Mother reads a passage about natural calamities (Questions and Answers 1929, 5 May).

Why do disasters occur?

*Because a higher consciousness wants to manifest itself in the world, and man and Nature resist it.*

This is partly true. But I don’t think Nature has this feeling. When there is an earthquake, for instance, or a volcano erupts, if there are men staying nearby and these events cause their death, obviously it is for these men a catastrophe, but we could very well imagine that for Nature it is good fun! We say, “What a terrible wind!” Naturally, for men it is “terrible”, but not for Nature. It is a question of proportion, isn’t it? I don’t know if it is necessary to bring into the picture a higher force wanting to manifest and a resistance from Nature; it is possible, but not indispensable. It can be understood quite easily that it is the play of Nature with tremendous forces and that for her it is only a diversion; in any case, nothing catastrophic. For the consciousness of Nature or the material consciousness, physical forms and humanity upon earth are like ants. You yourself, when you walk, you do not find it necessary to move out of the way to avoid crushing the ants!—unless you are a stubborn “non-violent” fellow. You walk, and if you crush a few hundred ants, it can’t be helped! Well, it is the same with Nature. She goes on, and if in the course of her march she destroys a few thousand men, it is not of much importance for her, she can make again a few millions! It is not difficult.

This reminds me of what happened in Paris when I was seventeen or eighteen. There was a “charity bazaar”. This charity
bazaar was a place where men from all over the world came to buy and sell all kinds of things, and the proceeds of the sale went to works of charity (it was meant more for amusement than for doing good, but still, charitable works profited by it). All the elegance, all the refinement of high society was gathered there. Now, the bazaar was very beautiful but not solidly built, because it was to last only for three or four days. The roof was of painted tarpaulin which had been suspended. Everything was lighted by electricity; the work was more or less decently done, but naturally with the idea that it was only for a few days. There was a short-circuit, everything began to blaze up; the roof caught fire and suddenly collapsed upon the people. As I said, all the elite of society were there — for them, from the human point of view, it was a frightful catastrophe. There were people near the entrance who tried to escape; others, all ablaze, also tried to reach the door and run away. It was a veritable scuffle! All these elegant, refined people, who usually were so well-mannered, began to fight like street rowdies. There was even a Count of something or other, a very well-known man, a poet, a man of perfect elegance, who carried a silver-knobbed stick, and he was surprised in the act of hitting women on the head with his stick, and trying to push forward! Indeed, it was a fine sight, something most elegant! Afterwards, lamentations in society, big funerals and many stories.... Now, a Dominican, a well-known orator, was asked to give a speech over the tombs of the unfortunate who had perished in the fire. He said something to this effect: “It serves you right. You did not live according to the law of God and He has punished you by burning you.”

And every time there was a disaster this story was repeated. Naturally many people protested and said, “Here’s a God whom we won’t have!” But these ideas are quite typical of ordinary humanity.

“Sinning” humanity is altogether a Christian idea, which falsifies our idea of the Divine — a Divine who punishes poor
people because it is their misfortune to be born “sinners” would not be very generous! However...

“...Philosophy has always failed to unveil the secret of things; it is because it has tried to fit the universe into the size of the human mind.”

*Questions and Answers 1929 (5 May)*

“To fit the universe into the size of the human mind”, this is precisely what everybody does. And not only do they judge the universe, but they judge the divine principles which have made it and they imagine they are able to know something.

*Does “liberty” mean freedom from all attachment?*

It is not only a freedom from all attachment, but a liberation from all bondage to the law of consequences. In the material field there is a determinism which comes from the law of consequences, from the law of cause and effect; hence inner liberation does not free you only from all attachment but from all consequences. As I have told you many a time, by your inner liberation your consciousness rises to a level far above the level which governs the material world and, from this high level, the Force can descend and cancel all the material consequences.

*If one realises a certain truth in the higher consciousness but the mind resists, should the mind be forced to accept this new truth?*

If you succeed in forcing it, very well. But it is not so easy. It is not enough to decide to force it for this to happen! It revolts. And it is not the only one to revolt. Then what are you going to do with this mind in revolt? Leave it to do what it likes? Exhaust all that? It is not a very fine procedure!
The functioning is not the same with everyone. There are people who have a great light in the mind (or think they have it!), they know things, they know how the world and others ought to behave and, moreover, they are sure that they, they are very far on the road, but when they begin to act they are more stupid than the little street urchin. Why? Because it is not the mind which has decided, and even if it has decided, it is not the mind which has executed; what has executed does not recognise at all the authority of the mind, but tells it: “Leave me alone, don’t bother me! I act according to my own inspiration!” Then, what are you going to do? Try to give a lesson to your mind? You may always try, but it is not sure that you will succeed. It is not an easy problem.... Human nature is very unstable; after having thought in one way, it thinks in another; after having felt in one way, it feels in another, and so on; nothing lasts: the good not longer than the bad; the bad, a little longer than the good! But anyway, this does not last indefinitely. So, if you have the patience to wait, surely it will change!

