3 March 1951

“There is even a necessity for the existence of the hostile forces. They make your determination stronger, your aspiration clearer.

“It is true, however, that they exist because you gave them reason to exist. So long as there is something in you which answers to them, their intervention is perfectly legitimate. If nothing in you responded, if they had no hold upon any part of your nature, they would retire and leave you.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (5 May)

The best way of facing hostile forces is always to aspire, always to remember the Divine. And never to fear.

Mother reads a question asked during the talk in 1929:

“Do the hostile forces generally come from outside or inside?”

Ibid.

They come from outside the consciousness or the being.

Where does the being stop?... What is the difference between outside and inside, if the consciousness is everywhere!

Seekers are always told, “If you want to get rid of something, say that it is outside.” This is only an impression, but it is easier to get rid of a difficulty if you have the impression that it is outside you. However, I have just told you the opposite, that if nothing “in you” answers to the hostile forces, they will never attack you. Therefore, what is inside is also outside and what is outside is also inside! The secret lies in knowing how to place it just where it is most convenient for the immediate action.
If you have a serious difficulty in your character, for example, the habit of losing your temper, and you decide: “I must not get angry again”, it is very difficult, but if on the other hand, you tell yourself: “Anger is something which circulates through the whole world, it is not in me, it belongs to everybody; it wanders about here and there and if I close my door, it will not enter”, it is much more easy. If you think: “It is my character, I am born like that”, it becomes almost impossible. It is true there is something in your character which answers to this force of anger. All movements, all vibrations are general — they enter, they go out, they move about — but they rush upon you and enter into you only to the extent you leave the door in you open. And if you have, besides, some affinity with these forces, you may get angry without even knowing why. Everything is everywhere and it is arbitrary to draw limits.

I read somewhere, in a book written by a confirmed materialist, that human beings are as though shut in a leather sack and have no contact with other beings. It is a stupidity evidently, but there are people who are helped by it; this idea that they are shut up in a shell and have no contact with others except through this shell, protects them and prevents them from receiving anything whatever from outside. True, it is a stupidity, but some stupidities are at times useful! We said the other day that the mind is not an instrument for knowledge and that in the domain of ideas everything is relative, everything is a way of seeing, everything is a way of living. Every science has its language, every religion its language, every philosophy its language, every activity its own language, and the more you learn these languages, the more do you have the impression of knowing many things. What matters is that you do know all the languages. You must come to the point where all these movements of the mind are for you a play altogether relative — you may play well or ill, but it is all a play. There are people who know how to make use of it, these are the so-called “intelligent” people and there are those who do not know how to use it, these are the so-called “fools".
Things are “in” us to the extent we identify ourselves with them. If we push back the identification, are they outside?

This is an altogether subjective way of speaking. To act, you have to make some classifications and it is just for this that the mind is useful: it organises, it puts each thing in its place, it plays the game; and it is this activity which creates the rules of the game and by obeying these rules it can win the game. But true knowledge comes from elsewhere.

“Mental faith is not sufficient; it must be completed and enforced by a vital and even a physical faith, a faith of the body. If you can create in yourself an integral force of this kind in all your being, then nothing can resist it; but... you must fix the faith in the very cells of the body. There is, for instance, now abroad the beginning of a knowledge among the scientists that death is not a necessity. But the whole of humanity believes firmly in death.... If this belief could be cast out first from the conscious mind, then from the vital nature and the subconscious physical layers, death would no longer be inevitable.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (5 May)

This is a negative way of looking at the problem. If one believed that immortality was possible, that would be a more active way of seeing; and not only that it is possible but it will be realised later, then one would be strong enough to resist.

“A fixed form was needed in order that the organised individual consciousness might have a stable support. And yet it is the fixity of the form that made death inevitable.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (5 May)
Who will tell me what constitutes an individual? What is it that gives you the impression that you are a person existing in himself?

One can say with Descartes: “I think, therefore I am.”

Ah, no! That does not prove that you are individualised.

