry.

War was declared just the day before I was supposed to join my regiment. So I joined the regiment, but the conditions were different and we were immediately put “under pressure”.

That meant horse riding four or five hours a day, which was considered to be the best training for war. There was theory – anyway, it was rather hard, and at the end of several months, because of this military training we had undergone, we were appointed sub-lieutenants, sub-lieutenants in the Artillery, and in October, the end of October, four months after the declaration of war, we left for the front. I was in a battery, a junior officer in a battery of 105s – what the English call a four-inch gun. It was a new rapid-firing weapon that France was very proud of – interesting.

Well, at that time – I won’t hide it from you – I was a young man who had the same interests of any normal young man at that age. I was like all my companions – I had the same concerns, the same interests as those around me. I liked studies. In general I liked what I did because I preferred to like it rather than to dislike it – life is better that way! (Laughter) But when I look back at my past, I cannot say that I had any spiritual aspirations. I had been brought up in the Catholic religion, but it didn’t especially interest me. I never asked myself any questions, to tell the truth.

Well, during the war we sometimes had hard knocks, so to say, difficult times, but sometimes there was also a lot of free time to be filled. I don’t know how – it was probably the hand of destiny – I started reading some books on so-called psychic phenomena – that is, phenomena that science at that time did not study at all but brushed aside, considering it outside its domain, non-scientific.

There were all sorts of things. There were telepathy, clairvoyance, phenomena involving mediums – I don’t know if you have heard of them – all those things, even the pendulum and divination, all that is rather on the border of science. I approached everything with a scientific spirit, simply to know, telling myself, “Well, here is a whole domain that science doesn’t study!” Why? Nobody knows. I never practised, I was
never interested in the actual experiences of mediums, seeing the future and all that. That was not what interested me; it was the possibility of these phenomena, their existence. Do they exist? Are they true? Are they false? Why doesn’t science study them? It was not that I wanted to acquire them or know the future or things about myself — no!

Then gradually, from one book to another, I was led to read what in Europe are called books on occultism. They enable you to understand many things. I won’t mention the names of any authors. Anyway, I read all that one could read on the subject: what is called magic — not black magic, that didn’t interest me, but magic, the possibility of handling certain forces, of proving their existence; and then, moving on to the Middle Ages (because naturally, when one studies occultism, one must go back to the time when occultism flourished), the Kabbala, the secret initiatory societies, the Hebrew tradition, particularly the Kabbala, alchemy, the alchemists (in the spiritual sense, the transformation of nature) and then the modern occultists — the door to India.

I must say that it was Theosophy that opened the door to India to me, and for that I am extremely grateful. For one thing, in Europe there was not much else, especially at that time. It was the Theosophists who translated many of the sacred books of India and made them available to the Western intellect — one can almost say made them fashionable, though it was not yet a question of fashion — matters like reincarnation, karma, perfection on earth, the ideal of the Jivanmukta, which exist in Theosophy.

Well, for me, as far as I remember, when I found out about reincarnation and karma, they seemed quite natural to me; there was no need to discuss them. Never for a second, from the time I came across these ideas of reincarnation and karma, have I doubted them. I accepted them as a part of myself; they seemed obvious to me. I knew, besides, that one could not
prove them, so there was no point in discussing them; either one accepted them or one did not.

So with these ideas from India, I entered a new phase, a phase of... of aspiration for spiritual perfection. You see, there are two ways of studying the religions of India. One is from the outside, as the Westerners, the French, generally do, without participating in them, without living them: they study India as they would study, yes, a colony of bees or ants! One gives an account of what they think, what they do. But the other way, and the only one that interested me, was, well, to live it - first to understand it and then to live it. It was the ideal of perfection, a perfection that men could realise in the course of time, of successive lives, that really appealed to me, that seemed to me both true and worth living for.

Meanwhile the war was going on. For two years I was on what is called the front, moving from one place to another, always in the artillery, the 105s. And then for another two years or so, I was at an army headquarters. At headquarters, as an artillery intelligence officer, I had a job that was almost a desk-job, but it was very interesting because it meant collecting the information we had and giving it to the artillery corps of an army. An army comprised a variable number of army corps; each corps consisted of two or three divisions, each division contained two brigades, and each brigade was made up of a certain number of regiments (that is, several thousand men) so an army corps represented, well, one or two hundred thousand men at the front, with a considerable amount of artillery and twelve to fifteen air squadrons. My work involved collecting, examining, investigating, screening all that could be gathered by way of intelligence. And at the same time I had another work, a humane work of keeping contact with the units; the units at the front, the visitors, the foreigners, because after a while we had a lot of Americans, and there were Englishmen too.
But all the free time I had (there wasn't much, we were very busy) I devoted to reading, often late into the night. And more and more these ideas took hold of me; I gave myself to them, I devoted myself to them. And in a few years (from 1917 I can say, so in two years) my viewpoint changed completely. I had been — I cannot say even a materialist, because I didn't have any opinion on the subject — I had been, as I have told you, a young man who had received a scientific, logical, rigorous education, but who had never asked himself questions about these subjects; but once they had entered my thoughts, my feelings, well, I gave myself to them completely.

In 1918, there was an epidemic in France that at the time was called the Spanish fever or flu, an epidemic that lasted quite a long time and killed twenty million people throughout the world. (I recently saw a book on the subject.) Well, I had the flu exactly at the time of the Armistice — that is, in November 1918. I was at the front; we had just broken through the German lines and were marching towards Germany. It was on the German lines that I caught this flu, but it was not restricted to Germany, the whole world had it, all the countries.

That day, I can say, was the decisive day of my life. In the field-hospital at the front, under the tents where I was, the sick were dying. Each morning three or four people were dead. Well, I clearly remember the very strong idea that took away all fear of death from me: it was giving, self-giving, giving myself so that my destiny, my spiritual destiny might be fulfilled, whatever it might be, with the offering of my life, truly, sincerely, if I was supposed to die. And if I was supposed to live, well, consecration to the Divine.

I was twenty-four at the time, just over twenty-four. After that, I was demobilized quite soon and I had to take up my studies again. I did that in order to finish something I had started, without much enthusiasm; but anyway, I had nothing
else to do. So I finished the École Polytechnique, the School of Bridges and Highways, and I was appointed as a junior engineer in Paris. Then a very strong feeling seized hold of me that I could not live that life. You see, it was a life (in itself it had nothing that might repel me) it was the life of an engineer, with no lack of interesting projects; a whole section of the Seine, especially Paris, was under my jurisdiction, with all the new projects, the repairs, all that. But (how to put it?) I had had enough, it didn’t interest me; I did it because it had to be done, but my heart was no longer there.

And then, in 1920, I made the decision to give up that life and devote myself to the search for my spiritual teacher, my guru. I knew (I “knew”, well, for me it was certain) that my life was to be a life of spiritual realisation, that nothing else mattered to me, and that somewhere on earth, on earth, someone must exist who could give me, who could lead me to the light.

That was at the beginning of 1920, in the first few months of the year. I continued to work for a few months with increasing inner difficulties, and at last I asked to be discharged. You see, I had my whole family against me. This is normal. I had my parents, a father, a mother, a brother. None of them understood what I was doing or why I was doing it. My father may have understood. He was very understanding; he had followed me, he had followed me as well as he could – I mean he had tried to understand the reasons for my action, and he sympathised with me. But he said, “Look here, if these things, these psychic phenomena, interest you, all right. If you like, I will give you whatever you need to become a doctor and study them as a doctor would. For that, you can study medicine as long as you need, and then you can study these phenomena with all knowledge and method of a medical doctor.”

But what he could not understand was that I wanted to live that life.
"But no, you should not get involved, because then you lose your critical faculty. You can't find out the truth if you adopt, if you accept an idea and try to put it into practice."

These were the kind of difficulties I met with at home.

I can say I was a bit fanatical, like all beginners. For example, I haven't told you that at the front, since I was junior officer, I was in charge of the officers' mess, the officers' dining room. I set the menu with the cook and I held the purse. Well, I had become a vegetarian (laughter), with a lot of conviction. To be a vegetarian at the front, in a French officers' mess, I can assure you, was not easy (laughter), not easy at all! Everyone laughed at me, or else they pitied me a bit and wished that I would return to common sense, to the traditional French ideas about food.

I won't hide from you the fact that before the war I used to drink, to drink wine sometimes, like other young people of my age. I was not particularly fond of drinking, but, after all, drinking wine is something quite normal for the French. You should not think it is completely bad. When I tell you this, you shouldn't see it with (what shall I say?) your traditional outlook and say, "Oh, he must have been a very bad man" - because for Indians someone who drinks is usually a very bad man. I am not trying to blacken myself, nor to... I have simply told you the truth.

So I was a bit fanatical and I was ready to break everything to get out of that life. Then an opportunity came my way. I had friends who were leaving for the Far East, for Japan, and I decided to go with them. It brought me closer. For myself, I make no great distinction between Buddhism and Hinduism. Doesn't the same spirituality enliven all the religions of India? So I left for Japan. I went not as an engineer but as an ordinary individual, so I had to earn my living there. It was not very easy, it was not very easy in an Asian country like Japan, which did not welcome foreigners unless, as in India today,
they are famous or they bring in money or they are supported by business concerns. I was none of these.

But at last, after some ups and downs, quite a few difficulties, a rather hard time, I remained in Japan for four years. Lots of experiences: the study of Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, life in the temples, work in the laboratories and, at home in the evenings, the pursuit of my studies. My studies were in Indian, Japanese and Chinese spirituality. There were alternations of light and darkness, progress and stagnation—all the difficulties that come to those who are seeking the light and who seek it alone, or at least seem to.

Then a delegation of Mongolian monks, lamas, came to Japan and visited the laboratories, the factory where I worked. I made contact with them, because my search always brought me back to Asia, to Central Asia, as a place, a centre, beneath the peaks of the Himalayas, whether the north or south—Tibet, the Himalayas. And there I saw an opportunity. I wondered if it was not an indication to go to Tibet. I made their acquaintance. It was not very easy to talk to them because we had no common language. There was an officer of the old Russian army who was Mongolian, but he didn't know English or Chinese. And there was his wife who knew Chinese and English. So we were able to converse through this intermediary. It was not very easy! But gradually the possibility opened up of going to live for some time in their monastery, in their lamasery. It meant crossing northern China in order to get to what is called Outer Mongolia—the part of Mongolia that was under Chinese rule. This was in 1924. To put it briefly, I went with a Mongolian lama who was a very sensible, open man. I learned the Mongolian language during this time, because, well, I had to say something to him. So I applied myself to learning Mongolian. How difficult it was to find books to learn Mongolian!

So I went across northern China, Peking. I won't tell you
about the experiences, the adventures, all that, no, I don't have time, but my attitude was somewhat like this: “I know that I am on the way to the Truth, to the one who will lead me to the Truth. I don’t know where he is, I don’t know how to reach him. All I can do is to remain completely alert and open to any sign I may perceive. If I see a door opening up in any direction, I will go through it. If I don’t see anything, well, I will wait and see.” And even today, I think it was a good attitude.

And so I left. We had to cross northern China and reach a monastery where there were only Tibetan lamas. I stayed there nine months – a whole winter, winter in a cold country, but anyway, I can’t say that I suffered from the cold. The place was well protected, completely isolated from all contacts. I didn’t see a single European during those nine months; a few Chinese – merchants – and then Mongolians. It was sometimes rather hard. One was turned within, left to oneself, with the struggles, the periods of crisis.

But what dominated was: “My God, if only I knew what I have to do on earth, whatever it is, even sweeping the street, well, I will do it happily. But what is it that I have to do?” And you see, it was already three or four years that this had been going on. “What am I supposed to do on earth? Where will I find a clear indication?”

By this time I knew of the existence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through mutual friends. I even had, before I left France, an issue of the French Arya in my hands. I had seen it. I must say that it had not particularly attracted my attention. I had read the contents, I had said, “Yes, it is interesting.” But what I wanted was a contact with something. There had been, yes, the first chapters of The Life Divine, and then the pieces on the Eternal Wisdom. I had seen that, it was really interesting, but I tell you frankly, it didn’t touch me more than other things did.
When I was in Japan... I arrived there just after the Mother had left. It was in 1920 and the Mother had left just a few months earlier. So I heard about her, we had mutual friends, I was interested in what they told me about her, very much so, and that is why I decided to write. So I wrote to Pondicherry – I never got a reply! *(Laughter)* Never. I wrote twice. No reply. I think that at that time they weren't answering letters much. Perhaps... I hope that we answer a bit more often now. *(Laughter)*

Well, after that rather harsh winter in Mongolia, I felt very clearly that that experience was over and I must go somewhere else. But where? Well, to India. The time had come for me to go to India. Where? I didn't know. Since I was returning from Japan, I had to have somewhere to go. So to others, to my family, to my friends I said, “I am returning to Europe by way of India.” But within myself I knew that I would stay in India. But I couldn't say that because they would have asked me, “Where will you go?” “Oh, I don't know!” I had nothing material to base my inner certitude on, except, “It is in India that I have to find what I am searching for.” That was all.

I left. I set out again. I passed through Indo-China where my brother was a telecommunications engineer, with the wireless network of Indo-China. I stayed there a month and then went south and landed in Ceylon. I arrived in Ceylon with India in front of me – the door to India.

“Well, where will I go? Pondicherry is the nearest place, I'll go to Pondicherry. But I don't know what kind of welcome I will get there. I don't even know if I will be received at all – I have had no reply to my letters. I am going to Pondicherry because it is the nearest spot. After that? Well, we'll see. Maybe I could go to Adyar, which isn't far away. Maybe! I'll see.” But the inner attitude was always the same: to see if a door would open.

I waited for three weeks in Ceylon because railway traffic...
in India had been disrupted by floods. You see, it still happens! The railway lines had been cut off, so for three weeks I stayed in Colombo. Then one morning I arrived in Pondicherry by train. I put up at the Hotel d’Europe and immediately went to the Ashram. At that time Sri Aurobindo lived in the room where Anilbaran lives now, as you know.

So I asked if I could meet Sri Aurobindo. At that time, Sri Aurobindo was still seeing people, he still saw his disciples. He agreed to see me. I explained my position to him, what I was looking for, why I had left Europe, why I had come to India and what I hoped to find here. It was I who spoke the first day. He asked me to come again the next day.

In the evening I met the Mother. About the Mother I remember – I remember especially her eyes, her eyes of light. I repeated my story to her, more briefly perhaps. She spoke a few words to me and then I returned to my hotel. I remember I went for a walk on the sea-front and someone said, “Look, there are some Swadeshis!” – that meant, the people dressed in white who were members of the Ashram, There were not many. There were – how many? – about twelve or fifteen.

The next morning I went back and Sri Aurobindo received me. And it was he who spoke. He told me that what I was seeking... of course, I had explained to him my desire for liberation, I had told him that that is what I was seeking – not so much liberation from rebirth as liberation... liberation from myself, from the ego, from ignorance and sin, from falsehood, from all that makes up the ordinary human life. Liberation, Moksha, that was my ideal. I didn’t place it in some other heaven, I didn’t particularly want to avoid suffering – it was the weight of ignorance, of falsehood, of ugliness, all that. And more than avoiding something, I was looking for something positive. I was looking for light – not so much the avoidance of suffering, the end of suffering nor the end of falsehood, but Light, Knowledge, Truth.
Then he told me that there were some people in India who could give me what I was looking for, but they were not easy to meet, especially for a European. And then he continued. He considered that what I was seeking - union with God, the realisation of the Brahman - came first, as a first step, a necessary stage, but it was not everything. There was a second step - the descent of the Power of the Divine into the human consciousness in order to transform it, and this is what he, Sri Aurobindo, was trying to do. And he said to me, "Well, if you want to try, you may stay."

I fell at his feet. He gave me his blessing and it was over. You see, a whole chapter of my life had come to an end. The search, the search for the source of light, the search for the one who would lead me to the Truth was over. Something else was beginning - the realisation, to put it into practice. But this time I had found Sri Aurobindo, I had found my guru.

So that is how I came here.

As I have told you, I was accepted. There was no Ashram then. There were a few houses that belonged to Sri Aurobindo, and the Mother looked mainly after Sri Aurobindo - after some of the disciples too, but each one was left more or less to himself. The Ashram took birth a year later, in 1926.

So I had the immense privilege of seeing Sri Aurobindo every day, of listening to him, hearing him reply every day to the questions we asked him. But that is something else and I won't speak of it today.

Well, I have something to tell you! If you permit me to give you some advice that experience has taught me, I would say that what matters is to give yourself entirely to whatever you do. Whatever you do, do it completely - don't do it half-heartedly. And then, try to do something that interests you. If you have the choice of a career, a profession, well, do what attracts you, do what you would like to do. Don't look for a petty, easy life where you will be secure, where you won't have too many
problems, too many worries, too much work. That is not the important thing. The important thing is to do something that interests you, something you can give yourself to completely. And if you do that, well, you will always be guided. Because now, looking back on my life with the perspective that age gives, I see that from the beginning, behind all that I did, even the stupidities (and there were some), even the stupidities, even the mistakes and all that, well, behind all that there was the hand, the protective guiding hand that led me on. And finally, in the end, all that I did, all my experiences (this is not to justify them), all had a meaning. And finally I reached at the place I had to reach.

There you are! Thank you.
PART 1

Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

Between December 1925 and November 1926, Pavitra had regular private conversations with Sri Aurobindo. He also spoke with the Mother during the last three months of this period. These conversations were noted down from memory soon after they occurred.
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

Friday, 18 December 1925

Your return to France just now would be a defeat. You would drift away from the state of consciousness you have glimpsed. It could even be worse. Perhaps after a few years you would recover, but in any case you would be missing an opportunity and failing to do what you have to do.

You bring to your search a sincerity of heart and a mental capacity for learning (by reserving judgment). But your mental activity is a hindrance; you have to quiet your mind.

A new consciousness is seeking expression in you. In India there are people, Yogis, who can help you in this and give you a new birth. There will be difficulties in finding them, because you do not speak their language and they are often hard to approach. Still, this is one of the solutions before you.

This spiritual consciousness will give you Mukti. Personally, my Yoga would be completed if my goal were liberation. Mukti is only the first part. The second is to bring down the Light into all the instruments, to make them perfect and to become an embodiment of Truth. The universal Truth and Power will act through you as an instrument. Some persons are more or less unconscious instruments of the Shakti, but it is a question of being perfectly conscious.

This perfection of the human being is difficult, very, very difficult, and it is the work of a lifetime. One may fail and make a mess of one's life. It is so hard, in fact, that I do not advise anyone to take this path. However, there is a powerful aspiration in you and something that is trying to come down. So I place this ideal before you. If you choose it, remain here
with us and see what I can give you and what you can take from me before going further.

Sunday, 20 December 1925

There is a region in us which is above space and time, immobile, immutable at first; it does not participate in the waves of emotions and thoughts. The first aim is to centre one's consciousness in this region and keep it there; this is Mukti. In us, beyond our personality, the Purusha is revealed, with several attributes which are successively unveiled.

First he appears as the witness of actions and sensations, untouched, unmoved.

Then he manifests as the giver of sanctions: he consents or refuses his consent to a movement of Prakriti – desire or thought or even action. When such an order is given – for instance, the refusal to participate in a certain emotion – then even though the past is still strong, the being turns away from that emotion.

Then the Purusha is the Knower and in him is the knowledge. This knowledge has several forms: the lowest is intuition, then comes unitive knowledge. In any case, the senses are no longer the avenues of knowledge; it comes directly.

Finally, the Purusha reveals himself as the Ishwara, the Lord. Governing and acting through his instruments, he at last takes his kingdom in his hands.

This is established in two stages.

At first the contact is mental – the zone of the spiritual mind.* A person recognises his mind, his emotions and his body as not himself. He finds that he exists above them – above the spatial and temporal form. He has peace and certitude.

*Buddhi? – Pavitra's note.
To achieve this, the first thing, especially for you, is to stop the thoughts at will. One must first separate oneself from the mind mentally, for one is not yet able to do it otherwise; one must observe it and study it. When this is done, it becomes easy to stop the thoughts. This is the first lesson of Yoga. Thus, while talking with you at this moment, I have no thoughts. I see what is around me, but without thinking (unless I wish to think and call the thought). When I began Yoga I went to see Lele* and asked him to help me. He told me to sit beside him and practise this mental separation. At the end of three days, I succeeded and slew the thoughts.

There are other means of achieving this, such as sitting down and opening oneself to the influx from above, so that this process may be accomplished from above without personal effort. To you I would recommend the first method. Until one has this first realisation, everything is mental; intuition is only fragmentary, uncertain and intermittent. One has to go beyond. Gradually a strong aspiration brings about the inrush (sometimes abruptly) of something new into the consciousness. Sometimes it is peace, solid as a rock. Sometimes light, almost physical, which illumines everything, inner and outer. Sometimes guidance. In any case, ineffable peace is followed by knowledge. And all this comes down from above - not, as with the Tantrics, starting from the lowest chakra, but on the contrary from above.

So for you, the first goal is to separate yourself from your mind and recognise it as being outside you. Take the attitude of the witness. Let thoughts come, but don't let yourself be carried away by them. Practise during meditation. Then you have to infuse into daily life what you first established in meditation.

*Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a Maharashtrian Yogi under whose guidance Sri Aurobindo achieved complete silence of mind.
Tuesday, 22 December 1925

It seems to me that there are two levels in the mind: the first attends to images and forms, the second to words and ideas. Beyond them is the principle of comprehension (Buddhi). I can easily dissociate myself from the lower mind. When I recall to memory an idea or phrase I have just expressed, I can also remain detached. But when I reason, for example, I am one with my mind; more precisely, Buddhi is joined to Manas.

That is true, but there is still a third thing – it is the mind in itself, different from the forms and ideas it produces. It is a principle, calm and transparent, which pervades the whole universe. Most people, and you too, identify themselves with the mind and its activities; they confuse the mind with its activities. You must be able to separate yourself from Prakriti and know yourself as the Purusha.

The method I was taught was to kill the thoughts when they appeared before me, simply by looking at them steadily.

You say that you fall asleep because in fact the only form of silence the ordinary man knows, in regard to the mind, is sleep. But it has to be overcome; it is a known obstacle that all have to overcome. Reject sleep as you reject other difficulties of the lower nature. You have the strength to do it, being the Purusha.

Then one of the following two things will happen: either you will remain fully conscious but with the mind empty, or you will have this consciousness but not in the waking state; in other words, you will be in Samadhi.

So this work is the first step for you.
Friday, 25 December 1925

By remaining attentive and facing my thoughts, I found that they disappeared as soon as I looked steadily at them. The means of killing them, then, is to watch attentively and, when one becomes conscious of a thought, to thus destroy it. This succeeds quite well in the region of words, but less well in the region of images. I am able to remain in this state, conscious only of my attention, but the mind is not dead – I feel it behind the door. At certain moments I feel that I am soon going to lose consciousness.

Good, but you are still conscious of your effort to kill the thoughts. This is natural, but in time this too will disappear. As for loss of consciousness, don’t be afraid. It could be that besides the alternative presented last time, you may fall into a state of unconsciousness that you keep no memory of. You must try to avoid that and attain either the waking state without mind or Samadhi.

Is reading harmful? I don't really need it and mental work is sometimes tedious.

You shouldn’t make any mental rules. Do according to your inner needs. Reading is not harmful in itself.

Wednesday, 30 December 1925

I succeed for a few minutes in keeping myself attentive, empty of thought, but then the sensations return with new strength. I am not able to turn away from a noise once my attention has been caught, because I have no object of concentration.
The first step is not to withdraw from all thought and sensation, but to consider them as outside oneself. There are two regions in the mind, one active, the other calm and attentive, not carried away by the movements of Nature. It is this distinction you must make. You want to go too quickly, by suppressing even the thought, “I am not that.” At the moment this thought is your instrument.

Remain the spectator of your thoughts and sensations, recognising that they are outside you and do not affect you. Then the higher consciousness, the Purusha consciousness, will descend and take possession of your mind.

But never struggle, because in the mind what you violently reject comes back with greater force. To struggle is to enter into all sorts of difficulties.

Monday, 4 January 1926

I am able to fix my consciousness so as to remain awake, immobile, in silence. This state lasts for only a few moments. I find that my consciousness is then centred at a point near the eyebrow centre. This exercise involves great mental strain and a working in three centres: solar, eyebrow and occipital.

Later, this cerebral effort will disappear, for you will not work with the brain. This is an intermediate state. Your consciousness will be centred at a certain moment outside your physical body, above your head; then it will expand and you will become aware of its unity with the other centres.

The throat centre is not involved because it is not a mental centre, but only vocal. Most people who work with the emotional mind remain at the level of the solar plexus.
If one becomes aware of one's unity with the whole, does one then become capable of identifying one's consciousness with that of another centre of consciousness?

Not all at once. There are two stages. At first, you perceive your unity with other centres of consciousness in the Silence; it is in the Transcendent that you perceive the identification. Later, you realise this union even in manifested activity, in the play of forces, and at that time the union you speak of is possible.

I am still not able to realise practically the independence of my true being from my physical body – an independence I can conceive of mentally. Will I realise this division?

It will definitely come and you will realise that your body is an instrument you can put aside. This is the first aspect of Mukti – the recognition that you are free from your body.

Similarly, certain imperfections, such as the desire for approbation and respect, are very strong, though I fight them mentally.

Yes, and your being is still far more complex than you imagine. A time will come when you observe your inner being as though it were outside. There is a part of your consciousness which gives its sanction to this movement of Nature, because there is something in you which desires this approval, though your mind fights it. But the mind can only restrain; it cannot change anything.

For this change, this transmutation to take place, it is necessary, according to my current ideas, to attain the cosmic consciousness and thus get hold of the "universal solvent";
No, it is not enough. When you come down again from your cosmic consciousness, the same tendencies are there, and they always come back to life. But beyond the immanent aspect of the absolute Power – the aspect you realise in the experience of the cosmic consciousness – there is what may be called the transcendent aspect, which is creative and unlimited. This is the solvent that destroys and creates. The vital Purusha, which consented to a certain movement of Nature, must surrender to the higher life and then transformation is possible.

There are several levels in the embodied consciousness. The Upanishads speak of five Purushas connected to the five Koshas.

In the case where the soul succeeds in escaping from the world of forms and entering into Nirvana, in sinking into the Silence, is this fusion and loss of individuality final?

Naturally, this is what many people seek. The Absolute has two aspects as the Purusha: the transcendent immutable Purusha and the mutable Purusha, as the Gita says. The soul can realise its union with the first: Prakriti disappears and the soul escapes from the manifested world, which it considered a falsehood, an illusion or a dangerous trap. But this cannot satisfy, because the Absolute also contains the mutable Purusha, and if the soul wants an integral union, it must realise its oneness with the Divine in the manifestation as well as with the Transcendent.

Besides, to say that the soul has become finally absorbed in the Absolute is only a way of speaking. Is this liberation final? I am not ready to except this.

The Absolute has an aspect that knows itself and loves itself through us as intermediaries, and that is the reason for the manifestation.
What seemed so simple has become very difficult. These last few days I have had the greatest difficulty in separating myself from my lower mind. It took a great deal of energy to remain awake, attentive, and not let myself be carried away by the flood of mental images without head or tail, a sort of waking dream. Perhaps this is a temporary reaction?

What do you do when you try to calm your mind?

I fix my consciousness on a point and try to remain attentive, to watch the play of the lower mind. If I get this poise, it becomes quiet. Two positions, one with images, one with language. The one with language is more difficult. It is automatic: it does not attach itself to well-defined things, but to what preoccupies me most or to the last thing I have thought about. The process is often set in motion by the senses.

At what spot do you try to fix your consciousness?

Normally at the level of the Ajna.

The Ajna is the centre that corresponds to the automatic mind and it is this dynamic centre that is working in you. This is what constitutes the mind in most men, and if you are aware of it — if you notice its action during your ordinary activities — others are not aware of it.

The mind proper (the thought mind) is higher. The other is the mechanical mind, which is no longer of any use to you. It is a waste of the nature.

Have you ever tried to use the will?
Of course, but I don't know if it is really the will I used.

The will has three levels, and first it must be distinguished from purely mental effort. The first level is desire, corresponding to the solar plexus. The second, Ishita or Aishwarya, is a kind of command or order that either sanctions or does not sanction the work of Prakriti. When it is recognised that something should be or should not be, it ought to come into action. This is an indispensable power for the Yoga we follow. One can call upon it by a consecration and then one becomes aware of its action. This action is disturbed and imperfect at the beginning, but in time it gets perfected. Mental effort may succeed in time, but the action of the true will is infinitely faster.

I have experienced this action when, by a call that is at the same time an offering, I reach the highest levels of my being. Physically I have the sensation of an action descending from above my head.

That is it. Try from time to time to invoke it. A continuous action is not yet possible, but get back the contact now and then.

The third action of the will is a control, an absolute possession of Prakriti by the Purusha.*

Monday, 11 January 1926

The fundamental doctrine of the Theosophical Society, in my opinion, is the existence of the Masters. On the one hand this is the new message, the other doctrines (Karma,
reincarnation) being purely philosophical and already known. On the other hand, this is a vital point for the leaders of the Society, who affirm that they are guided by these very Masters. From the logical and philosophical point of view, the existence of Siddhas who have perfected their nature and remain to guide humanity, is reasonable and even very probable. I admit it on this ground. Putting aside the idea that the leaders of the Society are consciously deceitful, how to account for their assertions about their relations with the Masters, not only on the higher planes but also on the physical plane? Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott and C. W. Leadbeater, for example, have met living masters. If one admits these statements, how to explain the paucity of spirituality in the Theosophical Society in general, and the general trend - ethical, moral, but not spiritual? There is something erroneous here; I cannot find its cause, but it has made me keep away from the movement (missionary, sectarian, etc., etc.). These are very important questions for me.

There are, in fact, two very different questions. Their true answers are not of a mental order, but can only be understood through spiritual realisation. However, here is what I can say about it.

About the first point, I shall say only that the existence of perfect beings, “those who have nothing more to learn” as you say, is problematic. There is always something to learn in the Infinite. The Buddha who took a vow to remain on earth until the last man enters Nirvana is not Gautama but Amitabha.

*Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. Charles Webster Leadbeater and Mrs Annie Besant (mentioned later in this conversation) were the other two important leaders of the early Theosophical movement.*
The other question is to assess the relations of the leaders of the Theosophical Society with the Masters – that is, to determine the nature of the psychical experiences of these persons. Everything in their works, and particularly the little true spirituality one finds there, makes me think that they have never gone beyond the vital plane, which corresponds to what they call the astral plane. I set aside the case of deception. The first thing to be considered is wilful self-deceit, the fact that on this plane we see what we mentally want to see. This is a complex and marvellous realm, where the true and the false are inextricably entangled. Everything appears under a logical and seductive form, organised, but finally illusory.

Madame Blavatsky was an amazing woman, with strong intuitions, but someone in whom everything would get mixed up; she was incapable of discussing psychical facts critically. She did not want to, besides. What mattered to her was to launch a movement. And this impulse, this desire to organise, to exercise an influence, is characteristic of the vital plane. There are influences of all kinds there, whose one desire is to take possession of those who are high-placed in order to use them for their own ends. Not only the weak are their prey, but also the strong, for it is especially the strong they aim at.

After Madame Blavatsky, there was Mrs Besant. In the beginning she simply followed the lines of Madame Blavatsky; then it was Leadbeater who influenced her. She recognised this, however, at a certain point in her life ("the glamour he has put on me"), but as she had nothing of her own she returned to him.

What is special about the vital plane is that anyone who has a certain realisation there can make another person have the same realisation. One should not apply the criteria of ordinary life to this plane; this is the mistake that many spiritualists, metapsychists, etc. make. I know this by experience. I have old disciples who have deviated without my being able
to bring them back, so great is the force of deception. Others write to me letters full of visions they have had; they have seen me and I am supposed to have given them instructions. Now it was not me and those instructions I would disown. It so happened that several of them had the same vision at the same time, apart from small variations of detail.

On the other hand, if the Masters directing the Theosophical Society are perfect, they have surely perceived the nature of these influences and also known the value of true spirituality. How is it they did not warn their disciples and why does one find so little of this spirituality? I have met Theosophists, some of whom have had glimpses of the spiritual life, but in none of those I know has it really been organised. While in others, persons who don't claim to be guided by perfect masters, one often finds far more spirituality, as in certain Yogis and others.

Their conception is mental and ethical, not spiritual. And as an ethical conception, there is nothing remarkable.

In spiritual life, one must always be ready to reject all systems and constructions. For a time a certain form is useful; then it becomes a hindrance. In my own spiritual life, since I was forty, three or four times I have completely discarded and broken the system I had arrived at.

If our disciples at X could not be brought back, the fault lies in their ambition, that kind of spiritual ambition, so dangerous for a Yogi, which endows us with a special importance in human life. It is a big danger, and I think it was responsible for making the Theosophists fall. There is a core of true spirituality there, very small, surrounded by a mass of erroneous facts and psychical data. And in time even the core gets affected.

I am answering your question because, by breaking through the veil, you will reach this psychical region. Hardly one per cent can pass through it - due to their mental purity,
their mind does not get attached to objects in order to find satisfaction in them. And this is a great danger, a powerful pressure. One must be very strong and hold on to the truth in order to resist. This is why I am replying and not in order to speak about the Theosophical Society. I have nothing against it nor against any of the Theosophists, to whom I wish the very best. I am not against them.

As for the fact that some have seen a Master physically, an explanation is possible. When conditions are favourable, these influences of the vital plane can very easily materialise; they have sufficient mastery over matter for this. Of course they must be given these conditions.

But if the Asuras can do this, can't the Suras do it too?

Obviously, but they do it far less frequently; they are not in a hurry to impose their guidance. And then very strict special conditions are necessary — one must be on an absolute march towards the Truth.

If these are the conditions of the vital plane, is it nevertheless possible to free oneself from them? These forces obey laws; by knowing them one can free oneself from them.

Of course it is possible. Even illusions obey laws. Here there is an aspect of true occultism, not that of the Theosophists. This occultism seeks to understand and realise, not to mentally create. It is in a way an extension of science.

Monday, 15 January 1926

I am progressing, but slowly. I have not been able to apply the will as you described it. In this regard a curious thing
happens. In meditation when I look for a higher support in myself, when I try to invoke the deeper parts of my being, I only meet a void and I am unable to make any inner movement. In ordinary life, of course, either under the press of outer excitement or by themselves, such movements and their results are frequent. And in general, though meditation has had very perceptible effects on my general state, it has never had any tangible results.

There are two principal forces that help in the ascent of man. One is aspiration; it is emotive and has its' centre in the solar plexus. The other is higher mental and its centre is above the head. You act in ordinary life with the help of the first. In meditation your consciousness rises into the higher mind. The silence you seek is not for its own sake, but only to let this higher Force descend and rejoin the other. The old allegory of the ascending fire and the descending Sun. But your mind is not used to letting this Force pass through consciously, and as a result it does not know how to act. There is, then, no effort to be made; in your case it is better to remain immobile. Naturally, this depends on the case; there are people who are very active above the head, and they easily draw from this Force. Later one succeeds in calling it down at will.

When I try to become silent inside, I have noticed that I centre my consciousness by taking the help of the physical body. Then my attention gradually sinks deeper. But a moment comes when I must leave this point of support; then I don't know where to fix my consciousness. Either it returns to external things and I become quite awake and attentive to the outer world, or else I fall into a half-dream state, though I keep my consciousness attentive for a while.

It is not necessary to fix the consciousness anywhere. When
you begin to participate in the higher consciousness, you will find it spread out, encompassing everything, without any specific centre. One makes one's own centre for oneself above the head. In the beginning, what you are doing is natural— but let go. As for attention to the outer world, you will see at a certain point that all phenomena, all noises are part of you and so on. You will include them in your consciousness; they will pass through it. The half-dream state is not to be feared, but keep your consciousness attentive; it will probably shift inward then. But have you succeeded in quieting your mind?

Yes, in the first state where I take a support. When I let go of the support, I still cannot stop the passing images.

What kind of images? Objects and beings seen and known, or unknown to you?

I don't know. Some of them seem new to me, but perhaps I have seen them before.

And what do you do then?

I try to remove them.

That need not be done. Wait and observe. Perhaps these images indicate the first sign of clairvoyance. You may be seeing events that are happening at a distance. You have to take the scientific attitude and see what is there. This may be a precious faculty.

I have heard a lot about this faculty, but I don't think that the incoherent images I see could lead to it.

This may be the beginning.
All that you said about the Theosophical Society is undoubtedly quite true. I have understood and am not raising an objection. I have the feeling that a link has been cut. But I would like to ask one more question. The force that is behind me, which I feel, which guides me, which I call my master (without ever having seen him) and which some psychics have connected with a Master – what is this force?

These are problems that cannot be resolved solely with the mind. When your psychic being opens, you will see and understand; it can happen. But there are many things. All those who have a strong push towards the higher life have a similar experience. The mind travesties and clothes the Force in a form that pleases it or that it is used to: Christ for a Christian, and so on. First, there is the universal force, the Purusha, whose action is effective and guiding. Then there are the intermediaries in the great plan, at every level. Then again, those you are destined to meet can influence you, often without their knowing it. When the psychic being has opened and set foot on spiritual ground, it can judge. The mental being cannot.

Monday, 18 January 1926

I have succeeded in keeping my mind absolutely empty of thought for a few minutes. All the waves have stopped. But still my consciousness is fixed on the physical plane all the time; thus I hear and see, though the perceptions do not awaken any thought. But several times I have had the feeling of being on the point of passing beyond; my breathing became very difficult and everything went whirling around, though my consciousness remained calm and attentive. If I could have stopped my breathing, I would
It is a question of leaving the physical body, but it should not be tried at the moment; it is necessary to get more control first — to know, for example, how to guide oneself beyond. And other conditions are also necessary — for example, to be sure of not being disturbed. Of course, this state is what the Yogis are seeking and try to attain. Everybody cannot do it. In my opinion, it is not necessary for you to seek this state at present — for instance, by proper breathing.

No, you have touched the state of perfect silence.

Widen it; this does not mean to deepen it. But make it last steadily for a longer time and gradually let it encompass all that surrounds you.

Friday, 22 January 1926

These last few days have not brought much progress, for my mind was extremely distracted and disturbed by different mental pursuits. Everything has settled down now, but I don't see very clearly what I ought to do. My mind is divided into two parts. The first part, which uses language and reasons and formulates, is the part that falls silent. But a certain attention is necessary to prevent untimely thoughts from arising through the throat and disturbing this peace. The other part is attentive, its special function being the vision of inner images; its centre is the Ajna. This part has been inactive so far, but even so it is not always still; it is centred here and there and does not know what to do.

Thoughts, in fact, have their origin in the solar plexus; then they rise up through the throat and invade the brain, where they become conscious. The still mind has no definite lo-
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

...calisation; it is a matter of habit. For the moment you are localising it in the brain, but its true seat, which corresponds to the higher mental truth, is the Sahasrara. Above, this consciousness itself will spread out and become the cosmic consciousness.

There are two different points to consider. The first is to empty the active mind of thoughts and leave it motionless. This is a useful capacity. The second is to remain completely detached from the thoughts that may arise in this active mind. Later you will see the thoughts being formulated there, not rising from below but coming from the surroundings or from above. And you will have to learn to recognise the Truth.

So you must learn to regard these thoughts as external objects, never allowing yourself to get carried away.

Besides, from now on, while keeping the lower mind still, you may “look above” in order to gradually centre your consciousness there.

When I do that, my consciousness oscillates between the above and below, because it still has to watch the lower part. Moreover, sound, a prolonged sound for example, does not raise any thought, but it captures my attention, which gets riveted there.

This is wrong concentration! Simply put that aside. In the cosmic consciousness you will have the impression that this sound is occurring somewhere in this consciousness, but it will no longer bother you.

Monday, 25 January 1926

At times I can keep my attention fixed, “turned above” (towards the Sahasrara) and my mind is calm and empty...
Something curious happened this morning. I woke up with waves of powerful vibrations at the top of the head and in the pit of the stomach. They were even physical; my scalp was sensitised. These vibrations corresponded to a sort of anguish, though I was not frightened and I reproduced these vibrations in order to study them.

You must be prepared for such things. You have called and the Force is descending, preparing the parts of the nature, right down to the physical itself. Everything in man is opposed to the working of the Force, and it has to be transformed. Even the cells will be transmuted later.

The feeling of fear has to be put aside completely. Even when an experience is likely to be dangerous, one must remain calm and in control of oneself, for without that danger comes immediately. The help is always given if one remains in control. Here it is a simple preparation – a response to the call given, a response, moreover, that does not always come.

The mental states are becoming more pronounced – joy, calm and fervent seeking on the one hand, but also deep sadness when I am separated from my inner light or when my mind, disturbed by some outer cause, becomes a great obstacle to the sadhana.

It is normal and connected with the psychic being.

(Then we spoke of Z, whose letter, announcing her impending departure from France, had just come. A.G. asked

*At that time, Sri Aurobindo was often called A.G. (Aurobindo Ghose) by his disciples.*
me several questions, wanting to know what stage she had reached and whether she had succeeded in separating the true psychic from various false creations. I know almost nothing about it. Is she coming here to realise her original plan of a small colony in North India?)

Monday, 1 February 1926

All these days I have had many difficulties with my mind. At certain times, when I succeed in rising above it, everything is all right, but at other times I am overwhelmed. Meditation is laboured and without much benefit. At other times I feel how thin the veil is. The best method I have found consists precisely in climbing as high as possible – then the lower being is calm. The three centres (Sahasrara, Ajna and solar) are then united. When I am not in meditation the mechanical mind is very restless and I have difficulty even in reading – in concentrating on anything at all. Where does this difficulty come from? Should I put even more energy into my meditation and my effort?

What is happening to you is common. The dynamic mind (not the mechanical, which only repeats the actions and thoughts of ordinary life) acquires even more strength when the other higher parts are calm and when, at certain times, it is reduced to silence. When one relapses during meditation, one loses one’s feet in the whirlwind. It is a common experience. Don’t be afraid of it, but continue to detach yourself more and more. When this detachment is complete, the waves will gradually become less powerful and recede. This experience has to be extended to the whole conscious life and not only to the period of meditation.
The moment you feel tired, you should not force yourself. Overdoing will result in another delay. It is better to go slowly but surely.

Here is Z's letter, which you lent me. According to me, she is at the stage when one doesn't know how to distinguish between the creations of one's mind and the truth. In her book she is very positive and believes herself bound, in the name of Christ, to spread it to the world. In her letter she expresses doubts about her capacity of discernment - but then why attach so much importance to what is so doubtful? She writes, "The Force connected with it is, and because it is and I know it to be my Force (and your Force if you like), It cannot deceive me." Here is exactly what makes so many people stumble. They imagine that because they have an experience of something higher than the ordinary mentality, everything is the truth. But when the universal Force enters an individual, there is an entire part of him that rises up and tries to take advantage of this Force for its own benefit, to use it for personal ends. Her book seems to be a dialogue between her higher illumined mind and her ordinary mind. One gets the impression of a conversation between her conscious self and her higher being or another being or a god.

But how many things creep in from below upwards! I know it, having myself remained for a long time in this state. But I always kept a critical mind, and my attention was alerted by doubtful mixtures. This is a common experience and unless one has a special tact it is extremely difficult to distinguish the truth in the beginning. One must have an absolute sincerity - not the sincerity of the ordinary mind but something deeper, a push that never lets one stop till the truth is reached, the whole truth, and one presses ahead.