What is it that gives you the impression that you are an individual?... When you were ten, you were very different from what you were when you were born, and now you are very different from what you were at ten, aren’t you? The form grows within certain limits and there is a similarity, but even so, it is quite different from what it was at your birth; you may almost say, “It was not I.” So much for the physical. Now, take your inner consciousness when you were five and now. Nobody would say it is the same person. And your thoughts, at five and now? All are different. But in spite of everything, what is it that gives you the impression that it is the same person who is thinking?

Let us take the example of a river following its course: it is never the same water which flows. What is a river? There is not a drop that ever is the same, no stability is there, then where is the river? (Some take this example to prove that there is no personality — they are very anxious to prove that there is no personality.) For beings it is the same thing: the consciousness changes, ideas change, sensations change, what then is the being? Some say that individuality is based upon memory, remembrance: you remember therefore you are an individual being. This is absolutely wrong, for even if you had no memory you would still be an individual being.

The river’s bed constitutes the river.

The bed localises the river, but the bed also changes much; which means that all is inconstant, all is fugitive, and this is true. But it is only one part of the truth, it is not the whole. You feel quite
clearly that there is something “stable” in you, don’t you, but where does this sensation of stability come from?

If I were to place it physically, I would say it is somewhere in the chest. When I say “I am going to do something”, it is not the true “I” which speaks. When I say “I think”, it is not the true “I” which thinks — the true “I” looks at the thinking, it looks at the thoughts coming. Naturally this is a way of speaking.

When the vast majority of people say “I”, it is a part of them, of their feeling, their body, their thought, indifferently, which speaks; it is something that always changes. Therefore, their “I” is innumerable, or the “I” always varies. What is the constant thing therein?... The psychic being, evidently. For, to be constant a thing must first be immortal. Otherwise it cannot be constant. Then, it must also be independent of the experiences through which it passes: it cannot be the experiences themselves. Hence, it is certainly not the bed of the river which constitutes the river; the bed is only a circumstance. If the comparison is carried a little farther (besides, comparisons are worthless, people find in them whatever they want), it can be said that the river is a good symbol of life, that what is constant in the river is the species “water”. It is not always the same drop of water, but it is always water — without water there would be no river. And what endures in the human being is the species “consciousness”. It is because it has a consciousness that it endures. It is not the forms which last, it is the consciousness, the power of binding together all these forms, of passing through all these things, not only keeping a memory of them (memory is something very external), but keeping the same vibration of consciousness.

And that is the great mystery of creation, for it is the same consciousness, the Consciousness is one. But the very moment this Consciousness manifests itself, exteriorises itself, deploys itself, it divides itself into innumerable fragments for the need
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of expansion, and each one of these fragmentations has been the beginning, the origin of an individual being. The origin of every individual form is the law of this form or the truth of this form. If there were no law, no truth of each form, there would be no possibility of individualisation. It would be something extending indefinitely; there would be perhaps points of concentration, assemblages, but no individual consciousness. Each form then represents one element in the changing of the One into the many. This multiplicity implies an innumerable quantity of laws, elements of consciousness, truths which spread out into the universe and finally become separate individualities. So the individual being seems constantly to go farther and farther away from its origin by the very necessity of individualisation. But once this individualisation, that is, this awareness of the inner truth is complete, it becomes possible, by an inner identification, to reestablish in the multiplicity the original unity; that is the purpose of the universe as we perceive it. The universe has been made so that this phenomenon may take place. The Supreme has manifested Himself to Himself so as to become aware of Himself.

In any case, that is the purpose of this creation. Let us be satisfied with our universe, let us make the best use possible of our life upon earth and the rest will come in its time.

It is purposely, mind you, that I have not mentioned the ego as one of the causes of the sense of individuality. For the ego being a falsehood and an illusion, the sense of individuality would itself be false and illusory (as Buddha and Shankara affirm), whereas the origin of individualisation being in the Supreme Himself, the ego is only a passing deformation, necessary for the moment, which will disappear when its utility is over, when the Truth-Consciousness will be established.