You easily gave up your ideas when you came to me, but if they had been mixed with personal psychic experiences, it would have been far more difficult.
If there is a little pride in us — quite unconscious, even hidden beneath humility — it makes us exaggerate our personal importance and we believe we are called to something special. So she writes this book, takes disciples, and so on. It is a common trap.

Let us hope that the doubt she expresses in her letter will help her to shed the illusion.

Friday, 5 February 1926

These last few days have been better — concentration is easier and also detachment of the mind. I can separate myself from the mind and observe its action. But when I try to make it completely still, I can do so only by concentrating near the Sahasrara, trying to separate myself from the body, and then the breathing becomes difficult.

There are two ways of becoming conscious of a higher world. One is to send a part of oneself there, all the while remaining in one's physical consciousness. The other is to leave this physical consciousness and enter into a kind of trance, which may verge upon catalepsy or coma. You are not in a condition to try that. And probably there is a confusion in you between the two movements — one of quieting the mind and the other of going out of your physical body.

That is likely. When I meditate, I am aware of certain movements that I locate in my vital body. They are not physical, though I feel them physically, especially between the chest and head and within the head.

There are movements in the higher body and they are felt even physically. But most of them, as your breathing trouble
proves, are the result of an effort to go out of your physical body. They are not necessary. You can simply become aware of the shift of your consciousness from one point to another.

Now that you can observe the calmness of the mind and separate yourself from the action of the mind linked to the physical, you must give up these efforts and remain in an expectant attitude, open to the working from above – without making an effort to go towards that which is above, but, knowing it is there, offering yourself for its descent. Don’t even make an effort to “see” or “feel”. Quiet everything below and wait – make a simple aspiration towards what you know is near.

Thursday, 11 February 1926

I must in fact have confused two movements: quieting my dynamic mind and going out of my body. As a result, I have had to work all over again to get mental silence. I can get it, though not always, because the dynamic mind is very active and I am always obliged to keep an eye on it. I also get a kind of relative peace: I am motionless, attentive, in a sort of transparent surrounding. But this never lasts very long. It is another peace, deeper, that I want to acquire, one that will destroy the feeling of “me”.

A difficulty comes from trying at the same time to keep the mind silent and to look beyond, making this silent and attentive offering.

These last few days, I forced the meditation a little too much and the tension has been too great. I have come back to three hours a day. Dental neuralgia. Why is this feeling of personal effort so strenuous? It is not inertia and rest that I want, but peace in action, the cessation of individual effort.
The deeper peace cannot come till the “lotuses” are open and the Force descends to take possession. Moreover, a distinction has to be made between the real individuality and the illusory sense of the ego. The true individuality is a small portion of the universal consciousness, and even when it seems to merge in this consciousness, the distinction is nevertheless there. It permits organised action, which would be impossible without it.

As the supreme Force takes possession of you, this sense of effort will diminish; but separate action will disappear only with perfection. Besides, other difficulties have yet to come. Your active centres are the centres higher than the solar plexus; the others are asleep. With their awakening, the mind, even quieted and controlled, will again be invaded and submerged. The real difficulties come then. In the mind there is always an element that helps, but here everything is directly linked with life and action.

Since you feel the possibility of uniting yourself with Nature through the solar plexus, do that when you are not in regular meditation.

You also say that what you do outside of meditation seems to make your mind active again. That doesn’t matter – you cannot do nothing. Everything takes its own time. And you are among those who have built everything on the mind – hence the difficulty. Others open easily. But don’t be impatient; it prolongs the sense of personal effort.

Monday, 15 February 1926

The effect of sadhana makes itself felt especially outside of meditation. It is becoming more and more easy for me to assume the role of witness of the actions of the mind and even of the body. From this more quietude comes, but the mind is not yet silent. This separation has made me conscious of the
disorderly chaos of the dynamic mind, so at first I thought it was becoming more active, while really I was simply conscious of its action.

The main thing is precisely to deepen and increase this consciousness – this witness or Purusha consciousness. Silence of the mind is certainly a precious faculty, but it will come in its time. The widening of this consciousness will bring about the influx of a deeper consciousness. Besides, isn’t this witness silent?

Before coming here I used to smoke, but then I stopped. Now I often have the desire to smoke. What should I do?

There is no absolute rule and it is not of very great importance. I too smoke.* But to abstain from something gives a clearer atmosphere. Besides, you have stopped; it is better not to begin again.

The time spent in sleep seems wasted to me. Is there not a way of using it better?

Is it wasted? Everything in sadhana is not conscious effort. Besides, it is a very difficult thing, which comes at the end. The body rests; but you have nothing to replace the torpor of the inner being. Later, sleep gradually gets organised in its turn.

Monday, 22 February 1926

I am continuing the separation of myself from the mind.

*Soon afterwards, Sri Aurobindo gave up smoking.
I can easily enough position myself as an inactive spectator of the movements of the personality. In these conditions I still exist as a mental being, endowed with the “I” and centred in the brain. But behind this mental self I can discern another state, free from all relation with manifested activity. There lies my true self, which uses the mental self as a window to look out from. What is this true self? Thus far I have only had a faint experience of it. I distinguish nothing; I have the impression of a void, a nothingness, but I also have the impression of a veil behind which lies a Presence.

When you are a spectator, are you active or passive?

Passive. It is not a question of witnessing a procession of images, of being the spectator of an action unfolding before me. The mental images are vague, fragmentary, like the waves of a sea growing calm. Otherwise, the sensory impressions often give rise to vivid images which are a cause of trouble.

Do you have the feeling of being a mental being?

When I remain on the level of the mind, yes; but when I can rise above it, the being that I am is not mental. The mental being is a mask assumed by the true self.

I see the way clearly, and I know that if I could make the complete and definitive surrender to the Divine Force, it would itself take charge of the Yoga. This self-giving has been made in my soul. My mind has accepted it, but there are certain points in the vital being which hinder the perfection of the giving and pull me down at times. But now, even these slips I see with an equal eye and offer them to the Divine Force. The good movements and the bad, all
are parts of the process. Formerly I used to get upset easily; now I am more calm.

Good. Now you have only to continue. Is there anything else?

As for Z's letter, what are you going to reply to her?

That I am waiting for a telegram announcing her arrival in order to go to the station to receive her. There is no need to go to Madras or Trichinopoly.

Evidently she is coming here with this plan of work - imaginary work. India is not what she thinks. India is India. After a short time every foreign element either gets absorbed or rejected. And life here is different from life in Europe. These ideas about a work to be done are common. It is the mental being that invents its own inspirations: a part of the mind rises up above and while coming down it takes on the nature of a revelation. The mind wants to achieve something and is looking for a great and important work. But all work, even the most humble, has the same value if it is the work one ought to do.

There is something true behind; it is the idea of a work to be accomplished. And that work is the divine work - but one has to be perfect to be able to undertake it. There are many men whose work has no need of perfection; they vaguely feel an impulse, the mind mixes in its own desires and then they go on like that. But I am speaking of those who have to accomplish a spiritual work; for them the work will be found when the instrument is ready.

Of course, all work is a preparation. Your other friends seem to be in the same position as Z. It is the mind that is pushing them, though they are quite unaware of it. They must learn to put aside this illusion; then all work is good for Yoga.

But I wouldn't advise you to say all that to Z. I don't know
if the mere fact of coming here and listening to what I have to say will be enough to make her see the truth. It may be that she needs to have her own experience. For it is the experience of life that is the touchstone. So long as one remains in abstractions, one doesn’t see the crucial point; but when you try to realise something, experience teaches you. It is necessary for the whole being to know the truth. If she doesn’t give up her idea, this tendency will remain there, intact, ready to reappear, and the final results may be bad. It may be better to let her have her own experience; that of another does not suffice.

You may write to her that you are engaged in sadhana and that for the time being you have given up all other work. If she wants to see you, she may do so here.

It is very dangerous to believe in one’s inspirations about work. This happens especially to those who are very impatient, who have a strong desire for realisation. They don’t see that it is their mind which is sending messages to their mind. The true work to be done does not present itself under this form, and the method of working is also completely different.

Monday, 1 March 1926

During the past week there has not been much progress. I cannot manage to get out of my mental prison and my mind doesn’t want to yield. There are two inner movements which I practise successively: first, while keeping the mind as quiet as possible, I try hard to open myself to a higher perception, to become aware of the higher mental reality; the other movement is to detach my inner being from action and from the mental level, in order to establish myself as it were, in the higher mental region. Are these two movements right?
They seem to me to be two aspects, active and passive, of the same effort. But it is always with the mind that you are making this effort; this is inevitable at the beginning. But the calm that comes is not an effort – it is a substance, a "mental stuff".

I understand this mentally, but I have not yet realised it. I always have to make an effort, quite a strenuous one, for it engages even my physical brain, where I feel it. When I lift this pressure, the waves resume their movement. I am also very easily disturbed by outside noises. Even when they don't awaken any thought in me, they draw my attention sharply, which gets riveted to them.

You will feel them occurring somewhere in your widened consciousness, but without their disturbing you; indeed, everything will seem as though it were outside you. That is my experience. When I began Yoga, I came to an impasse, unable to go further. My brother then directed me to a Yogi who had certain powers. I remained with him for ten days. He told me to sit beside him and consciously drive away any thought that would appear. I did this and after three days my mind was calm and peaceful, unwavering. Thoughts floated before me, I saw them and was aware of them, but I was no longer their plaything. When I left, since I was the political leader, I was asked to make a speech somewhere. I refused, saying that I didn't have a thought in my mind. But the Yogi told me to go, since the thoughts would come of themselves. And it was true. In the same way, I had to write for the newspapers; and when I went back to Bengal, I had to speak at several stations on the way. Always the mental work was done of itself, without my

*Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. By following his instructions Sri Aurobindo attained complete silence of mind.*
being its plaything, in detachment and peace.

This calm is mental at first. There are two parts in the mind, one that reflects the activity of Prakriti, another that shares the calm of the Purusha.

I understand quite clearly. The only result attained so far is greater calmness and a deeper peace, less easily disturbed by the little things of life, more intuitiveness and a greater capacity to unite myself with what is around me.

That is already something important. Continue, and also develop this feeling of union with Nature which you have.

Monday, 8 March 1926

This week there has not been much progress. My mind is sometimes tamasic, sometimes rajasic. At times outside noises are the cause of difficulties; they resound with much more force as my mind becomes more calm and empty.

What movements are you making?

Always the following two movements: having quieted the mind, either to remain attentive to the influence from above, or to separate myself from the quieted mental being and try to realise my existence above the mind, as in the brief experience I glimpsed once.

If you succeed in keeping out all thought, in reaching absolute passivity, three things can happen, in fact. Either a profound calm descends and takes hold of one, or the consciousness separates from the outer world and reaches another level, or, lastly, the invasion of outside impressions becomes all-power-
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

ful. And if one of the first two things is not achieved, then the third sets in. Hence the importance of making everything quiet while remaining attentive to the higher influence — open to the heights, so to say.

It is difficult for me to keep this attitude and aspiration when I silence the thought, for it is thought that helps me to arouse them.

Why? Because you think it is difficult and you are not used to it. But it is important. Make an effort to do this. If your consciousness leaves the physical level, that can of itself shut out all sensation. But in any case, you will have to develop it; you may as well do it now.

I suppose these difficulties are common — such as the fact that the mind is trying by every means to keep its grip on me and toss me violently here and there.

Quite common.

It would seem easier to overcome the causes of disturbance by retiring from the world. It is this feeling, no doubt, that has given rise to the Sannyasin’s aversion to the world. But I realise that there is another way, that of mental control.

Yes. Besides, the shrunken world in which the Sannyasin moves very often becomes a theatre of the same difficulties and struggles — and it is the small things that take on importance. It is quite useless to cut oneself off like this. Many have felt this. An old Yogi in Benares told me that if he could start all over again, he would change his whole method in this respect; but he was too old. Those who have long abandoned the world rarely can return to it. They have lost the ability and something in them
would not be able to bear it. If here we retire a little from human contact, it is not for the same reasons, but mainly to avoid the shock and pressure of the thoughts others direct towards us.

Is this experience I am preparing myself for what has been described as a second birth?

Yes – but in this Yoga one must pass through many new births!

Wednesday, 10 March 1926

In meditation the whole mind is quiet. The faculty of forming images disappears and as well as that of reasoning, of putting out ideas, and I remain immobile, incapable of any inner movement. There is no change in the consciousness, only in the instruments of this consciousness. What should I do in meditation? Should this new state be brought into the ordinary life?

At first, the mind is divided into two parts – one part whose movements are activated by Nature, the other which shares the nature of the Purusha and remains immobile. It is now necessary to extend the power of this immobile part in order to remain the witness of the changes of the other part. Thought will seem to occur in front of the mind, and it will become aware that it is universal Nature which activates the play of thoughts. You must move towards this universalisation. Thoughts will come from outside and you will see them taking shape in you. You will also experience that you have power over them: you will be able to make a choice, to refuse a movement, and so on. This is the beginning of mastery. The immobile part of the mind will also have to be seen as the
reflection of a vaster universal Purusha above you. From both sides you must free yourself from the limited self. You should relax the pressure you have been putting on the mind in order to master the thought and be free from it. Insist on the witness attitude. When a thought comes, examine it, see where it comes from, follow it.

The two parts you are separating in this way will later have to be united once again.

*I have the feeling that there is only one part, with two possible states, one active, the other passive and inactive.*

At first it is necessary to emphasise the division before making the synthesis. You will experience that it is not you who is thinking, but Prakriti; this is a first liberation. The faculty of thinking has not been taken away from you, but thought seems to be outside yourself.

*But there is no change in the consciousness and this state has nothing spiritual about it.*

True, but it is a preparation of the instruments and as such it is very important.

Saturday, 13 March 1926

*Master, there is something I don’t understand very well. Suppose I am meditating. At first there is quite a lot of activity of the semi-automatic mind, which continues the original movement. Gradually this activity becomes calm and stops; then I find myself before the quiet mind. But there is another activity of the mind, a kind of inner language that seems to be activated by myself. It is with*
this thought that I tell myself for example, “Now I am observing my thoughts... Where does this one come from?... Now all is calm... I must stop talking to myself like this” and so on. It is also possible to completely stop this activity. Where does it come from? Its laws are those of the mind, but it seems to reflect some purpose of the Purusha, or to serve him as an instrument of knowledge and action. If it were activated by Prakriti, Prakriti would be struggling against herself. On the other hand, how can the Purusha, who is calm and immutable, bring about a change? If there were really no change in him, this would be impossible, wouldn’t it?

At first it so happens that Prakriti does struggle against herself – some parts struggle against others. But the Purusha is not totally inactive. The inactivity of the Purusha reduced to the sole role of passive witness, is that of the Sankhya: the Purusha is the Sakshi. But even then he can give or refuse his consent; he is the giver of sanction, Anumanta. And Prakriti works not only for herself, she also works for the Purusha – she executes. But the Purusha is more than that. He does not execute, his activity is not effective, but he is the Knower and Lord (Ishwara), and what he decides, Prakriti executes. In most people the Purusha is hidden behind all the mental activity. There is, no doubt, a consent to the play of Prakriti, but the Purusha is not free then – Prakriti throws her activity on the Purusha. The Purusha must first recover his attitude of witness. Then he sees for himself that he has a certain power over the activities of Prakriti.

Is this consent of the Purusha conscious? Or is it something much more profound?

It is not in the mental ego; that is why it seems unconscious. But when the Purusha is free, it becomes conscious.
This part that I call myself, which looks at the quiet mind without taking part in its activities, is this the Manomaya Purusha?

Yes.

Is the consent of the Purusha individual? Is it not the universal that determines it?

There is the universal Purusha as there is the individual Purusha, and there is that which transcends them both. This individual Purusha is distinct, though not separate (he does not feel himself separate) from the whole. And when he is fully conscious, he has direct access to the Transcendent. Without this individual Purusha, no organised action would be possible. There are many sadhaks who try to eliminate this action. For example, the stage of the Paramahamsa in which one is absolutely unconscious of one's activities, be it as a child or one inert or one carried away like a leaf in the wind, is a phase preparatory to total cessation. When the impetus given ceases, there is a final rejection at the time of the dissolution of the body. But we, we do not want cessation, but to replace limited action, circumscribed by limited knowledge, by true action, governed by knowledge of the Truth. Thought is a means of knowledge, but it is the lowest means. When the Purusha is disengaged from Prakriti, he has all knowledge in him, direct. He knows directly by a sort of vision, by direct contact with the Truth. For example, when you are angry you don't need to think, "I am angry" you know it without thinking. Direct knowledge is similar. Even when later one translates this knowledge into mental terms, it remains independent of them. Besides, only a part, fragmentary and deformed, can be translated. That is why I find it so difficult to express myself in words. If you had developed this faculty in yourself, I could have shown you the Truth directly without
I am aware that I exist independently of my thoughts, but then I am weak and feeble, without knowledge and action.

A new state has to be attained. You will see that your knowledge is not limited by thought.

In the same way, I don't see that thoughts are aroused in me by Prakriti. I know that the mind is not myself, but the thoughts seem to be born in the mind.

Yes, but in the universal mind, which formulates them in you. So long as you are confined to the physical brain, naturally you cannot have this understanding. But later you will be able to perceive this action of the universal mind, which projects the thoughts into your mental field.

How can one achieve that?

Continue to stress the separation. You say that you can silence even the inner language, guided by the Purusha. Can you also separate yourself from him?

Yes, I observe him as outside myself.

Stress the separation even more. There are stages like that to go through. People remain at one stage or another for varying periods of time.
Monday, 19 April 1926

This whole week I tried to withdraw into the silent mind, but without much success. I have not yet returned to the point where I was before the arrival of X. But that great peace is there, behind; I have the impression of a transparent atmosphere. I wonder whether this is not the experience the Christian mystics describe as the “glassy sea” and the Japanese as the “Crystal Palace”?

There are two principal forms under which one becomes aware of it: one is like the feeling of a transparent motionless sea and the other like that of an ethereal expanse.

Last time you spoke to me about psychic knowledge and its character of truth. Does this knowledge concern facts, beings and events of the manifested world or simply metaphysical truths?

The word “metaphysical” suggests mental knowledge, but in psychic knowledge there is a nearness, a concrete reality very different from intellectual speculation.

To say that it brings material knowledge would be wrong – that is not its field. It transforms the being into a being of truth, a flame of aspiration for the truth. Psychic knowledge would rather be a contact, a feeling. When one says that the heart knows better than the head, one expresses something that comes near to it, although there is a gulf between emotion, feeling, and the psychic. The psychic being receives the truth but does not create it, as opposed to the supramental. There is a difference between the two.

The faculty of recognising the truth at first sight comes from intuition, one of the forms of the lower supramental knowledge. The true, unerring knowledge is knowledge by identity.
Steiner* distinguishes three degrees of occult knowledge: imaginative, inspired and unitive; the last, which cannot err, is probably knowledge by identity.

The first form of intuition is cloaked in mental forms that distort it. Moreover, the mind is not satisfied with what it receives and it crystallises everything around its own additions. There is a little that is true and much that is false.

Besides, the mind learns to pass off its data under the guise of intuitions. When the being begins to ask for intuitive knowledge, the personality sends its desires and prejudices disguised as intuitions. Thus at the beginning intuitive knowledge is not very sure; then it develops, but even before it is brought to perfection other modes of knowing develop.

There are four grades in intuition, which is the elementary form of supramental truth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intuition proper</th>
<th>Sporadic and irregular, supplying isolated elements. It gives the impression of remembering a latent, past or subconscious knowledge.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discernment</td>
<td>Here there is a process, a non-intellectual activity that accepts certain elements and rejects others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Something comes from outside and unfolds within. Like a voice that speaks in you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Like a vision.</td>
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*Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), German philosopher and educationist.
I thought you would like to join us in the evenings, once or twice a week. Which day suits you?

Gladly. For me any day is suitable.

I will let you know later the days on which you may come.

Monday, 26 April 1926

This week my meditation was better, deeper and more regular. I feel the Force descending into the Anahata and Muladhara centres and even into the legs. At times my legs become stiff. Also a greater calm which, if I could apply it directly to the mind, would quiet the whole mind by its very descent. Once I happened to see flashes of light.

You say your legs become stiff. Do you feel the Force descending into the legs?

At least I become conscious of my legs; there is a working of the Force there.

If you don't feel the Force descending there, but are only conscious of your legs, it may be that the Force trying to descend is encountering an obstacle and this is the cause of the stiffness you feel. When the Force descends and presses down, one is unable to move for some time after the meditation – it is such a pressure. However, one can remove this inability to move by applying the Force itself. But if there is stiffness, perhaps there is struggle.

*Sri Aurobindo met regularly in the evenings with some of his disciples. Their informal conversations later became known as the “evening talks”.*
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

The calm you speak of, what is it?

The experience is not complete. I know that I could make this Force act to calm the mind, but this has not been done yet.

All this work is necessary on every plane, in order to make possible the opening and possession of the whole consciousness.

I want to say something about smoking. I used to smoke. When I came here I stopped smoking. But when the Xs came, gradually I started again, just now and then. Then I stopped once more. Lately, I have not smoked for ten days. But the desire has come back very strongly. I would really like to get rid of it, for I am not its master.

If the desire is simply nervous it can easily be managed, but if it finds a support in the vital and the mind it is more difficult. In principle there are two methods. The first is to cut off everything abruptly – to make a firm resolution and by an act of will refuse consent; when the desire comes, to withdraw from it and let it have its play below, unless one is able to throw that out too. The desire becomes weaker and weaker. The other method is to give the desire a little satisfaction when it comes and then to reject it. To give it a little Bhoga. But one has to be careful to make this only a means to arrive at rejection. Not to indulge it, because without rejection the resistance is unending.

These are the two methods used by Yogis.

I have fought for several years, more or less, but I don't seem to have come to any result. I want to be free from desire. Then smoking becomes a matter of indifference. This
is my experience in the case of sex. I had to struggle very hard for several years; then the desire suddenly vanished and left me quiet. Still, I know it isn’t dead and that if circumstances were different it could wake up and come to life again.

That always happens when one fights it out. As for myself, I smoke a little, but for me it is all the same and my mind is just as calm when I don’t smoke.

But in my case I become have the slave of tobacco; that is why I want to free myself from it. Anyway, I am going to do my best.

Monday, 3 May 1926

Nothing new in my sadhana. The mind does not quiet down, though I feel the Force descending into me. It is no longer, as at the beginning, vibrating waves going straight to the Muladhara. It is now a calmer Force which flows gently and penetrates into me.

Where does this Force come from? From above?

If I localise it in space, I would say that its origin is above the head. I try, moreover, to unite with this Force at that spot.

Where is your consciousness?

In the head.

At the top of the head?
When I am able to disengage myself and forget my body and the sensations, my consciousness can be centred outside; but that is extremely difficult for me.

It is not necessary to forget one's body. If your consciousness were established at that spot, you could continue to receive sense impressions, but you would look at them from there.

I would see them as outside myself?

At least as different from the calm zone, which would be like an outer layer of your consciousness.

At present I am identified rather with this outer layer and I observe the calm inner layer. But I am trying to open myself as best I can to this Force. Where is the difficulty – in the mind or in the physical?

It is in the mind. But often a certain amount of time is needed to obtain the first result. You have only to persevere.

In my efforts to bring about this separation, I cause movements in the nervous fluid, so I often have neuralgia.

It is no use making these efforts. It is rather through a calm will that this separation comes. When one makes efforts, headaches or other little disorders often appear.

The mind will not always be calm, but there will be a region that is always peaceful, inaccessible to movements, which only touch the outer part.
Monday, 10 May 1926

No great change. My mind seems to be more and more outside myself and I can look at its activities impassively. It tries to take advantage of everything to cling to its old way of feeling and acting, but even its sudden jerks no longer disturb me as they used to do before.

To gain this calm, which is based on the perception of the immutable Purusha, is the beginning of realisation.

A few days ago I had an experience during the night. I woke up about 12.30 and while coming back into my physical consciousness, the memory was transformed into a dream. I was driving a car on a grand wide road. In the car were several people, among others the Mother and X. The Mother was guiding me past ambushes, which lay everywhere along the road. Vehicles were passing in all directions, people on foot were lying in wait to fire at us. "Watch out for this; watch out for that," she was saying. I had a revolver near at hand.

It seems to me that this symbolises a passage through hostile forces. In this passage, I remember that at one moment X looked at me and said, "He's drowning, he's drowning!" Suddenly I realised that I was being dragged away by these forces. At once I called the divine Force, which descended through the Sahasrara right down to the two lowest chakras. With the help of this Force, I repelled the hostile forces and set myself afloat again. A bit later I woke up. But for some time I was aware that the hostile forces were trying to break through the wall and I repelled them in the same way. The two lowest centres were vibrating rapidly.
Carriages, horses and other symbols of movement indicate progress in occult evolution. This is a symbol of the vital plane.

Does the fact that I woke up mean that I was not able to sustain the effort?

Not at all. If you had not awakened, you would probably not have kept any memory of it.

Quite true.

The evening talks on science and occultism interest me very much.* For a long time, this was one of my ideals — to work for the union of science and occultism. But a time came when I had to give up my ideals, like all the rest, to the Lord of the Yoga. But it is possible that a time may come when I could work for it again.

Indeed, in Yoga one must give up everything, all ideals as well as all desires. A time comes when what is true in the being — not what is mental but what is deeper and is to be used by the Divine — a time comes when this is awakened. This happens when the Force comes down into the physical plane. What was mental or vital is rejected, but the true forms of action remain.

Monday, 17 May 1926

This week was a little better than the previous ones; the mind and vital were more submissive and the meditation was easier. But there was nothing new or unusual. At

*Six of these talks, recorded by Pavitra, form Part 2 of this book.
times, when the mind is completely calm, it gives me the feeling of transparency, like jelly.

Jelly?

That is the word which best expresses what I mean.

Does the mind remain motionless by itself, without your putting pressure on it?

No, not yet; but there is an automatic inner movement that positions me as an observer in front of my mind.

This calm is necessary before calling down something higher, in order not to be disturbed by invading thoughts.

Monday, 24 May 1926

The difficulty always comes from the mechanical part of the mind. It clings to anything it can find – the small things of daily life, books, purchases, etc. – and embroiders and builds upon them. Nevertheless, there is a certain progress in the way I look at its activity: it seems more external.

You won't be able to free yourself completely from this mechanical activity until you have achieved the transformation of the physical. Till then you will be able to stop it at will, during meditation for instance. You will see it as outside yourself and have a certain influence over how it expresses itself, but you won't be entirely free from it.

I suppose I take too much interest in these things; that is what allows my mind to cling to them. The highest parts
of my mind are dead; I no longer have any interest in spiritual books like the Bhagavad Gita and others. But this mechanical part still remains active.

Because it is the most difficult to deal with. Moreover, the physical consciousness always takes interest in these things and even if they were not in you, they fill the surrounding atmosphere. Unless one does as the Sannyasins do, one has to fight as you are doing. But this is rather a negative thing and you must not attach too much importance to it. A positive experience is more important – either the deep calm or the Light from above, and they will remove quite naturally the rest of this mechanical activity. This is what you must aim at.

Is there a centre near the heart?

No. All the centres are in a straight line. What is called the heart centre is at the solar plexus. Manipura is behind the navel. They are connected to the spinal column.

Steiner speaks of the solar plexus as well as of the heart centre.

It is a mistake.

My body is feeling the heat. These last few days I was tired. Also I did my meditation lying down. Is there any objection to that?

You can meditate in any position whatever. I often meditate while walking.

You spoke about going out in the vital body and in the mental body. What does the latter phrase mean?
When the vital body leaves the physical, the body remains in trance, but if it is only the mind, this doesn't happen. The mind goes out in meditation, for example, and visits certain places or planes; it can observe things there and even make itself felt. But it is not the whole mind that goes out, only a central portion, so to say. There are no dangers as in trance; if you are awakened, the mind comes back immediately without danger. It is not the same if the vital has gone out. A cord connects it to the physical; as it is the life, if this thread is cut, death results. An abrupt recall is also dangerous.

As a rule, it is better to acquire some experience of the mind's going out and a mental knowledge of the planes before trying to go out in the vital body.

So in this Yoga, going out in the mental body precedes going out in the vital body?

Yes, but even so, both are subordinate to the spiritual experience, which is far more important.

I understand that the spiritual experience is fundamental and that the rest is necessary simply because perfection must be achieved on all the planes.

Monday, 31 May 1926

My meditation is becoming deeper and more detached from the external world. At certain times I succeed in watching myself think. Thought still does not seem external to me, but even so I am able to consider this activity as separate. I am also quite aware that thought is an altogether superficial activity, and it does not affect the deep layers of my being, but remains on the surface.
When the meditation becomes deep, my feet start aching.

What kind of sensation do you have?

Both like a pressure and an uprooting. Could it be the vital being rising up to separate itself?

It may be that, or it may be a change that usually occurs when the divine force slowly transforms even the physical substance. This substance is impure and cannot receive the impulse without a preliminary transformation.

Is it physical matter itself that changes or the life of this matter?

It is a cellular change that takes place, especially in the vital and mental parts of the cells; but even physical matter shares in it.

In my meditations there are several inner attitudes I can take, and each one generates certain vital currents.

What attitudes, for instance?

I can try to take the position of witness of the mental activity; I can try to climb higher and hold on to the highest level of my being. I can call the Force from below. In my recent meditations, for example, I was centred not above the head but behind the solar plexus, in the depths and not on the heights.

That is the region of the psychic being, which is behind the heart (the solar plexus). It is one of the occult centres, the
one that governs the ordinary man. You also have to become conscious in the centre above the head, from which the central being governs everything.

But aren't all these currents conflicting? I produce them blindly without knowing their effects. Which of these attitudes are right?

All, all are right. You have only to watch what happens. The solar centre and the centre in the head must cooperate in the perfect mastery of the instruments. Each has its role.

Should this attitude of witness of mental changes be held in all the circumstances of ordinary life? At the moment, under these conditions I can manage only less important, semi-automatic activities. As soon as a certain attentiveness is necessary, I get lost again in action.

But that is not inevitable – it is a question of habit. You have not yet overcome the illusion of seeing yourself as the doer. Of course, this witness attitude is necessary; it is a first step. All the parts of the mind can thus be made automatic. One watches them from above; one can stop them or alter them.

It is then a perfect mastery of the instruments. But in me this automatic activity is not yet sufficiently developed and I can entrust only less important tasks to it – though there is already some progress in this respect.

Monday, 7 June 1926

There are cycles in my meditations: good periods and others where it is more difficult. At present I can quiet the mind
quite easily, detach myself from it and try to penetrate into a region that I sense above it. My mind now seems like a small portion of my true being. But above me there is a sort of veil that will not yield and it prevents me from passing beyond. Also, when I succeed in thus quieting the mind and trying to break through it, I am aware of a pain or rather a sensation in the feet and legs, which then draws the attention of my being. I cannot separate myself from it, because the more effort I make, the stronger this sensation becomes.

In your physical consciousness there are parts that are holding you back. You may be aware of them or not, but when you try to pierce the veil they hold you back. You are not yet ready. Also, it is necessary for the Force from above to descend and prepare your lower consciousness. This veil can be crossed from below, but it is more difficult and everyone cannot do it. But if the Force descends from above, it can remove the veil. So the first necessity is to open yourself to this Force.

It means, then, that I should take a passive attitude and not try to centre my consciousness above.

The aim, of course, is to lift yourself above the mind, but the Force has to prepare what is still not ready. Even though the mind is calm, these imperfections are holding you back.

What is the difference between the psychic being behind the heart centre and the central being above the head? Are they two beings or one single being?

Naturally, from one point of view they are one. But your being, though one, is composed of many distinct beings. Just as your mental being is different from your physical being and
vital being, so the psychic being, the soul, is different from the central being.

The psychic being is the transmitter that receives the light and transmits it to the lower personality. It is the being that remains at the back and governs the personality. The psychic being is in direct communication with the truth, which it organises and transmits to the outer being. The central being cannot organise the truth; it is above all evolution. It is the psychic being that develops spiritually through the different personalities.

Is it the central being, then, which is above space and time and behind what evolves through the successive personalities?

Yes. The psychic being is only the developing soul; it supports and prepares the personality. The central being has no direct action; it presides and watches.

Yesterday evening I dined at the Xs. I narrated how the house of C.S. had burnt down. Mme. X began to think over this accident. Suddenly she felt a very unpleasant emanation which she described as being reddish brown and nauseating. In fact, I too had an unpleasant feeling. Then I returned home and went out again to the seaside. Suddenly I became aware of the same unpleasant sensation. It was as if some entity were trying to bring about something negative, and I felt that I had to remain attentive, on my guard. By keeping contact with my inner being, I was able to reject it easily.

As a matter of fact, she has written about it this morning. Mme. X is very sensitive to these influences. But there is no reason for you to become so, since you are not yet
ready to work on the physical plane. It is infinitely better not to enter into contact with them, but to reject them.

She probably has no connection with C.S.'s affair; but all these influences stick together and to think of one calls up others.

\[ \text{Is it not an imagination?} \]

No, there was probably nothing imaginative in it. But you should have nothing to do with these forces. Reject them forcefully; throw them far away from you.

\[ \text{I didn’t try to enter into contact with them.} \]

\[ \text{Some days ago, I dreamt that someone lifted up a snake with his stick. Then he told me, “Be careful, don’t move, this snake is venomous.” So I remained still and the snake passed by my side without touching me.} \]

It was a warning. But there is no need to stir up snakes with a stick.

\[ \text{Monday, 14 June 1926} \]

\[ \text{I try to understand the resistance that is in me. The only thing I do is to open myself to the Force from above and to surrender utterly. Every time the Force comes down I feel it going down to the solar plexus, and then at the level of the belly a resistance is felt that translates itself into a stiffness of the legs and a peculiar feeling in the feet and hands also.} \]

*From this date, Pavitra recorded his conversations with Sri Aurobindo directly in English.*
Now I tried to see what part of the mind was connected with the resistance. It seems to me that it is the most material and physical part of the mind, the part that is busy with forms and the collection of forms, acquiring, dealing with objects, etc.

Yes, but that ought not to interfere with anything. This part of the mind, the physical mind, is useful and has to do its work. It is not bad unless it tries to impose its desire, but I suppose that is not the case here. What do you feel exactly? And you said you feel the Force outside yourself; don't you feel its workings inside also?

I feel it come down to the solar plexus, but nothing in the navel. Some time before I felt it also in the Muladhara. Now I don't feel it so distinctly, but there is no strict separation between inside and outside.

Two reasons for these sensations may be possible. First, the vitality of the limbs retires in deep meditation and as I am not yet accustomed to it I feel a little pain — or there is an obstacle in the path of the Force.

There is an obstacle in the form of the physical mind. It is often the case with minds accustomed to being too active. They are not plastic enough and they must wear out till they become fully passive to the divine Force. Gradually this opposition will be overcome if you go on surrendering to the Force.

Sometimes the Force, coming down, does not permeate all the chakras and the Light only descends up to what is ready. There is a partial enlightenment, which improves afterwards. That may be the case if some chakras remain untouched.

It seems to me also that I have to reject these lower move-
ments of the mind unless they are necessary, and to submit to them as little as possible.

Exactly so. This rejection is necessary.

Should I do some work like the study of astrology now?

I would not advise it. For the present let the mind be quiet until the calm settles. Then afterwards comes the period when the mind changes its workings and work can be taken up as a field of action, to carry out the process.

The calm that I can, at certain times, produce in my mind is artificial, so to say. It is imposed by will and must be constantly watched so that no thought interferes – and it does not last long. But I know this is not the calm that has to come from above and settle in the mind. Nevertheless I always feel that the calm is very close and the veil is thin and grows thinner and thinner. But I may be wrong in my expectations?

You said last time that I was not ready. Does that mean that this part of the mind was not ready to admit the Force?

Yes.

Will it be overcome?

Certainly. What happened is this. When you came here, you took up the work with a very strong aspiration. But as usual, the defects of the mind rose by and by and now they have to be overcome.

That is true. From when I came till the coming of X was a
period of hard work. Then with the coming of X, for many reasons, I relaxed my effort and my mind asserted itself again in the old ways. I have not yet regained the former eagerness and I am now trying to regain it.

That is exactly so.

I suppose there is no need to feel discouraged. I am not at all discouraged or even sad about this process taking so long a time.

No need at all.

When I came here you saw in me certain possibilities and also certain difficulties. Now is there any change in the outlook?

No.

I mean, do you think it will be possible for me to stay here?

Yes, certainly. I have the conviction you will stay here.

Monday, 21 June 1926

There is a slow improvement but no radical change yet. The pain in the legs has greatly diminished and I find less obstacles in the way of the Force coming down. But, nothing has changed. Truly I feel that a strong pressure is behind, which would, if unveiled, quickly stabilise the mind.

Do you feel it in the mind?
Yes, but I know it comes from above the mind.

Also, my mind has less tendency to busy itself with all sorts of things. The obstacle is always, it seems to me, the part of the mind that is active with the most outward aspect of things. For instance, the part of the mind that rejoices in making a collection of stamps. And I still have difficulty in withdrawing from it.

It is probably a small thing that holds you back, but it is very obstinate.

I wonder whether the pain in the legs was not due to tobacco smoking, for since I gave up tobacco ten days ago, the pain has decreased.

No, I don't think so. The craving for tobacco is more a vital desire and creates a vital obstacle. There is probably some resistance in the body itself.

But what is a little unusual is the resistance of the physical mind at this stage. Generally it comes at a later stage, and when it comes it is very obstinate. But in your case, it seems to be rising now; this may be due to the fact that we are all working in the physical mind and the resistance is there. All rises at the same time. You have to wear it out. That is all.

I know that I am doing the right thing and that I am on the right path, so there is no anxiety in my mind.

I always have great difficulty in separating from the physical body and my meditation is not deep. Every sound which is a little insistent or recurring catches my attention and breaks my meditation.

You need not be so disturbed. Is it not because you have a fixed idea that such a sound is able to disturb you? You could
hear it without its leaving any impression in the mind. A part of the mind would know it, but the central part would not be in the least disturbed.

No doubt it is so. A feeble sound enters and goes on unnoticed, but once my attention is awakened, it is difficult to reject it quietly.

Which is easier to separate from my true self—the body or the mind?

When you are out of the body, you are in the true mind!

Sometimes I feel a part of my consciousness somewhere before my face, but as soon as I become aware of it, I rush back into my bodily consciousness. (A.G. smiles.)

Monday, 28 June 1926

Sometimes the activity of my mind is very painful. I feel tired and harassed by it. No doubt there is in me something that takes pleasure in this activity, for if there were none, it would cease of itself. But my conscious will and the greater part of my being reject it and want to be free. How is it that such a small part can victoriously oppose the process?

It may be a small part, but it played an important part in past evolution.

In the beginning of the week, meditation was good. I succeeded in separating from the mind entirely and keeping it quiet for a while. But the last days were not successful. At times I feel harassed. Does the mental resistance not receive a support from the vital?
Yes, and from the physical also. The physical is the receptacle of the past habits and supports them. So too does the vital. Therefore no perfection is possible unless the vital is opened and the physical conquered.

But you should not insist so much upon the perfection of the mind. It cannot be perfect now — that is, quiet and luminous. But it must be sufficiently still to allow the Force to come down and work. That is what is especially needed.

Last Tuesday I felt as if a great sweetness (there is no better word) was hovering over me.

It is rather in that direction that you should go.

It means a more active surrender.

Yes. Not a mere negative effort in the mind. You should insist more upon the positive aspect. Negative blankness is not an end but a means.

How is it that even the faint experiences I had — light, deep calm of the mind — have receded and do not come back?

It happens like that. There is no continuous and regular unfolding, but alternations of light and darkness, ebb and flow. But the experiences have to become more and more frequent and prolonged, until they come at will and mastery is gained.

Monday, 12 July 1926

My mind is becoming quieter and I am able to separate myself better from its workings. There is also a kind of
broadening of consciousness; I feel in touch, all around the head, with a living medium. It is still very dim, only a beginning.

What I am doing is mostly to remain passive, allowing the Force to flow down and work. It then goes down to a little above the navel and expands.

I am watching the working of the Force. It seems to me not very spiritual.

... ? ...

I mean it is of the nature of a sensation – not of course a physical sensation – but not very distinct from it.

There is no such distinction between spiritual and material, in the sense that the Force is working on a material level, so to say – here, the psycho-physical – and it is not surprising that you feel its working. But it comes from above and has a set purpose: to render the body a fit instrument for the spirit.

It happened twice during meditation that my head was slowly bending backwards. Has this any meaning?

I don't see it very well.

I did not come last week because I was then in the midst of a struggle and did not find myself worthy of coming. It has been a difficult time – overpowered by the mind. But now it is better. Always the alternate coming of night and day.

You spoke of a broadening of consciousness. That is an important part of the process. If that were firmly established, all would go well. The essential thing to do is to watch the forces closely, to follow the divine Force in its workings and see how
it works, to see what happens and how it happens. The Force may come down for organising the parts of the being, it may work from above or it may organise experiences. All this has to be watched.

Sometimes, in meditation, images appear in the field of vision. But they are not very vivid and they have the same character as the images of a dream. Moreover, I never noticed any element in them unknown to my consciousness. They are remembrances or due to the habitual linking of thoughts. I have always tried to reject these images. Is it all right?

The faculty of observing images should not be opposed. It may be that the present images are nothing but thought-images, but it may cover a more delicate working, and this may be the basis for something higher. You should not discourage this faculty, but you should keep watching the images without being carried away by them.

When looking at such images, I begin to think, “What is that? Oh, this is so and so” and so on, and my thinking (my inner conversation) begins to influence the images themselves, which shape themselves differently.

Of course, this thinking has to stop, for it spoils everything. What is needed is passivity without losing oneself.

Monday, 19 July 1926

This week has been calm and quiet – the meditation good. There is a slow improvement in the separation from the acting mind – and also an increasing peace and joy. There
is nothing else to be said.

I received a letter from my friend Y, whose wife is at Geneva. He sent me a lecture of his about internationalism and it will perhaps show you better what the man is.

(After reading it) It is more about nationalism than internationalism! He still uses crude language.

...?...

Yes, he talks about love between nations. Love between nations is an absurdity. The love that a man can become conscious of for his fellow-beings is the experience of identity, and only a few can have it. If the leaders, the brains of a nation, could have it, that would be all right, but nothing more can be expected. And to speak about love in such a way is only to prepare war.

Why so?

Because it is a false ideal – false because not practical. Of course, the League of Nations is actually based upon greed and vanity. But to break it all of a sudden is an impossible task in the present state of humanity. Something can be done, but to hope that love can be the next motto for it is foolish.

About him, I feel that these ideals are coming more from the vital plane than from elsewhere. He is not a mental man and has always had the ideal of a mission to fulfill, of being guided towards it by higher entities. In what way can I help him?

Of course, the life energy he speaks of is a vital energy and it catches ideals and ideas to support itself. This is a common
fact and it is all right for those who are not destined for the spiritual life. In such a case one has to recognise that such ideals are not final and to understand their true nature. But to destroy this would mean that you would have to have something higher to give him.

He seems to be perfectly happy today. In his letter he says that his soul is full of joy.

Then it is better to leave him, not to meddle with his evolution, until he demands something higher.

May I come more often to the evening sittings?

Yes, you may come.

Monday, 26 July 1926

I feel distinctly the overshadowing presence of a Force above me. A small part of that Force comes down and works in me.

What kind of work does it effect?

I cannot see very distinctly. It is a pressure that tries to expand. More than this I cannot say. But I feel that only a small part comes down. It also presses upon the physical mind and tries to calm and quiet it.

There are two movements I make: one is to be passive and open to that working. The other is to go above and try to unite with that Force. I have then a sensation of broadening, of a vast and compact consciousness.

It happened two or three times that I saw before me a long,
endless road. But this image had no distinct character that indicated an origin other than the ordinary mental images.

It is still a mental image, and all mental images have the same character, only it may come from the higher mental plane. Once you open to them, you receive knowledge of things you do not know in the ordinary mind.

The image of a road is a very common image of the higher mental; its meaning is that of the path that has to be travelled on.

*If the images are all around us, how is it that they do not come into our mind?*

They come often into a man's mind, but he believes them to be his own thoughts. Moreover, one must have something that corresponds to them; otherwise they make no impression and do not come out of the subconscient. But once you begin to open, images arise more frequently and you need to discriminate among them.

*What kind of image has to be rejected and what kind accepted?*

What has first to be rejected is the ordinary working of the mind and the images of material life that surround us. Afterwards one has to remain passive. What seems to come from above is not necessarily pure and then one has to discriminate.

Mr. G has spoken to Mr. V, head of the college here. There is a possibility of my becoming an examiner for the baccalauréat here. This will bring me students. But I will owe this position to Mr. G. And it is impossible to obtain it without his support.
I don’t see why you should not accept it. It does not bind you?

Not at all. I have only to be thankful for it.

That is all right. What is to be avoided is your being drawn into politics.

Certainly. There is no chance of that.

Monday, 2 August 1926

There is nothing new to report. Quiet meditation becoming deeper. At times flashes of light pass before my eyes, but I know they have no outward reality. They are the same kind as those flashes that are seen when one presses one’s eyes.

These flashes of light are the first sign of the coming down of the Light into the physical consciousness. They need not come and the sense of Light may remain mental, but if it comes down, flashes are seen. But you must not jump to the conclusion that they are the same kind as light created by ocular compression. People generally view their new experiences from the standpoint of their accumulated experience. Some people, for instance, when they first see that Light, look around to see if a lamp is lit or if sunlight is coming in. It is necessary to view them from a higher point of view.

But how does it give such a physical impression of light, though it is not physical? You said also that a tendency to blindness may be created at that time.
Because the centre of vision is affected and we have the habit of referring every new experience to what we already know. It need not affect the physical sight if we can remain aloof from it.

As for the tendency to blindness, it has two main causes. First, many people, when these visions come, get into the habit of continually keeping their visual attention inward and thus create a disturbance in the physical sight. Then the light which is seen is very brilliant and it has the same effect as if somebody was continually gazing at a dazzling light.

_Madame X has had these experiences and says she nearly became blind._

But a balance has to be cultivated that enables one to remain above, undisturbed and unaffected.

**Monday, 9 August 1926**

_Nothing new. As I have done some mental work, my mind has caused me some trouble. There are two kinds of mental work as regards their effect upon me. When I am preparing my tuitions or reading an easy book, my mind is only superficially interested, but when I am trying to solve a question for myself, for instance a problem of mathematics, and if I take interest in it, my mind gets dispersed again and carries me away. Then it rushes out with accumulated force – and it sees nothing else, it does not allow me to meditate and it cuts my connection with the higher life._

It need not be cut. There is nothing wrong in being interested in some work. But the mind that works is not the whole mind and there is a part which stands apart if you do not identify
I cannot make this separation in practice. When I am reading, if I try to look at my mind which is reading I lose the significance of what I read.

That has always been a difficulty with me. As soon as I do any action in life - it may be a manual or an intellectual work - I cut myself off from my higher aspiration. It is impossible to practise yoga in life.

Because the vital and physical parts of the mind have remained untouched. They must be opened.

The Mother told me that my vital being had been repressed. There is some truth in it. My education has been purely scientific and I had no artistic culture. I did not derive any help from art. I am far from clinging to conventional ideas of morality, but I have repressed certain tendencies of the vital in order to get a relative freedom and mastery. I have respect, but very little, for sentimental emotion. So the vital is of very little use to me. But what is to be done? I suppose it will open to the higher Light and nothing is to be tried from below.

It will open in the process of Yoga. But something more than a passive self-surrender is necessary. In this Yoga, a mere waiting upon the Force to come down if it wills, won't do. You have done nearly all that could be done by the mind above, and the opening through a pure mental process would no doubt take a long time. Therefore you have to rely on the higher Force. But simply waiting is not sufficient; you have to call it down and see how it works, make demands upon it. And this must be done in the vital as well as in the mind.
What is the difference between a vital demand and a mental demand?

This you have to find out. You have to see what is there in the vital, see the possibilities and potentialities, and what is to be kept. You will rely on the higher Light to decide, but you must not remain purely passive. The higher Light will show you what has to be done, but you must make an active demand for transformation. This will not be perfect at first and some resistance will be there.

Especially in your case, such an active demand is necessary. Some people need moderation, for they are continually pulling down, being vitally and emotionally eager. But this is not your case.

I have always been afraid of mental laziness, but I suppose that was wrong. Even if I don't do any mental work except what is strictly necessary for my tuitions, there is no harm in it.

It is sometimes good to change one's habitual way of working for a certain time.

Monday, 16 August 1926

Last week has been better on the whole; it has been more easy to meditate and the Force has come down with more power. It presses down at the level of the navel. My mind also is more quiet and does not require as much incentive.

You spoke of the opening of the mind and the vital. What do you mean exactly by these terms?

It is first the opening to a higher Light and Power and also the
opening to the influences of that plane, becoming conscious of the forces of that level.

*Does the mind always open before the vital?*

It is generally so. But the vital can be prepared before the mind opens. The mind may get partially opened and the vital is then able to receive the higher Light. But the total opening of the mind may come only later. In your case the fact that the Force is working now on the vital level shows that it can pass through the mind without being hampered. You have to open to the higher Light and Power.

*Should I try to pull the Force down?*

No, just open yourself to it. It will act on its own.

*Has my recent illness any connection with sadhana? At any rate, there is a distinct physical cause for it: I got a chill.*

No. I don’t think there is any connection with sadhana.

*Now another question. Mr. G spoke to the Governor about me and my position as a teacher and as an examiner. I wonder whether it would not be good to pay a visit to the Governor. He is said to be a kind man, with an interest in Theosophy. I would like to say to him, diplomatically, that though he will not meet me in social gatherings my abstention only comes from the kind of studies I am pursuing.*

Let me consider that point. I will let you know later.

*(Later Barin-da told me that I could go and visit the Governor, but that it would probably be better not to*
Wednesday, 18 August 1926

(I report my conversation with the Governor, who besides had asked for me. He received me quite sympathetically and asked me if I could possibly devote some time to giving lessons at the school. Not only does he excuse my abstention from social life but he approves of it. In short, interview successful.)

Saturday, 28 August 1926

I have been very busy outside with the examination, but for the first time the contact with the outside world has not disturbed me as it used to do. Coming home I was able to take up meditation rather easily.

Meditation has been, on the whole, satisfactory. The mind was relatively quiet and transparent to the Force that came down. The chief place where the Force works is above and around the navel. Sometimes I felt a distinct sense of strong power rising in me.

The vital centre is beginning to open in you.

The principal difficulty in meditation comes from the most external part of the mind. Sometimes it is quiet and passive, but sometimes intruding thoughts are very obstinate; they are connected with the physical arrangement of things. For instance, I am thinking whether I should place a shelf here or not, what I have to buy, the things that may come by the next mail and so on. That was what I meant when speak-
ing of the part of the mind which is interested in collecting stamps. On the other hand, the preparation of my tuitions and the tuitions themselves do not disturb me. But if I take interest in a work for myself, then I am easily carried away.

But these thoughts do not disturb you in meditation, do they?

When I am in a favourable state, they don’t, but sometimes I cannot get rid of them, especially in the morning meditation, which is generally very defective. The best one is in the evening, between six and seven. The noon one is between these two.

The reason may be that the things you throw away in the waking state are able to come back through the subconscious and they come in mostly at night.

That may be.

Now, something happened a few days ago. I received a letter from my friend Y, speaking about his wife. After that, in meditation I found myself thinking of that lady, but in a peculiar way. I was directing to her a kind of force that came from the mental vital. It was not purposely done by me nor was it a vital rush, but a quiet and mild pressure and it was put forth from the top of the head.

Twice I had similar experiences of finding myself working on the higher planes without purposely intending to do it. The first one was when C.S. was ill. At the evening gathering, you asked the news about him and then remained silent for a while. Then I felt myself carried to his room and working there. Another time, when a gale was raging during our evening meeting, I found that I was putting forth a kind of force in that direction. K also felt it.
It is because the consciousness is beginning to awake on the higher planes and to work consciously there. There is nothing of pure imagination in it. It is a fact.

Today I brought photos of my friend's wife in so that you may know what she is like.

Can you leave them with me? I shall show them to the Mother.

Saturday, 4 September 1926

This week has not been as favourable as the last one. And it is a curious fact, for last week I was very busy outside, but when I came home I entered easily into meditation; body, vital and mind submitted to it. It may be that I am now going through the consequences of the disturbance, consequences which did not appear at first. My body is slothful, my mind is restless. So there is not much to say.

What is the reason that progress is always made by fits and starts, never straightforwardly?

It is always so. Different movements enter into play at different times — the important thing is to discern from where they come. And the most obstinate movements always recur until they are completely transformed.

You spoke of two ways — one direct to the supermind through the mind, the other by the opening of the psychic being. Are they really two different paths? And what are their characteristics?

Yes, there are two movements. Sometimes the mind opens
first to the Light, and the supermind works then through the mind and uses the machinery of mind. Sometimes the psychic being, which is always behind — without a psychic aspiration nothing in this Yoga is possible — comes forward. There is then no mental illumination, but a burning fire which turns the whole being upwards. It makes the progress easy. Afterwards, of course, the whole machinery of one’s nature is directed from above, but the mental movement is not the chief one.

What is the nature of Carpenter’s illumination?*

It is difficult to say; I don’t know him.

But judging from his writing?

It does not indicate much — it may be only an awakening of the intuitive mind.

Sometimes my aspiration is very intense, but when the mind resumes again its working, it covers it up to some extent.

The mind must remain, but it must be transformed. And so also with the vital and the physical. They must completely surrender themselves and not accept only the pressure which is put on them by the mind.

This I understand now. From my experience with the Theosophists, I can say that they try only to overrule the lower bodies by the mind, but never try to go into these levels and transform them. I understand that the con-

*Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), English writer and social reformer. His later works express a certain perception of the unity of all existence.
Consciousness of these planes must yield to the higher Light and accept by itself the transformation.

I suppose that in my case I am following the way through the mind.

Yes, the mental movement is predominant. That is why it is slow.

(Smiling) But it does not mean unfitness!

Not at all. There are always difficulties in each case – for instance when the vital and the physical are opening, everything that is concealed there comes out.

In my case the central acceptance is done, and I think that even the vital and physical accept the change.

But the question is whether they accept it by themselves or on account of the pressure put upon them by the mind.

That I don't know.

Now, will you tell me something about the photos?

Not very favourable.

... ? ...

She is a vital woman. She moves only on the vital plane.

I knew that. But is there nothing psychic about her?

I don't see anything. Mental aspiration there may be, but it is not sufficient. I may say that she is not safe in the spiritual life.
But won't a time come when she will open to something higher?

What do you mean by “a time”?

I mean in this life.

Everything is possible. It would rather be a miracle.

There is something curious. They could have come here. They had the opportunity of doing so. She went back to Europe and on the way landed at Colombo, but did not come here. He is now returning from the Far-East, but is going through Siberia.

I don't know much about him, but she is not intended for this place.

Then is it better not to try to bring them to this Yoga?

Yes, you should leave them to follow their own path.

Saturday, 11 September 1926

In meditation I feel myself distinct from the mind. I can see my mind working, but the curious thing is that my mind seems to remain connected with the body and I watch it from outside. I see from outside the form-building mind, the speaking mind, and when sounds come from outside they seem to happen inside that mind. But all this is in the body, so to say, and I am in front of my body, looking at it, not from above.

When the Force comes down, it has a dissolving power
over the mental formations. I can now use this power by placing before the Force the mental formations I want to get rid of. This power liberates me and I feel a sensation akin to floating. I never go above, but forward – and I never succeed in cutting all connection with the active mind and moving freely on my own plane.

It is not the usual movement. Generally one goes above the body or finds some wideness where there is no location of consciousness.

I don’t feel this wideness. Of course I cannot be very positive about the location of my consciousness. As soon as I try to think of this location in space, I find myself again in the body. Is this movement to be encouraged?

I suppose it is a movement on the mental plane, but we have to see.

As I said, I am conscious of the dissolving power of the Force coming from above. It goes down to the navel centre and works from there. I cannot say yet how it works, but at times a sense of vital power rises.

I am fully conscious from above of vital movements rising. For instance, a movement of pride rises – it comes from the navel – and I realise it as distinct from myself. But what shall I do with it? Up to the present time I have merely tried to force it down and bar its coming into the conscious field. But I think it is not right.

No. That is what people ordinarily do, but it simply suppresses the vital movements. You have to call down the same power that dissolves the mental formations and apply it to open the vital. You have to watch and understand the movements, see
how they rise, what supports them in your nature. A full understanding of this is necessary.

I did so instinctively. And I offer these movements, impure as they may be, to the Divine, that he may transform them.

The Mother told me yesterday that the awakening of the psychic in me depended much upon my attitude. Can you tell me something more about this attitude?

She did not say anything else?

No.

It is difficult to say. (Silence)

This attitude can only become permanent when the mental is no longer the prominent factor in life. It all comes to the same thing – you have to rely upon the Power that comes from above and realise that it is something more than a power.

The Divine as personality?

We are always using mental words that mislead. Yes, it is true that this Power is the support of all personality. The Vedantic standpoint of the impersonal Absolute, which has spread so much in recent years, is only one aspect of the Truth. It applies very much to the mind, especially to the modern mind, but when the consciousness rises above the mind, it is clearly seen as a partial aspect of the Truth. The Power has personality as a Guna. It uses the impersonal to rise above the limited egoism of our personalities. The impersonal view of the Divine is somewhat larger than our personal conception, which is limited by our mind; it is the mind that limits personality. But the Power has an existence above mind. You have to recognise
that the Power is not a mere power.

*It is true that, for the present, I only see it as a working power.*

Because you are always in the mind. But when the psychic opens, you cannot retain this standpoint – it becomes too vivid and too real.

*Have I to rise into the supermind for that?*

The psychic opening will raise you to that.

*Before coming here, I stuck to the Vedantic idea of impersonality and even now I cannot realise with the mind what is truly meant by divine personality. How can the mind take the right attitude?*

It can call for it. When it gets a glimpse of it, it will more easily put itself in the right movement.

*Last night I had a dream. I was with others, probably sadhaks, and the Mother was there. I was given a book. This book was written in French, but in a purely phonetic way, not taking into account the orthographic rules. Even some new phonetic signs were used. It was new to me and somehow I had the idea it was written by you, the Mother and P.R. I could not understand anything of it. Looking through the book I noticed some misprints. I showed them to the Mother who said, "It is strange. I took so much care to have it corrected before having it printed." I also asked for some information from you, who were in the adjoining room. You answered me in Sanskrit, which I could not understand. I went towards you. You were in bed and, as*
far as I remember, taking breakfast. I bowed to you with very deep feelings of devotion and aspiration and remained prostrated for some time with a blank mind. Then you touched me with your hand and I underwent a change of consciousness, of which I don't remember anything. After some time my consciousness came down again. You kissed me twice and I departed with very high feelings. The vividness of the dream and the strength of the feelings surprised me. I awoke; it was half past two.

As for the book, I don't see the meaning very well. It may have been something from the past. Something probably took place on the vital plane, and it is not always easy to interpret.

*But did I come into your presence?*

Not in the physical. Some vital happening occurred and that is why you saw me in such a way.

*Why was it so vivid?*

Once you enter the mental and vital planes, they are as real as the physical.

*Perhaps some mixture came from my mind with regard to the book. But the last part was of a different character.*

*(Later I related the dream to the Mother. She commented:)*

This is not surprising. We spoke of you several times during the day yesterday in connection with the difficulties of the Western mind. Even yesterday evening, we talked about what happened in you during the evening gathering, of which you may not be conscious. Also it is not surprising that there was
some thought on his part about you. And when I spoke with you yesterday, there was aspiration on your part too. So much the better; this shows that the time is drawing near when you will be able to receive the Light. Keep what you have received.

Tuesday, 14 September 1926

(The Mother spoke with A.G. about my difficulties in meditation. Today she took me aside and we meditated together for half an hour, at 4.30 p.m. The Force collected above my head, then descended, particularly to the level of the mind, and tried to open the mind. Outer thoughts were kept at a distance, though they tried to penetrate. The day was not particularly well chosen, for I had been meditating with difficulty for some days. Later, after hearing what I felt, the Mother told me:)

Yes, the Force descended. It went right down to your feet, but in the lower regions it was rather outside than within.

At the beginning you had a very strong aspiration; then something must have disturbed you. But all the time there was a peaceful and calm aspiration. You have a power of aspiration, but it has been almost completely stifled by the mind.

The Force that descended at first was a force of wisdom, of pure knowledge; it descended to the level of the solar plexus. There there was a sort of command to open the mind. There was an opening, which had a geometrical form — a triangle — and within, a sort of representation of the idea you have formed of the Divine.

A force of calm, a silence, descended afterwards. You say you did not feel it, yet it was there and perhaps you will feel it soon. Much more descended than what you are aware of now,
but it is not lost for the subconscious and it will be gradually realised. There is in you a great capacity for calmness, which may serve as a useful base for a subsequent descent and manifestation. Anyway, in that calmness there was Ananda.

There was some response in the lower centres, but the response was weak and mostly recorded by the subconscious.

In short, I do not think it will take very long now. There is a certain rigidity in the mind, but that is common to all Westerners.

Did the Force descend as far as the vital plane?

Yes, of course, even into the physical, but outside you rather than within.

There is certainly a great difference from my ordinary meditations. Now I feel, perhaps more than during the meditation, that there is something quite close which descended.

Saturday, 18 September 1926

The Mother must have told you about our meditation of last Tuesday. After the meditation I felt very deeply the presence of a great calm Force which was behind me. It did not enter my consciousness, but I felt it nevertheless backing me.

When in meditation, the divine Force comes down readily. It works through the navel centre on the vital and also, it seems, on the physical. There is not any powerful vibration of the lowest centre, but I feel as if a force were expanding in the physical itself. It seems to me quite distinct from the vital.
You say it expands?

I would rather say it permeates the subtle-physical part of the body. But I am not perfectly sure of it. Let us wait and see.

Behind the chest centre, which is always very active, I feel the presence of something and from there my aspiration rises and unites with the Force coming down. I see a kind of connecting line between this centre and the top of the head. It is a straight line. Is there anything like that?

It means that your psychic aspiration is rising and calling the Force down. A connection has been formed. In the end all the centres will be connected in that way.

My mind is still active on the old lines. How is it that it does not stop?

The old habit is recurring! But it does not matter much as long as the aspiration is able to bring down the Force. The mind by itself cannot do much; the Force that comes from the Divine is more powerful.

Now I will be more busy outside with this new work in the archives. I hope it will not disturb me.

It is not an absorbing work, is it?

Of course not. As soon as it is over, I forget all about it. But it seems that the work that best suits me is teaching. As regards teaching in the college, the Governor has met an opposition in Mr. V, the director.

He is completely in the hands of the priests.
I hope in time to get something there. It would suit me better than the present work.

Saturday, 25 September 1926

Meditation has become easier; it is more substantial, more vivid. Up to now it has always been hard and difficult, a pressure exerted by the mind. Now a certain interest is found in meditation itself.

It has become more vivid because the vital is opening.

The principal thing is that the Force is coming down into the physical. It is felt by the physical consciousness and the pressure acts especially on the centres of the knees and legs. The pressure is so strong that I now lie down during meditation. At certain times I feel a pressure above and behind me. It is not a one-pointed pressure (it is not a single point of consciousness) but I feel it, I touch it, so to say, not only in relation to the head centre but also the heart centre. What this pressure is I don’t know. It is formless, but it gives me a strong feeling of peace, calm and bliss. My feelings are also aroused. What is it?

(Smiling) You have to wait and see what is beginning to manifest itself. Do you feel it especially at meditation time?

Yes. But when I turn my inner awareness towards it, I can also feel it at other times. There is nothing else to say.
Saturday, 2 October 1926

There is nothing new to say about the last week. The same working goes on. At the evening sitting I feel above me the presence of a great peace; it is there but it does not come down, though my mind is quieter. I suppose it has to come down!

Yes, it will.

My thoughts are then seen as happening below. There is not much difference felt between a thought of mine and the voice of somebody else. They all play before me, so to say.

Since my coming here, my mind has gone through a whole process. Now I don't feel much inclined towards space and time or towards reading books. The only thing that remains as a part of the mental activity is the business of ordinary life. This is sometimes troublesome; however, I generally succeed in keeping it away during meditation.

In the vital I feel the same working. Are there two centres, one below and one above the navel?

The vital centre is at the navel itself. There is a play of forces between this centre and the chest centre. There is a connection between that part and the more physical part of the mind, the material stuff of mind. Below the navel centre there is another centre, also a vital centre, which is in connection with life, outward life. The activities of the navel centre may be felt all around the waist. From that centre to the Muladhara, all is vital. At the Muladhara the vital connects with the physical.

It seems that all these centres are becoming active, though I don't distinguish very well their various activities. As for the physical consciousness, it appears to me as being some-
where at the level of the mouth.

It may be anywhere. The centres are fixed, but the physical consciousness may be centred anywhere. It is generally connected with the throat centre. This is the centre of speech and formulation, and most of the vital and physical activities are connected there.

I see the difference. From the Muladhara the Force proceeds downwards towards the legs and feet or permeates the whole physical consciousness. But the centre of this consciousness, which in meditation appears as separate from the higher consciousness, is felt where I said.

Now there is something I don't understand. When I meditated with the Mother last Tuesday, the divine Force came down. But what is the part either you or the Mother play in such a descent?

I don't understand.

Well, the divine Force comes from inside. How can it be brought down by somebody else? It is not a mere tuning of the instruments, a quieting of the mind which could be done from outside, but a real call.

The explanation? It is a fact, is it not?

Yes.

Then that is sufficient.

But I meant to say this. Suppose I had not come here, but remained doing Yoga elsewhere. God and I would have been the same, but this descent would not have happened.
Is there, for instance, some kind of intermediary centre of divine Force in the spiritual Force which is here above?

Even in the case of those who look only for liberation and try to merge into God, help from someone who has already realised is generally necessary because the forces of ignorance are too strong. What is trying to come down here is a power for knowledge. In the past, knowledge has been attained, but a different kind of knowledge, a knowledge more abstract. Now it is a knowledge for effectuation, for the practical purposes of human life. That is what is in the spiritual Force above. And as you are in touch with it here, it is trying to manifest in you.

The Mother has spoken of the blue light of Sri Krishna.

Yes. Krishna is generally depicted as blue – it is his colour. This means that it is one aspect of the Divine. All these colours are aspects of the divine force.

Is it a force of knowledge?

Not exactly. Knowledge manifests more by a force whose colour is golden, though it includes many other things.

Then is it a force of divine love?

It is a force of true devotion that raises the psychic being to a state of pure aspiration; it also includes many other things. But names are always limiting – you must not hanker after naming things, but see what is behind them, realise and know them.

Has it any connection with the historical Krishna?
Sunday, 3 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother)

Do not seek the truth with your mind! All that you have done so far, all that you have learned, has to be set aside. What holds you back is your education and your mental habits.

An Indian who had the profound experience you had last time would have drawn knowledge from it. That experience truly would have brought knowledge. It was beautiful enough, wasn’t it, and you felt all its power, but your European mentality came in the way. Your inner being opened and put itself in a receptive attitude, which allowed the descent. Instead of trying to reason, plunge into the experience itself.

If I asked a question, it is not because my mind was anxious or wanted so much to convert everything into mental terms. My mind has suffered harsh rebuffs and it is no longer so demanding. I feel a truth quite near; there is a part in me that knows it. But from time to time a question comes up in my mind, without attaching much importance to it.

When you asked it the question, it was on the point of speaking, but it cannot speak before the psychic being is open.

If that experience could have led to the desired change of attitude, everything would have been transformed. But it has to come, it is bound to come – you are on the verge of it. It depends on your opening to the Divine.

Next week you may come to the small meditation room. You may feel something – that is why I am asking you to come.
Saturday, 9 October 1926

The pressure is exerting itself more upon the mind now. It works at a complete quieting of the mind and for a separation of my consciousness from the working of the mind.

But is it always the mind that is working?

Yes. I feel in myself a consciousness distinct from the mind, behind me; but when working I come back to the mind.

What will happen is that the mind will no longer work, but all knowledge will come from above. The mind will receive it, of course, but it will no longer have to ascertain the truth by reasoning. And works, even the most outward ones like tuition, etc., will be directed from above.

Does it mean that the mind is perfectly still?

The mind is then nothing but a channel.

Why is it so difficult to bring the inner experiences into my active consciousness?

Because this consciousness has taken a habitual position from which it is very difficult to dislodge it. It can be done in two ways. The first is by the mind itself – but it is very slow, especially in cases where the mind has been rigidly trained and worked much, as in Europeans. In most Indians, in whom the mind is trained differently, it is easier. But this way is also not absolutely secure. When the mind, enlightened, begins to awake, the vital powers arise. In the practical use of these powers, the mind is capable of making mistakes, and even if it receives the Light from above, it may mistranslate the Truth.
On the other hand, the second way is shorter and surer: it is the opening of the psychic being. It is surer because it knows the truth, and if a mistake is made it feels uneasy until it is set right.

I feel in myself a partial awakening of the inner being.

(Smiling) That is true, but it has to come forward completely.

Tuesday, 12 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother after meditation with her at 11.45 a.m.)

It is difficult for me to distinguish everything that happens during meditation. I only know that a sweet and powerful and luminous Force descends into the vital right down to the physical. But a certain surface activity of the mind always remains. Is it that which prevents me from perceiving clearly?

What is its nature?

Creative thoughts come and try to enter. Sometimes they remain without penetrating very deeply. At other times I am obliged to throw them out lest they get hold of me.

Yes, that has something to do with it, but it is not so important.

Your receptivity is good. As soon as you are seated, the Force descends and you receive it. What is missing is something in the consciousness – you do not get sufficiently absorbed in the inner experience. If that were done, you would
return with the full knowledge of what happened. Between your head and chest a line of light has been established, a column of gleaming light— not a round column but a square one, so to say. It is like a cage, the preparation of a dwelling-place for what is going to descend.

Yesterday evening, Sri Aurobindo spoke to you about the four aspects of the supermind. Did you follow? You see, this white light comes from Maheshwari; it is a light of knowledge and purity. It is she who is the great preparer of this Yoga. When that preparation is ready, then an aspect of power (Mahakali) generally descends; it takes a personal form, whereas the force of Maheshwari is impersonal, at least here. I was expecting to see this descent. But the work of preparation— of assimilation and isolation from the outside— was lengthy; it took almost the whole time. At the same time a third ring separated you, as if cutting you off from the world in which you lived outwardly and also from your past. This force comes from Mahalakshmi.

The force of purification is always there now, preparing, regulating. I am always following you, though I do not see you physically. As the preparation was very good, I thought something would manifest in your consciousness today. But we must not be in too great a hurry; it will come another time.

"Before coming here, all my meditations were in a wrong direction— purely mental. I had no idea of what the inner experience was. That may be why I am having these difficulties. But perhaps that too was useful after all?"

Yes, as a preparation of the instrument.

But what we are doing here is so different from what people are in the habit of thinking, even here in India, and much more so in Europe or in...
October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother. The beginning is missing.)

... in the inner experience.

That I know very well. Even in meditation my mind remains active and my consciousness often gets carried away. I go back and forth, so to say, between the inner and outer movements. I cannot remain united for long with the inner movement. But I hope that when this inner experience becomes more lasting, I shall become more easily absorbed in it.

At present I have often the feeling of transparency. My mind becomes transparent and thoughts are like little centres of activity in this translucent milieu.

Yes, this is an experience that will develop.

Saturday, 16 October 1926

I feel the working of two forces. One goes straight to the psychic centre and remains there; the other comes from above and permeates the outer consciousness - the mind first, then the vital. The first is more inward, but it calls the second one into action.

These are two workings of the Force.

I have difficulty in keeping my mind concentrated upon the
inner experience. When I am watching these movements, I don't watch the thoughts and they often carry me away.

But that is the correct movement that has to be made. The thoughts come and go without being noticed, without attention being paid to them. But you must watch the inner movement and not the outer one. At first you had to act upon the mind to quiet it to some extent, in order to allow the Force to begin its work. But now you must detach yourself from the mind itself.

Are there not two methods? One consists in looking at the thoughts as they cross the field of the mind, the other in losing consciousness of them by concentrating upon the inner movement?

I think you can now enter the second movement. And you must keep in mind that the more you can overcome the idea of working by yourself, the quicker you will go. Allow things to be done for you.

I think that means keeping always the inner connection with the Force within.

Yes, till you become one with the Force. All things will be directed from within. The inner consciousness will remain calm and peaceful, though for some work you may enter the outer movement and come back again.

I suppose this idea of self will also disappear, for it has no raison d'être and is troublesome.

Yes, it will.
I have at times the sense of transparency, the thoughts happening as local activities which I am looking at.

There are two ways: one by oneself – it is slow; another by allowing everything to be done by the Divine – it is quick.

Has the Mother told you about your taking part in her meditation with others?

I think I misunderstood. I thought she meant my meditation with the group here with you.

No. With them.

What I got in my meditations with the Mother is invaluable, and I know that much more has been received than I am conscious of. In fact, I am only a little conscious of what happened.

But the Mother told me that you received well enough.

Yes, certainly. But I only feel a deep and strong and luminous Force coming down. My knowledge is fragmentary.

Anyhow, you are able to follow the movement. Very few are conscious of all that happens.

I am most willing to participate in the meditation and I am grateful for it. But I will do what you decide, as you know better.

Now Mme. W told me of the possibility of my being invited to dinner by the British Consul. There is an architect from Madras here for some time. I don't think there is any reason to accept.
Neither do I. But I will speak with the Mother and answer later.

Sunday, 17 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother)

I think I have understood what you meant. Since yesterday I have changed everything in my meditation. Instead of doing things myself as though I were directing the Force, I simply open myself and remain passive. Almost the whole day, I was able to keep contact with the Force and open myself to its action.

I felt you very close the whole day.

But this puts me to sleep.

There is nothing wrong with that. During sleep, in you as in many others, there is no resistance left. Everything opens and the working is perfect. If you feel inclined to sleep, don't resist it.

About the meditation, what have you decided?

It is decided, if you yourself are ready within.

I consider this meditation as infinitely valuable and accept it gratefully.

I must ask you not to be surprised in your outer consciousness if you see certain things that could make you wonder. The others consider this room a temple and behave as they would
in a temple, but they replace the idol by a human figure. That gives them the plenitude they need. You are brought up differently.

Don't worry. First of all, this won't surprise me – I understand their feeling very well. I don't act quite like them, probably because, as you say, I have been brought up in other conditions and have less need of outer manifestations; still, I obey what I feel within. As for being surprised, why?

Tuesday, 19 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother after meditation with her at 12.15 p.m.)

Something profound must have happened. I followed the movement on the whole. It seems to me there were two different forces – the first force was calm and luminous; the second, a stronger one, was fixed here (pointing to the solar plexus).

A force of strength?

Yes, a force of strength. My mind was more calm today.

When you came, you were well prepared. Your psychic being had prepared and adorned, under a symbolic form, a sort of bed of roses and gold leaves to receive what was going to come down. It was very pretty.

The Force that descended is a force of transformation. It will act from the centre now, fully conscious of the movements.
... for lack of a better word, I would say several examinations, or tests, if you like. You have passed them all successively and regularly, which shows that you were quite sincere. Now everything will go well till the end; everything will be easy. I am sure of it.

Tomorrow Sri Aurobindo will see you after your meditation.

In that way, I won't miss the meditation!

Saturday, 23 October 1926

First, I will speak of my meditation when I'm alone. There I feel, as I said, two workings of the Force. One is behind the heart; the impression it gives me is of living fire, but obscure. On the contrary, the Force coming from above into the mind has a light behind; though I don't see it, I know it is there.

Taking my meditation with the Mother today, I will say what happens when meditating with her. I feel at first a preparatory period when the Force comes down to the head and remains there for a certain time. Then it goes down and takes possession of the central being. There it remains. My consciousness is then drawn backwards, but, as it is a new movement for my body, there is some difficulty arising from it in the chest and throat - for instance, a choking sensation.

With the Mother my mind is quiet; its activity is greatly diminished and does not disturb me. But when I am alone, as I don't act upon the mind now, it is sometimes very chaotic and disturbs me very much.
What kind of movements take place?

Always the same old movement. A noise awakens some association and the mind spins around it and goes on and on. Then I find myself carried away and have to come back again and again.

Do you see what kind of movements they are? Are they true mental movements or do they arise from below?

They arise from below and I don't think there is anything new in them. But there is also another kind of mental movement. Very often now I find myself thinking of you or of the Mother, thinking that I will see you tomorrow, for instance, and what I will say to you, or seeing myself offering flowers to the Mother.

Seeing?

Not seeing, imagining rather. The process is the ordinary mental one, it seems. But as I am awaking to the reality of something of which I had only an intuition formerly and as I am coming in touch with the Light here above, my mind is directed towards you. It may be there is something genuine, but then the mind immediately starts working in the old way. What should I do?

You have nothing to do. The two movements you are conscious of are movements of the same Force. When it comes to the centre in the chest, it awakens the being to the Truth and turns it upwards. It is the human way of establishing the communication with what is above, a straight line with the supramental Truth. When the Force is established there and the central being comes out and seizes upon the outer being,
it will effect the transformation. It will direct the Force downwards, everywhere, and effect the change.

*I am so tired of my mind.*

But these movements are not so important. They are the remnants of the old way of working and they will fade away.

*I am waiting for a more radical change. Up to the present, though something very luminous is dawning in me, there is no radical change of consciousness. I am still the old self.*

What are you expecting?

*Well, many things! For instance, I will see my lower self as I see others' selves. I will no more be bound by the body.*

Of course the time will come when you will see the movements of nature in yourself as in others. But what you are waiting for, is it not a mental demand? It is better not to make such demands, for they always misrepresent the Truth. What you are asking for is the Truth and you must not state in advance that the Truth must be so and so. The mental representations, even the best ones, are imperfect and they become obstacles. What is needed is to realise the experiences as part of yourself.

*Then is it too much to wait for such a change? I am waiting for a change. Perhaps it is wrong to wait for something?*

No, but it is wrong to state in advance what the change will be.

*Now in meditation I only open myself to the Force and allow it to work. I am not acting upon my mind any longer;*
that is why it is so restless at times. This change in my meditation occurred last Saturday. I was then very conscious of the Presence in me and I kept in touch with it the whole day. But since that day, though it is still working, I am not very conscious of it. Sometimes the Force acts in the mind, sometimes in the central being. What shall I do? I have left the idea of directing the Force. (Sri Aurobindo smiles.) But shall I follow all its movements?

Remain open and passive and follow; that is what you have to do. The Force will transform you by itself and by its own means and ways. The way of doing it with the mind is slow and imperfect, though the mind sometimes thinks it to be the best way because it feels itself acting. That is wrong. The mind does not know the conditions and the means. The Force acts with a directness of which the mind is incapable, and you are receptive enough to allow it to work. Obstacles may arise, obstacles in the physical, vital or mental, as they arise always, but that does not matter. They will be worked out and rejected. Do not try to do anything by yourself.

I feel an increasing need for peace, tranquillity. And even the little work I do outside disturbs me for the present. I would like to minimise it or even to give it up. But I suppose I have to keep it.

Yes, it is better to keep it — and you will arrive at a state where you will do that work only with the outer part of yourself. It will then no longer disturb you.

Yes. But for the present, it is a little difficult and painful. It seems to be a period of transition.

Yes. It is a period of transition.
Saturday, 30 October 1926

Nothing remarkable is to be said. Meditation is becoming deeper and more luminous. I feel my consciousness as if bathed in light. Also it happened that I felt separated, to some extent, from my outer consciousness. Yesterday evening, in meditation, my consciousness was very much withdrawn inside and I nearly lost consciousness of the body. Thinking it to be a help, I called the Mother, but instead of helping me to go beyond, it seemed that she brought me back to the physical consciousness. It is only an impression; I have not spoken to her since.

It is not always equally easy. Some days are better than others. But apart from these slight variations and from the recurring thoughts of the mind, there are no special difficulties now. The Force is working mainly in front of the face, where it purifies and pacifies, and on the vital. I feel the Force as luminous, white. It pervades the mind but not yet the whole being.

My physical body feels a little strain resulting from the different movements. Today I woke up with a pain in the back. I don't know if it has any relation to Yoga or is simply due to cold. Perhaps it has a connection with the psychic centre.

But why is the vital not opening?

It is opening. Much more work is being done than is felt by your ordinary consciousness. The Mother tells me sometimes what is happening during the meditation. It is all very good. The task of connecting the two consciousnesses is going on. When this will be done, it will go quickly.
In meditation I don't remain completely passive, but I follow what the Force does. I talked with the Mother about the matter and she said that passivity was required in the beginning of the meditation, but that when the Force has begun to work cooperation is to be practised.

Of course, following the movement was understood – to follow the movement and see what it is doing there. Complete passivity would be insconscience.

Completely passive, I would go to sleep.

I became conscious of a centre in the middle of the head, a centre connected with both ears. I don't know more about it yet, only its existence.

Sunday, 31 October 1926

(Conversation with the Mother)

My meditation was calm and deep – a great Force descended. But the last two days were not very luminous. Yesterday in particular, it was a little cloudy.

The evening of the day before, during meditation, I almost lost consciousness of my body. I called you to help me, but instead of helping me to realise myself you put me back into my physical consciousness.

Yes. To leave one's consciousness in order to enter into another state is not what one should seek. That may be interesting as an experience, but the present movement is different. It is a question of connecting the two consciousnesses, but this means bringing down the higher consciousness into the physical body. Everything must be present there in the natural
consciousness. You will be brought back like this each time you try to escape.

Something is being prepared for you – that was said yesterday. It is as though the Divine Will had traced the goal and the path; it is as though it had told you, “You will be like this.” It was very clear. The goal is known to us, but it is reserved for the two of us. To you it is rather the path that this indicated, and this path is very different from what you are expecting in your outer consciousness. I wouldn’t know how to express it; you wouldn’t understand me in your outer consciousness. Your inner being knows; it almost told me a while ago something very similar. This has to become conscious. You are on the verge of something. Don’t be surprised if it is very different from what you expect or if it is very intense. It is so willed.

...?...

During the first part of the week I was disturbed by some movements of the vital which were possibly due to a hostile influence. Even when the possibility of the influence was removed, some anxiety was still felt, due perhaps only to
the novelty of the movement. But later this anxiety was thrown away and calm came again.

The chief difficulty is always the activity of the mind. It is neither possible to quiet it completely nor to stand aside from it. Even when, for a very short time, it does not interfere with the concentration, it is not truly quiet and so it resumes its activity at the very first opportunity. It seems to me that if it were possible to quiet it, progress would be rapid, for concentration would be easy. Now I am always disturbed and concentration is very imperfect.

This activity of the physical mind will only be completely transformed when the physical itself has been changed, but what should be arrived at is that during meditation it simply drops off.

But what about the activity of the mind that observes what is going on and expresses it? Shall I try to suppress it?

Not suppress, but simply discard it. But there are movements of the mind that are more true in character; they are reflections from above and bear some stamp of truth. Are these not of this kind?

I don't think so. There is nothing of an especially true character in them. They are ordinary mental movements as far as I can see.

Nowadays, at the beginning of every meditation, I call in the Force to effect this silencing of the mind and, open to it, let it work it out. I suppose this is correct.

Yes, it is. (Silence)

What did you say to Mme. X?
I told her what you said, but as coming from me. I told her that you would not allow any of us to make any political move and that from the very beginning you have kept the same attitude. I suggested that a third party should go and meet these gentlemen from Chandernagore and hint at what was behind the present situation, explaining also the attitude of the Governor and of X’s family towards us. And I said that if their suspicion had been aroused, they would have come here for information and they would have been told the truth.

Nolini told me that you said she was surprised that we would not help them after what they did for us.

No, I did not mean that. I simply said that I took care to explain in the right way in order to avoid such a feeling.

They must understand that I cannot and will not take any step in any political affair.* What they might expect from me is purely spiritual. The only thing they can expect for the help they gave you and Mme. Z is a spiritual return. And if they can receive it, it is all right. My only action is on a spiritual plane and when I decide to act in a case like this, it is from above. When C.R.** came to me asking for help, I did not act otherwise. For some time he remained open and was able to receive something. He succeeded in all he did and even recovered from ill health. After some time he severed the con-

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*At this time Sri Aurobindo was a political refugee in French India; any intervention by him in political affairs would have given the British an opportunity to demand his extradition.

**Chittaranjan Das (1870–1925), a prominent political leader and head of the Swaraj Party in Bengal. An eminent Calcutta lawyer, he defended Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case. In 1923 Das came to Pondicherry for spiritual as well as political advice.
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

He had asked me for some public recognition, some public blessing, etc. This I refused to give. And if the Xs use the power for public good... But you know how corrupt the political atmosphere is here!

May I tell her this?

Well, by and by, and if the opportunity presents itself. You may tell her that I have retired completely from physical action for the present and am engaged only in spiritual work.

Saturday, 6 November 1926

(Conversation with the Mother at 7.00 p.m.)

The day was calm and peaceful. During my meditation this evening, the work was in the outer consciousness. A calm and peaceful Light descended which filled the whole upper part of the body, though exactly where it emanated from I cannot say, and a work of calming went on in the outer mind. The lowest centre was also active – in short, the whole outer consciousness. In this case I made no effort to concentrate within myself.

Yes, naturally one has to follow the movement of the Force. It is a work of stopping this outer consciousness so that there will then be only one consciousness.

There is an entire part of the mind that always remains active; it is the part that observes, or rather it is the part that formulates what I observe into words; it follows the experience and expresses it. I cannot stop it.
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

For the moment it doesn't matter. You are conscious of something only when it is expressed in words. For the moment this is still necessary.

*But later, should even this disappear?*

You will be conscious directly, without this intermediary. Naturally, for expression, words will always be necessary, but then the mind is no longer needed.

When Sri Aurobindo wrote the *Arya,* his mind was absolutely silent, passive. His consciousness was high above in the supermind, and the consciousness in the hand formed the words; he was conscious of them as they were being expressed. From the intellectual point of view, the *Arya* is perfect—clarity, order, logic—and yet the mind had no part in it. This does not mean that the mind is useless; it has certain useful activities, but it is …

*(Here, eight pages of the notebook have been torn out.)*

November 1926

*(Conversation with the Mother. The beginning is missing.)*

… manifestation.

*Is it not possible that some mental elements come from one source and others from another source?*

*Arya,* a monthly philosophical review in which most of Sri Aurobindo’s major works first appeared between 1914 and 1921.
Yes, but usually this is not important. In some cases, in Egypt for example, there was an advanced occult knowledge. Certain men accumulated an occult mental knowledge which has remained there, quite ready, at your disposal when you enter into contact with it. But such cases are rare. Generally, these are tendencies or it may be a capacity or a memory more or less important.

This divine aspect is, in short, the individual higher Self?

Are you speaking of the Jiva, the individual element that persists and presides over the reincarnations? It is more than that. Normally these Jivas, except in very rare cases, are like emanations of divine beings who have put forth from themselves numerous Jivas, and it is those Jivas that incarnate.

In your case the divine aspect in question has put itself forth in Jivas, but there is one of them that represents this aspect more directly, as the direct projection or emanation by which it will find its fulfilment. And this Jiva, from what I can see, has already incarnated three times on earth; you would be the fourth. When an emanation like this prepares and chooses a vehicle, that preparation is still made under the distant guidance of this Force, and often there are certain tendencies in childhood that cannot be understood until one becomes conscious of the aim of one’s life. Then these tendencies, sometimes quite opposed to one’s milieu and heredity, take on their raison d’être. But it is only when one penetrates the depths of consciousness that one really becomes aware of the reason for things.
And what is there behind you is your true Self, clothed with all the experiences of terrestrial life.*

Saturday, 13 November 1926

My vital being is beginning to take part fully in the meditation, and I have the sensation that my consciousness extends from the head to the feet, like a calm and transparent medium. It would be quite limpid if the physiological sensations of sight would stop, which they do sometimes, but not always. Then I am conscious of a presence behind me, which feels like a duplicate of my consciousness. I even feel it as if it were the same size as my physical body and it presses to unite with my outer consciousness.

Today the unification was nearly made, though I did not experience any change of consciousness. I have the impression that this presence has entered me and that a slight touch would be enough to awaken my full consciousness to it.

Isn't this luminous consciousness the physical consciousness – I mean the whole physical, the physical mind, vital and body?

I suppose it is the normal consciousness, including the physical, and the consciousness behind is the inner one, which is trying to unite with the outer one.

*The following note is part of a preceding page torn out of the notebook. The Mother is apparently referring to the "divine aspect" that was trying to come down into the disciple: "At the beginning it remained behind. But gradually as your consciousness was clarified, it drew close. I spoke to you about it only when your consciousness was sufficiently transparent for you to begin to perceive it."
I also became conscious of the movements of the vital, which we may call egoistic movements. They rise from the vital and become conscious at the emotional centre. The thoughts by themselves have no character of vanity or selfishness, but when dwelling on certain thoughts, vital movements of this character appear and I cannot stop them. I suppose they will disappear, won't they?

Yes. The first thing is to become conscious that they do not come from the mind. When the mind is free from them and the emotional being is sufficiently free, they rise but they don't cloud the mind. They are then in their proper place and, by refusing them consent and calmly putting them aside, they will disappear. Most men cannot get rid of them because they cannot make this separation and are not conscious of this rising.

I feel, as before, something very deep and grand.

Yes.

November 1926

(Conversation with the Mother. The beginning is missing because several pages of the notebook have been torn out.)

... philosopher's stone. And they said that this stone could even transform the physical body. Does this not prove a realisation in the physical?

Yes. This is something that has always been known, this possibility of transformation. But their vision was very partial. They were rather the scientists of the age.
What did you see yesterday?

*My physical eyes did not see anything special. But I felt very powerfully the force and majesty.*

You should not expect to see a complete change. But some see very different aspects.

*I saw a luminosity, a halo.*

Yes, it rarely goes further. Still, some see changing aspects.

*I saw in fact modifications of the shadows of faces, which could give this idea of successive changes; but as it was unsteady, I did not pay much attention to it.*

There are different aspects which manifest successively. The modifications are still imperfect, because the flesh and what is most physical are not transformed; it penetrates into the blood. Yesterday, it was especially the aspect of wisdom that manifested in all its power – the knowledge in the Word.

There is quite a work going on in your eyes. Do you feel it? *Yes. I have spoken about it several times.*

Everything depends on how far your outer consciousness is united with the inner consciousness. When you have overcome the difficulties of your outer being, you will pass through a progressive initiation. I will show you, through the eyes, all that is there in the universe; then you will see the exact place of all these things. You have to get rid of all these difficulties.

*Is there something special I should do?*
As you know, the best thing is to open yourself and ask that it be done.

Saturday, 20 November 1926

I suppose the Mother must have told you the way I am progressing.

Yes.

There is nothing much to add that is important. I am conscious of the process of identification with that greater consciousness which is behind me, but it is not yet done. The difficulty lies always in the outer consciousness and the mechanical part of the mind which carries me away.

That is again the old story. You are paying too much attention to these workings.

I am not trying to suppress them by force. But is it really that they have no importance?

It is only an outer working which will be left aside and cast away in the process. This outer being is only the aggregate of what belongs to this lifetime, with a personality that is not your true personality.

How will it disappear?

When the inner consciousness is fully awake, it will absorb the outer one, or what cannot be absorbed will be rejected. There is no doubt that the change will occur.
You spoke of your experience with Lele. At that time did this mechanical working stop?

Yes, everything stopped. But everybody cannot do it. I could do it because there had always been a tendency to calm in my being and because I became aware of the thoughts coming from outside. When I rejected them, the calm descended upon me. Everything appears in the mind but does not evoke any response in it. I see, I hear, but no responses are awakened. At that time a complete silence came down. Everything that happened was like a cinema. After that, I had to take things back again into me, but in their right place.

So, I should not expect this?

It will come as something pressed from above. But it may not come in the beginning. Of course, the faculty of silence at will is needed and has to come.

Up to now no fundamental change in consciousness has occurred. I feel that my mind is deeper and has a sort of deep background behind. I am more and more conscious of the working of the forces in me. But no radical change yet.

(The last ten pages of the notebook have been torn out.)
During his first year in Pondicherry, Pavitra took part in the informal talks that Sri Aurobindo had in the evenings with a small group of disciples. Pavitra kept a record of several talks dealing with science and occultism, two subjects of special interest to him.
Evening Talks

24 April 1926

(The discussion is about spiritualistic phenomena: materialisations, movement of physical objects, etc. Sri Aurobindo comments:)

Are these phenomena really physical phenomena – that is, do they make use of physical matter and are they subject to the laws of the physical plane? With vital force alone, it is quite possible to act upon physical matter, to move it and, by compacting this vital matter, to give the illusion of the physical one.

(Pavitra gives an account of recent mediumistic phenomena studied in Europe: the work of Guzik and Eva, paraffin gloves, the materialisation of flowers, etc. Then the story is told of the stone-throwing incident that occurred a few years back in the house on Rue François Martin. Other stories of similar manifestations are mentioned.)

These phenomena are achieved with the assistance of vital forces that are not of a very high order. That is why the morality of the mediums is often lowered when they fall under the control of such entities. It is possible, however, to manipulate these forces by oneself without such danger.

Whenever reference is made to the danger of Siddhis, it is on account of the contact with these lower vital forces. But these Siddhis are not necessarily dangerous. It depends on the nature of the Siddhis and the use that is made of them.
The Catholic Church is not quite wrong when it ascribes spiritualistic phenomena to devils; it is speaking ignorantly, but it is not far from the truth. One must be very cautious in this matter.

(Pavitra speaks of the Metapsychic Institute of Paris and the work of Dr. Geley. Dr. Geley seems to have scientifically established that there is a real self in man above space and time. This gives a strong support to reincarnation.)

The real self of man is above the physical manifestations of space and time, but it is not above space and time; it is not in the Timeless.

28 April 1926

(Continuation of the same subject)

The way in which Europe approaches the manifestations of the vital plane is wrong and does not lead to more light.

First, it is perfectly possible from the vital plane itself to imitate purely physical manifestations. The fact that an object is seen or touched does not prove that it is really physical. Most of these materialisations, like the materialised animals of Guzik, only succeed in red light. This suggests that the forces in action are vital forces, which cannot bear white light. If there were a complete materialisation, why should red light be so important?

When the connection between the physical and the vital is close, vital manifestations imitate physical ones. In such cases, a wound inflicted upon the vital body has its reaction on the physical. Of course, it is possible that the higher physical levels are reached and not the lower ones; that may account for the
Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo

Mediumship brings great dangers. To be a medium is to lend oneself without control to all kinds of beings of the vital plane, often of the lowest order. These vital beings try to contact the physical plane in order to find willing instruments there to project on them their influence. They are always in search of human beings to make use of them; this varies from a simple influence to a complete possession. The latter is a fearful danger.

Apart from possession, we must remember that the vital is the plane of desires, and that any work with the forces of that plane carries in itself the danger related to these desires: ambition, greed, lust, etc.

Though new facts are being placed before science, it does not seem to view them in the right manner or to derive more light from them; it cannot be obtained in the way now followed.

Pavitra: Is science not bound to travel from the known to the unknown? And is it not possible thus to come slowly to recognise the existence of realities higher than the physical, and then proceed to the study of the laws of the higher planes?

The knowledge that science possesses is one thing — and not a large one — the scientific attitude is another. The capacity of observation, of study, of reserving one's judgment and building a conclusion only after all available data have been gathered, of keeping the mind open to any suggestion, any clue about a higher truth, this attitude is indispensable to the occultist also.

But the criteria of the physical plane are not valid on the vital plane. The vital plane is the world of spell and deceit and power. The methods of modern science are good so far as the
physical plane is concerned; they are not acceptable for the higher ones. For these planes, the ancient method of developing the higher knowledge under the guidance of the Guru has its raison d'être.

And even then there are dangers: first, the danger of falling into the power of vital entities, and second, the danger arising from the very nature of the vital world – the terrible power of desire. Whenever perfect conditions are not fulfilled, the possibility of a fall becomes very great.

**PAVITRA:** At present, is the mass of humanity able to accept knowledge which is not purely mental?

It may be that it would not accept such knowledge.

**BARINDRA:** The progress of science is mostly due to a few highly gifted men who were working by intuition, checking afterwards the truth of what they had perceived.

The dangers I was speaking of just now are not only met with in Yoga. In the case of spiritualism, the phenomena are due to vital entities taking possession of vital remnants of dead people and their floating thoughts. They assume various names which they take from the consciousness of the audience – not always the surface consciousness, very often the collective subconscious. They can even bring out facts unknown to those present, but it does not prove anything.

Why in India are Siddhis dreaded by those who aim at high spirituality? It is because of this double danger.

It is indeed possible to develop certain powers without being overcome by them. When one rises high enough in the Truth, Siddhis offer themselves without the same risk. But even then, care must be taken.
(The subject of discussion is Mongolia and China. Characteristics of the Chinese: the Chinese are material and strongly intellectual.

Books of Ossendowski (Men, Beasts and Gods) and of St. Yves d'Alveydre (Mission de l'Inde) about Mongolia and the mysteries of Central Asia. Both authors speak of a great secret community of sages and adepts who are living in an underground city somewhere in Tibet. They are said to preserve all the wisdom and knowledge of the lost civilisations of Atlantis and others.)

These writers, like many other clairvoyants who give similar accounts, do not know how to distinguish between the physical and the vital worlds. They mistake for physical realities scenes, happenings and beings which exist only on a higher plane.

(Pavitra gives an instance of a Chinese traveller in Tibet who found a great monastery in a very isolated and lonely place in a high and remote valley. The adepts there had solved the problems of life and death and were powerful occultists. Many of them were Chinese and Tibetan, but there were also Indians and several Europeans.)

There is nothing very strange in the existence of a monastery in a high valley of the mountains, but the presence there of several Europeans is very improbable.

A similar case is that of a Christian Sadhu who asserts the existence in the Himalayas of a community of Christian Masters who will come down very soon – naturally, to Christianise the world. And there are many other such cases.
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

(The talk then turns to what makes up the characteristics of a race. It is stated that physical heredity is not sufficient to account for the similarity of characters, ideals and tendencies.)

The main factor is that souls of a certain type are attracted to a definite race and take a body in it. This gives a first tendency towards the similarity you are speaking of.

5 May 1926

(Continuation of the same subject)

The pages you have shown me, containing an account by a Chinese traveller of his discovery of the Temple of Life in a Tibetan valley, are far from convincing. No doubt, there are in such places monasteries and retreats inhabited by occultists, but the statement does not bear the stamp of truth. This international gathering is fanciful and highly improbable.

A few years ago, a Hindu who had travelled in these regions of China, Indo-China and Tibet brought to Europe a number of photos which he was showing with his lectures. His father was from Lahore and had married a Muslim woman in Mauritius. He had no spiritual value and his lectures were only a means to get some fame.

Mira* saw these photos and recognised two scenes she had seen often in visions. One was the entrance of a cave with two lying statues, leading to a small brook which the sun reached only once a day. Mira saw monks coming there to fetch water. But the Hindu traveller asserted that the place was totally deserted. What Mira saw then was either something of the

*At that time, the Mother was known by this name.
past or a vital scene on a physical substratum. The other scene was a monastery in which monks were putting someone into a trance. The traveller confirmed the capacities of the monks for occultism.

**PAVITRA:** There is a strong desire for the marvellous in the European and still more in the American.

This has come as a reaction to a period of belief in nothing. But this liking for the marvellous is not at all spiritual. There is a complete want of knowledge of the spiritual. One cannot even speak of a search for Truth.

**PAVITRA:** In spite of this ignorance and lack of discrimination, have we not here an indication of an aspiration towards a more spiritual state, of something hitherto hidden that is trying to come out?

Very likely. Such a thing has happened several times in history, but always ignorance has violently rejected the Truth that tried to come down. The last attempt was taken advantage of by a rising Christianity. A certain preparation had been made for a coming down of the Truth. Christianity failed not only because all religions are bound to fail, but because it was overwhelmed by ignorance, and what was coming down ascended and disappeared.

We are now in a similar condition and the same danger is near by. The Theosophists, spiritualists and others did not succeed in placing themselves in the true receptive attitude. If the leading spirits of Europe were in search of the spiritual Truth, there would be hope, but it is not so. That is why, in spite of all the adverse conditions, the East has accomplished more in spirituality than the West. In the East it is always the highly gifted minds that have turned towards spirituality,
and a strong potentiality and spiritual reserve have thus been created.

8 May 1926

(Continuation of the same subject)

In the West the highest minds have turned not towards spiritual truth but towards material science. The scope of science is very narrow; it touches only the most exterior part of the physical plane. And even there, what does science know really? It studies the functioning of laws, builds up theories that are ever renewed and each new theory is held up as the last word of truth! We recently had the atomic theory, now comes the electronic.

There are two statements of modern science that would stir up deeper ranges for an occultist:

First, atoms are whirling systems like the solar system.
Second, the atoms of all the elements are made out of the same constituents. Different arrangement is the only cause of their different properties.

If these statements were considered under their true aspect, they could lead science to new discoveries, of which there is no idea at present and in comparison with which the present knowledge is poor.

According to the experience of the ancient Yogis, sensible matter was made out of five elements, Bhutani: Prithivi, Apas, Agni (Tejas), Vayu and Akasha.

Agni is threefold:
First, ordinary fire, Jada Agni;
Second, electric fire, Vaidyuta Agni;
Third, solar fire, Saura Agni.

Science has only entered upon the first and second of these
fires. The fact that the atom is like the solar system could lead it to the knowledge of the third.

Beyond Agni is Vayu, of which science knows nothing. It is the support of all contact and exchange, the cause of gravitation and of the magnetic and electric fields. Through it, the action of Agni, the formal element, the builder of forms, is made possible.

And beyond Vayu is the ether, Akasha.

But these five elements constitute only the grossest part of the physical plane. Immediately behind it is the physical-vital, the element of life buried in matter. J. C. Bose is contacting this element in his experiments. Beyond that is the mind in matter. This mind has a much different form than the human mind; still, it is a manifestation of the same principle of organisation. And deep below, there are two more hidden layers.

That is the occult knowledge concerning the physical plane only. Science is far behind this knowledge.

The Hindu Yogis who realised these truths did not elaborate them and turn them into scientific knowledge. Other fields of action and knowledge having been opened to before them, they neglected what for them was the most exterior aspect of the manifestation.

There is a difference between the scientific mind and the cast of mind of an occultist. There is little doubt that someone who could unite these two groups of faculties would lead science towards great progress.

**PAVITRA:** Did science study the first three Tattwas? What, for instance, is Apas?

It is the element that makes life possible – the desire which is the source of life. Agni is the element which renders form possible and Prithivi is the compacting element which concretises.
KSHITISH: Water is recognised by science as indispensable to life. Any strong dehydrating agent is an antiseptic – for example, absolute alcohol.

PAVITRA: But water is not Apas! What is the relation between the Tattwas and the three states of matter: solid, liquid and gaseous?

These states of matter are the most exterior manifestations of those elements and they are in correspondence with them.

KSHITISH: Why does Vayu, which corresponds to gas, stand higher than Agni?

Vayu has been identified with gas, but that is a mistake. It is Vayu which permits exchanges and mutual actions – gravitation, for instance. It is an element of contact.

KSHITISH: Is Vayu what has been called Pancha Vayu?

No, there is nothing in common. Pancha Vayu represents certain movements in the vital body.

PAVITRA: Do the five senses also correspond to the five Tattwas?

For some of them, the correspondence is easy to recognise. We find in Sankhya, for instance, that Apas contains Rasa, the sense of taste. Agni, determining the forms, corresponds to sight; Vayu, the contacting element, corresponds to touch. As for smell, which has the emission of particles as a mechanism, the correspondence is less evident. It is perhaps more in the nature of a symbol.
PAVITRA: Is hearing, then, of a higher quality than sight?

Hearing and the sounds that we receive are very minor compared to the total possibility of sound. Every manifestation originates by a movement of sound. That is what the Veda meant by creation by sound, by creative sound, Shabda Shrishti.

KSHITISH: Is Shabda, then, very different from what we call sound?

The range of our auditory perception is small. There exists in sound something higher, beyond its physical manifestation.

X: Some consider the sounds issued by living organisms different in their properties from the sounds made by dead matter.

Y: Another classification is given in the Tantras. They divide sounds into three classes: Vaikhari, Madhyama and Pashyanti.

PAVITRA: Are there five elements or seven?

The ancient seers said that everything went by seven. But in the present state of evolution, there are in play five principles of which perception is possible. But very likely, there are seven Tattwas.

KSHITISH: What corresponds to the Tattwas, on the vital plane?

There are evidently correspondences, but we enter into a far different world.
X: Is sensible matter made of Prithivi only, or is it compounded with other Tattwas?

What we perceive contains the five Tattwas; that means that the five Tattwas cooperated in its formation.

PAVITRA: Reverting to science, it seems that for the study of the physical plane science has followed a method which has given good fruits. Does this method apply to the study of the higher planes? The method consists of observation and experiment, the deduction of laws, and the building up of theories and hypotheses connecting these laws.

There is a twofold objective of the method: to explain the mechanism of the phenomena and the origin of the laws, and to suggest other laws and other experiments.

Moreover, there are certain principles that have ruled the scientific mind, such as not to accept a hypothesis which is not indispensable.

If these methods and principles are not suitable for the higher planes, what modifications are needed in order to promote the study of occult knowledge? Here also some method is necessary, isn't it?

Without any doubt. Observation and experiment count for much in occultism. But if one tried to deduce general laws from what is perceived with no other help, the worst mistake would be made. Something else is necessary – let us call it intuition; it is a discernment which enables one to assert that this is so or it is not so. And it is an indispensable faculty.

Moreover, the occultist does not make any hypotheses. Experimenting and observation confirm what intuition reveals to him. He is liable to error or to ignorance. If what he has intuited is insufficient, he must search for deeper and more complete intuitions. He can commit mistakes if he
builds false mental constructions around his intuitions, and
mind easily makes up for the lack of intuition with its own
additions. It is a very common source of error, and it has led
astray a number of occultists. Anyhow, there are no hypoth-
eses in occultism.

Again, scientific hypotheses have no character of truth.
Very often it is possible to give two different theories explain-
ing the very same facts — so they have equal value. In such a
case, possibilities are more important than truth.

12 May 1926

(The book of Dr. Gustave Geley, L'Ectoplasme et la Clairvoyance, had been handed over to Sri Aurobindo
for reading.)

I have no time to read such books. I simply had a glance at the
photos; it was quite enough for me. They show that these are
manifestations of vital entities of the lowest order — what the
Church calls devils. One has simply to look at the pictures to
know what the matter is: the look of the eyes is quite devilish.
Nothing good can come out of this, absolutely nothing. It is
just the opposite of spiritual science.

If European scientists enter on this way, the consequences
may be disastrous. They are trying to rend the veil put by
Nature between the physical and the vital, and if this way
is widespread, the result will be mass possession and a grip
by these beings that will become stronger and stronger upon
humanity. Usually these vital beings can act upon man only
through his desires and passions; but if one opens himself to
them in this way, as the mediums do, they can directly contact
the physical plane and their sway can prove to be very harm-
ful. Europe is still protected by the grossness of its mind.
After all, I do not think such practices can spread very far; occult forces would intervene to stop them. But it is far worse than a purely negative scepticism; here there is a total perversion and a complete opposition to all that is spiritual, and it would stand in the way of the spiritual evolution of humanity. There is here an atmosphere that kills all that is spiritual; it is a very repulsive atmosphere and I would not like to have anything to do with all these people.

Dr. Geley may be unaffected; he is there simply as a spectator. But for the medium, there is a danger of moral degradation and a loss of all moral control. Even on the spectator there can be an effect: a kind of cloud is spread in the lowest part of the vital, and under its cover anything can break in.

It is not possible to climb thus from plane to plane—it is impossible—and when the vital is taken by the wrong end, one is in for trouble. It is more obnoxious and dangerous than mere scepticism. These vital beings have utilised this means to get a new point of contact with the physical. Happily, Europe is not very sensitive, but if they introduced this in India the havoc would be great. The Hindu is generally so exactly balanced between the physical and the higher planes that at the slightest touch the veil is rent.

**PAVITRA:** The mediums do not all have a bad morality.

I am not speaking only from the sexual point of view. Their moral comprehension becomes obliterated and they don't know how to distinguish between good and evil.

Besides spiritual knowledge, there is the true occultism, of which there are two kinds: the lower, what is called magic, and the higher. The higher occultism consists in understanding the nature of the planes and the beings who live in them, their relations with the physical plane and how to control them. To all this, spiritual knowledge adds divine comprehen-
sion and divine action — the knowledge of the manifestation of Spirit and its evolution on earth.

But what is done in Europe is neither spiritual development nor occultism. Nothing can come out of these practices, for they can prove nothing — except the existence of the facts themselves. Science is exactly in the same position as “spiritualism”, which cannot prove that the dead live. These vital beings take upon themselves the shapes of the dead and they derive factual knowledge from the subliminal consciousness of the audience and even from other sources. Nothing is proved or disproved by these purely physical experiments.

Similarly, there was a recent article on J. C. Bose’s work in which they were trying to prove that his experiments had demonstrated the non-existence of the vital force, that the vital reactions of plants were as unconscious and automatic as those of inorganic matter. Here also, nothing can be proved, for or against. The only way out is occultism — that is, to work with one’s own consciousness, to study the reactions and the forces, to learn how to distinguish them, to follow their effects, etc.

_KSHITISH: Are the clairvoyants and those who foretell the future in such a bad position?_

No, unless they use the same wrong means.

The majority of those who foretell the future are open to a certain consciousness of the higher part of the physical and there they can perceive images of the past and future. It is not the real knowledge, which can be attained only by rising very high, and it brings us not images but the truth concerning manifestation. Here the knowledge is fragmentary. These people are sometimes interesting, with a very simple mind and a kind of intuition concerning happenings, a kind of psychical tact.
Of course, this also is different from spirituality. One can be a great sage but not be able to foresee the future, and one can be a good clairvoyant but not very spiritually advanced. And in truth there is only one thing worth seeking — it is the evolving Spirit.

**PAVITRA:** The future of Europe is very dark, then. Placed as she is between the Church which dogmatizes, official science which negates, and psychical research which is the “work of demons”, how can she find the way?

By looking for spiritual truth; if there were sufficient aspiration for it, it would manifest.

**X:** But there are no persons in Europe who possess a sincere and unmixed aspiration towards spirituality.

How do you know that? There is at present no leader in the field of spirituality, but there are possibilities.

**Y:** Pavitra is here — this is a case of possibilities! (Laughter)

**Z:** What are the realisations of Edward Carpenter and A.E.?

Of A.E. I know only the poems, not the man. He has written beautiful things, but that does not prove he has a large realisation. With Carpenter, it is somewhat different; but I think he has more of a mental spirituality than a true spiritual knowledge.

In any case it is also something that is necessary. It is not sufficient to have nice ideas about spiritual realisation. What is needed is an aspiration towards the complete change of life
Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo

itself. And for Europe the obstacle lies in the mind.

Saturday, 29 May 1926

(The talk turned to Tirupati, a disciple who came from his home to Pondicherry in spite of the letters of Sri Aurobindo instructing him to stay home and to work towards the recovery of his mental balance. Recent letters sent by Tirupati to Sri Aurobindo made no sense. In one he spoke of himself as being an Avatar, etc. After that, Tirupati expressed regret for having sent this letter.)

Was this regret sincere?

KSHITISH: I think so. There seems to be in him a double personality, so it is possible that the normal personality regrets what the other one does. When I went to see him, at first he did not recognise me; he did so only after some time.

It is true that it is a kind of double personality, but not of the type in which one ignores what the other is doing.

The vital being that possesses him suggests to him all kinds of explanations — about my letters, for instance. This being takes the form of myself or of Mira, and Tirupati believes it implicitly. It suggests that my letters have a different meaning, sometimes just the opposite of the plain one.

It is becoming worse every day. Two things may happen: Tirupati may become a lunatic or he may manifest some power and pretend to be a great Yogi or an Avatar.

It is easy to fall, but difficult to climb again!

PAVITRA: Was this fall partly due to physical weakness?
Of course, he made himself weak by non-cooperation. He also had some illness, but so do others. The breakdown cannot be attributed to physical weakness; the defects were vital and mental.

He had a very narrow and conventional mind – practically no mind at all – only conventional ideas about religion, etc. He also had a vanity which made him believe that he was a great sadhak. He aimed at becoming a superman in the egoistic sense. But he had a remarkable aspiration and intensity in the vital being. There was a possibility of his manifesting something very beautiful, but it failed. The sexual impulse was very strong in him; instead of dominating it from above and purifying it, he repressed it with the common religious and ethical ideas that it was devilish and bad. But then the sex energy accumulates and is not transmuted. When the hold on it is lost, everything rises up with tremendous intensity – it is like an explosion! It also takes other forms.

He began the practices that the Bhaktas sometimes indulge in – weeping and uttering my name and that of Mira. He was too eager to call something down. He wanted supermanhood in one year, like Swaraj in one year for Gandhi! I asked him to stop these practices, but he did not stop them. Finally he lost control of his body and began shouting in meditation.

He also had the extreme ascetic ideal; he tried to abstain from food and also from sleep. This naturally brought about the final collapse and I had to send him away.

*Purani*: Is it possible to have such a control over the universal vital plane that it is impossible for these vital forces to represent themselves as the truth?

It is a question of consciousness and it is not as on the physical plane where you can prevent somebody from doing something. Nothing can be done without the cooperation of the
individual. If he wants the enjoyment he receives and calls it back, you cannot prevent it.

And that was so in Tirupati’s case. When he tried to recover, he felt like an ordinary man, no more like an Avatar – and this he did not like. Also he felt some pain and illness in his body. So he called back the vital force.

**Purani:** Why did the vital being direct him here, instead of using him in ways more suited to its aims?

There are various tendencies among these beings. Some of them would even like to stay here: they are attracted and hope to derive some benefit, but at the same time they feel uncomfortable and don’t like to obey.

**Pavitra:** What do they aim at in taking possession of human beings?

They want an influence over the physical plane. Sometimes they only want to play a joke. Oh, they don’t care for man! Some of them like to play God and receive worship. Some aim at an increase in the manifestation of powers, such as healing powers – for example, at Lourdes.

The lowest of these beings aim at the satisfaction of various kinds of desires: lust, anger, etc. That is why capital punishment is so absurd. The vital being of the executed man goes out and tries to take hold of anybody nearby. Many murderers have said that they got the first impulse to murder when they attended an execution.

**Kshitish:** In the case of Tirupati, is the vital being the same kind as the one that took hold of Motilal?

They are the same kind. Both were not very strong, but that
of Motilal had more strength, though a limited amount. In Tirupati's case it was a stupid vital being thinking it could have some play here. In both cases they were trying to get some support here.

But the really strong beings are those behind movements like the Theosophical Society. They have not only vital power, but mental power.

**Pavitra:** What is their part in evolution?

They evolve in their proper plane and do not usually come in a physical body.

**Durai Swami:** Have they no idea of progressing?

For them, progress is an increase of power, unless they get converted. It was Théon's idea that those who come in touch with the physical are destined to be converted.

**Kshitish:** Does conversion mean the change of their vital nature into something else?

They remain vital beings, but instead of aiming at power for selfish ends, they consent to manifest something higher. They don't need to take a body for that.

**Pavitra:** Where does the soul go in a case like Tirupati's? Does it not try to recover the lost control?

Generally, in man, the soul is not in the forefront. By Yoga the soul is supposed to come to the front; but even then, it can be thrown into the background again by these forces, who take advantage of narrowness of mind or some vital defect or physical weakness — unless the central being comes and takes
KSHITISH: How can these beings take possession of man, since man has a mind higher than the vital impulses?

What kind of mental knowledge does man have? Practically none. He is a most ignorant creature. Knowledge is based upon data, but from the same data clever men derive absolutely opposite theories, and your preferences determine which theory you accept. Is that knowledge? Moreover, the data are taken from sensations. Man only knows what he sees.

These vital beings are not so limited. They know and feel the play of forces, so they are more powerful and more clever than men. Théon used to speak of a warrior fighting against one of these beings and conquering it. The vital being admits its defeat and wants to be converted. Then the warrior releases its grip and begins to teach; after a while the warrior comes under the domination of the vital being.

Man has a brilliant future if he takes the right attitude, but as he is presently limited to physical knowledge, he belongs, so to say, to an inferior plane.

Tuesday, 1 June 1926

PUNAMCHAND: Men are beings of the physical plane, but they have vital, mental and psychic parts. Do the beings of the vital plane also possess mental and psychic parts?

The vital and the physical planes are somewhat different. On the physical plane, there is evolution through the different grades of being. Even matter evolves. There are other physical planes on which there is no evolution, but on ours there is. On the vital plane there is none. It is a plane of types: con-
Consciousness does not evolve from one level to another. And it is not true that man, after having been a physical being, must become a vital one and then a mental one.

The animal has its consciousness held on the vital level, but when it is ready the consciousness changes to the mental, and the animal reincarnates as a man. Some of our cats are ready for human birth.

The ordinary man can hardly be said to have a soul. The low type of man is vital. By and by, the true mental appears, but it is still rare. Then some higher principle may enter into play.

**KSHITISH:** Do the Asuras also have the possibilities of man?

No.

**PAVITRA:** Then is there no progress for the Asuras?

Not in the sense of evolving their consciousness. They can change their working and open to something higher.

**KSHITISH:** That is what you meant by their being converted. Then can they help evolution?

Yes, they can manifest something higher than the vital nature and become instruments of the Divine.

**PAVITRA:** If they are not converted, what is their fate? Annihilation?

Yes. But if you ask what will happen at the end of the Kalpa, it is difficult to answer.

**KSHITISH:** What is the truth behind the Puranic idea of
In the case of Ravana and Hiranyakashipu, they were human beings who became Asuras and chose the path of opposition. It is a fall and it shows that the course of evolution for man is not to become an Asura. By doing so, he compromises his evolution.

KSHITISH: Then is there any truth in their idea of worshipping God as an enemy?

Their sadhana was egoistical and they wanted power for themselves or they aimed at retiring from the manifestation.

KSHITISH: You said that those Asuras who are behind movements like the Theosophical Society have strong minds. How do they make such a mistake as to oppose the Divine?

I did not say that they had great minds and that the ideas they put forth were great ideas. They can be said to be clever in their purpose and in knowing how to work out results.

PAVITRA: What is their place in evolution? Could it be done without them?

There is the old idea of the Devas and the Asuras struggling to control the human evolution. The Asuras are responsible for the great complexity of the world, but in my opinion they are not a necessity.

The Asuras realise themselves through revolt, suffering, struggle, pain and difficulty. The world could have evolved differently, like a flower blooming from inside to the outside,
but forces of the Asuric type entered the play and prevented it. This is a truth known to any religion – the snake tempting Prakriti and Prakriti deceiving Purusha. There is also the parable of the Devas endeavouring to do some work and the Asuras coming and disturbing it all.

*Punamchand:* How can one be safe against the Asuric influence?

Through purity and sincerity one is secure from their possession. They can give you blows, they can deceive and fog your mind, but if you have the white light, there is no definitive fall and you will go through.
A Life-Sketch of Pavitra

Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire was born in Paris on 16 January 1894. An outstanding student, he studied physics, chemistry and mathematics at the École Polytechnique. When the First World War broke out in August 1914, he was called up for duty in the army. He served first as an artillery officer on the front lines and then as a reconnaissance officer. After the war he returned to the École Polytechnique in order to complete his studies, and graduated with a degree in civil engineering. For about a year he worked as a junior engineer in Paris, repairing roads and bridges. In 1920 he left France for Japan, and four years later went to Outer Mongolia, where he lived for a year in a Buddhist lamasary.

Saint Hilaire had already read some of Sri Aurobindo's writings, and had heard about the Mother from friends. At the end of 1925, he went to meet them in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo accepted him as a disciple, guided him in the practice of Yoga, and gave him a new name, Pavitra, the Pure One.

At the end of 1926, Sri Aurobindo withdrew from public life and placed the Mother in charge of the disciples who had gathered around him; this was the beginning of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. For more than four decades, Pavitra helped to build up the Ashram by serving the Mother in various ways. As a qualified engineer, he carried out a number of electrical and mechanical works. For example, he installed the electrical wiring in the house where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lived after February 1927. In the late 1920s, after three cars were given to the Mother, he became her mechanic and chauffeur. A few years later, he designed and built the Ashram's first automobile workshop. Pavitra made salads and sandwiches for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, growing the vegetables and
greens in pots on the terrace outside his room. He set up a perfume laboratory in order to prepare perfumes and lotions for the Mother. And for several decades, he handled much of her foreign correspondence.

In 1951 the Mother founded the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre (later renamed Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education). Pavitra was one of its principal creators and its first director. He helped to develop the school's curriculum and its “free progress” system of instruction. He also set up its first chemistry and physics laboratories. For many years he edited the French portion of the school's bilingual quarterly journal.

Pavitra was a versatile man with many interests. An avid philatelist, he built up a large stamp collection. A civil engineer, he drew up the plan for the public park in the centre of Pondicherry. But always his primary interest was the spiritual life envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Pavitra made three compilations from their works. The first was *The Future Evolution of Man* (1963), compiled from several of Sri Aurobindo's major works. The second was *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love* (1966), compiled from their writings and talks. The third was *Le Yoga de la Bhagavad Guita* (1969), a translation and commentary comprising French translations of extracts from Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. He also wrote a book of his own, *Education and the Aim of Human Life* (1961), and several other essays on education.

Pavitra lived in the Ashram for forty-four years. Towards the end of his life, he contracted leukemia. Severely weakened, he continued to work as much as he could. And every day he slowly climbed the staircase to the Mother's room in order to see her for a short time. He passed away on 16 May 1969, at the age of seventy-five.

PART ONE. CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO. These conversations began in mid-December 1925 and continued, once or twice a week, for nearly a year. Pavitra kept a detailed record of the conversations, noting them down from memory in his notebooks. Never published during his lifetime, they were first serialised in French and English in the Ashram’s bilingual quarterly journal Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education between August 1969 and February 1972. Although the conversations were in English, Pavitra recorded the first twenty-nine of them in French (18 December 1925 to 7 June 1926). The remaining ones were recorded in English (14 June to 20 November 1926). The conversations with the Mother would have been spoken and recorded in French. All these conversations were first published in the form of a book in Conversations avec Pavitra (1972). The present text, based on that book, is a new English
translation of the conversations spoken in French and a very slightly revised version of those spoken in English (occasional awkwardly worded sentences have been revised to make them more clear).

PART TWO. EVENING TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO. These eight talks were recorded by Pavitra because they dealt with two subjects of interest to him, science and occultism. He noted them down in English. The first six talks, translated into French, were published in the April 1953 issue of France-Asie: Revue Mensuelle de Culture de Synthèse, Saigon. They came out in the original English in the July 1969 issue of Mother India. The final two talks are being published for the first time in this book. The texts of all these talks have been lightly revised; grammatical errors have been corrected and some awkward phrases recast for the sake of clarity.
Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

Agni — fire; one of the five elemental states of substance; the principle that gives form and particular character to the action of forces, represented to our senses in matter as light, electricity, fire and heat.

Aishwarya — use of the will on a person, object or event in order to control it; effectiveness of the will acting as a command, without any special concentration as in Vashita (see below).

Ajna (Chakra) — the centre of consciousness between the eyebrows, governing the dynamic mind, will, vision and mental formation.

Akasha — ether; one of the five elements, the static principle of extension which is the eternal matrix of things.

Anahata (Chakra) — the centre of consciousness in the heart, governing the emotional being.

Ananda — bliss, spiritual delight.

Anumanta — giver of sanction; the Purusha as giver of the sanction of the works of Nature.

Apas — water; one of the five elements, the materialising or outflowing principle of continuation, represented to our senses in matter as sap, seed, Rasa.

Asura — an anti-divine being, a hostile being of the mentalised vital plane.

Avatar — divine incarnation; one in whom the Divine Consciousness has descended into human birth.

Bhagavad Gita — a celebrated Indian scripture in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, spoken on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, which occurs as an episode in the Mahabharata.
Bhakta — a lover and devotee of the Divine; one who follows the path of love and devotion.

Bhoga — enjoyment.

Bhutani — elements; elemental states of substance.

Buddhi — the thinking mind, the intelligence, the mental power of understanding and discrimination.

Chakra — inner centre; a centre of consciousness in the subtle body.

Deva — god, godhead.

Gita — see Bhagavad Gita.

Guna — quality, characteristic, property.

Guru — spiritual teacher.

Ishita — effectiveness of will acting not as a command or through the thought as in Aishwarya, but through the heart and temperament (Chitta) in a perception of need.

Ishwara — lord, master; the Purusha as lord of Nature.

Jada Agni — ordinary fire.

Jiva — (shortened form of Jivatman): the individual Self; the individualised Self or Spirit (Atman) upholding the living being (Jiva) in its evolution from birth to birth.

Kalpa — aeon, age, world cycle.

Karma — action, work; action entailing its consequences.

Kosha — sheath, body; the Koshas are the envelopes or subtle bodies which constitute an embodied soul.

Krishna — the Lord of Ananda, Love and devotion.

Madhyama (Vak) — the middle gradation of speech, between the seeing word and articulate speech.

Mahakali — the Divine Mother’s Power of force and strength.

Mahalakshmi — the Divine Mother’s power of harmony, love and delight.

Mahasaraswati — the Divine Mother’s Power of work and her spirit of perfection and order.

Maheshwari — the Divine Mother’s power of wisdom, wide-
- ness, compassion, majesty and all-ruling greatness.

**Manas** — the sense mind.

**Manomaya Purusha** — the mental being or self.

**Moksha** — liberation, spiritual liberation.

**Mukti** — liberation, spiritual liberation.

**Muladhara (Chakra)** — the lowest centre of consciousness at the base of the spine, governing the physical down to the subconscious.

**Nirvana** — extinction, the state of non-being.

**Pancha Vayu** — the five vital “airs”, the five types of pranic energy.

**Paramahamsa** — the liberated man; the free soul.

**Pashyanti (Vak)** — the seeing word, speech with the vision of truth in it.

**Prakriti** — Nature, Nature-Force; the outer or executive force of the Conscious Energy (Shakti) which forms and moves the world.

**Prithivi** — earth, the earth-principle; one of the five elements, the stabilising principle of condensation, represented to us in matter as earth, the basis of all solids.

**Puranas** — a class of Indian sacred writings composed of legends, apologues, etc.

**Purusha** — Conscious Being, essential Being supporting the play of Prakriti (Nature); the Self as witness, giver of sanction, enjoyer, upholder and lord of the forms and works of Nature.

**Rajas** — the quality of Nature that energises and drives to action.

**Rasa** — taste, liking, pure taste of enjoyment.

**Sadhak** — one who practises a spiritual discipline.

**Sadhana** — spiritual practice or discipline; the practice of Yoga.

**Sadhu** — a good or holy man.

**Sahasrara (Chakra)** — the centre of consciousness located
Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

just above the head; the highest of the seven centres of consciousness.

**Sakshi** — witness; the Purusha as witness of Nature.

**Samadhi** — yogic trance or state of absorption in which the mind acquires the capacity of withdrawing from its limited waking activities into freer and higher states of consciousness.

**Sankhya** — a system of Indian philosophy whose method is based on the analysis, enumeration and discriminative setting forth of the principles of our being.

**Sannyasin** — one who has renounced the world and action; an ascetic.

**Saura Agni** — solar fire.

**Shabda Shrishti** — creative sound, creation by sound.

**Shakti** — power, force; the Divine Power; the consciousness and power of the Divine; the Power of the Mother.

**Siddha** — a perfected man, one who has accomplished the aims of Yoga.

**Siddhi** — spiritual perfection, accomplishment of the aims or any movement of the Yoga; also, an occult or supernormal power.

**Sura** — a god.

**Swaraj** — independence, self-rule.

**Tamas** — the quality of Nature that hides or darkens; the quality of ignorance, inertia and obscurity.

**Tantra** — a yogic system based on the principle of Consciousness-Power (conceived of as the Divine Mother) as the Supreme Reality; its method of discipline is to raise Nature in man into manifest power of Spirit. Also, a text explaining the Tantric philosophy or method of practice.

**Tantric** — related to Tantra; one who practises Tantra.

**Tattwa** — a fundamental cosmic principle.

**Tejas** — one of the five elements, also called Agni; light and heat energy.
Upanishads — a class of Indian sacred writings, regarded as the source of the Vedanta philosophy.

Vaidyuta Agni — electric fire.

Vaikhari (Vak) — articulate speech, the spoken word.

Vaira Bhava — the attitude of hostility or enmity towards the Divine.

Vashita — concentration of the will on a person, object or event so as to control it.

Vayu — air; one of the five elements, the contacting element, the motional principle of expansion and contraction.

Vedanta — a system of philosophy and spiritual discipline based on the Upanishads and teaching the culminating knowledge of the Absolute.

Yoga — joining, union; union with the Divine or the conscious seeking for this union. Yoga is in essence the union of the soul with the immortal being and consciousness and bliss of the Divine, effected through the human nature with a result of development into the divine nature of being.

Yogi — one who practises Yoga, but especially one who is already established in spiritual realisation.
This book is primarily the record of a young Frenchman’s conversations with Sri Aurobindo in 1925 and 1926. For nearly a year, Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, later known as Pavitra, spoke regularly with Sri Aurobindo. The central subject was the spiritual practices undertaken by Pavitra at this time. Sri Aurobindo gave him detailed instructions in meditation, explaining how to quiet the mind and open to the divine force. Other topics include Theosophy, occultism, science, and various aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s system of Yoga. The book also contains a number of conversations with the Mother and several “evening talks” in which Sri Aurobindo conversed informally with the disciples who had gathered around him.

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