*But everything returns*

Yes, surely, because in this way nothing will change, it is only the rhythm which will change. It is like those colour-wheels: sometimes one sees one colour, sometimes another, and if one waits long enough one sees the red, blue, white, red, blue, white... indefinitely. There are people who have a pretty little theory like that, which I have often heard; they say that one’s vital should never be repressed, it must be allowed to do all it wants, it will get tired and be cured! This is the height of stupidity! First, because the vital by its very nature is never satisfied, and if a certain kind of activity becomes insipid, it will double the dose: if its stupidities bore it, it will increase its stupidities and its excesses, and if that tires it, as soon as it has rested it will start again. For it will not be changed. Others say that if you sit upon your vital it will be suppressed and, one day, it will shoot up like
5 March 1951

a steam-jet... and this is true. Hence, to repress the vital is not a solution. To let it do what it likes is not a solution either, and generally this brings on fairly serious disorders. There must be a third solution.

To aspire that the light from above may come and purify it?

Obviously, but the problem remains. You aspire for a change, perhaps for a specific change; but the answer to your aspiration will not come immediately and in the meantime your nature will resist. Things happen like this: at a given moment the nature seems to have yielded and you think you have got the desired result. Your aspiration diminishes in intensity because you think you have the desired result. But the other fellow, who is very cunning and is waiting quietly in his corner, when you are off your guard, he springs up like a jack-in-the-box, and then you must begin all over again.

But if one can tear out completely the root of the thing?

Ah! One must not be so sure of that. I have known people who wanted to save the world by reducing it so much that there was no longer a world left! This is the ascetic way — you want to do away with the problem by doing away with the possibility of the problem. But this will never change anything.

No, there is a method — a sure one — but your method must be very clear-sighted and you must have a wide-awake consciousness of your person and of what goes on there and the way in which things happen. Let us take the instance of a person subject to outbursts of rage and violence. According to one method he would be told: “Get as angry as you like, you will suffer the consequences of your anger and this will cure you.” This is debatable. According to another method he would be told: “Sit upon your anger and it will disappear.” This too
Questions and Answers

is debatable. In any case, you will have to sit upon it all the time, for if ever you should get up for a minute you will see immediately what happens! Then, what is to be done?

You must become more and more conscious. You must observe how the thing happens, by what road the danger approaches, and stand in the way before it can take hold of you. If you want to cure yourself of a defect or a difficulty, there is but one method: to be perfectly vigilant, to have a very alert and vigilant consciousness. First you must see very clearly what you want to do. You must not hesitate, be full of doubt and say, “Is it good to do this or not, does this come into the synthesis or should it not come in?” You will see that if you trust your mind, it will always shuttle back and forth: it vacillates all the time. If you take a decision it will put before you all the arguments to show you that your decision is not good, and you will be tossed between the “yes” and “no”, the black and white, and will arrive at nothing. Hence, first, you must know exactly what you want — know, not mentally, but through concentration, through aspiration and a very conscious will. That is the important point. Afterwards, gradually, by observation, by a sustained vigilance, you must realise a sort of method which will be personal to you — it is useless to convince others to adopt the same method as yours, for that won’t succeed. Everyone must find his own method, everyone must have his own method, and to the extent you put into practice your method, it will become clearer and clearer, more and more precise. You can correct a certain point, make clear another, etc. So, you start working.... For a while, all will go well. Then, one day, you will find yourself facing an insurmountable difficulty and will tell yourself, “I have done all that and look, everything is as bad as before!” Then, in this case, you must, through a yet more sustained concentration, open an inner door in you and bring into this movement a force which was not there formerly, a state of consciousness which was not there before. And there, there will be a power, when your own personal power will be exhausted and no longer effective. When
the personal power runs out ordinary people say, “That’s good, I can no longer do anything, it is finished.” But I tell you that when you find yourself before this wall, it is the beginning of something new. By an obstinate concentration, you must pass over to the other side of the wall and there you will find a new knowledge, a new force, a new power, a new help, and you will be able to work out a new system, a new method which surely will take you very far.

I do not say this to discourage you; only, things happen like that. And the worst of all is to get discouraged when it happens. You must tell yourself, “With the means of transport at my disposal I have reached a certain point, but these means do not allow me to go further. What should I do?... Sit there and not stir any longer? — not at all. I must find other means of transport.” This will happen quite often, but after a while you will get used to it. You must sit down for a moment, meditate, and then find other means. You must increase your concentration, your aspiration and your trust and with the new help which comes to you, make a new programme, work out other means to replace those you have left behind. This is how one progresses stage by stage.

But you must take great care to apply at each stage, as perfectly as possible, what you have gained or learnt. If you remain in an indrawn state of consciousness and do not apply materially the inner progress, a time will certainly come when you will not be able to move at all, for your outer being, unchanged, will be like a fetter pulling you back and hindering you from advancing. So, the most important point (what everybody says but only a few do) is to put into practice what you know. With that you have a good chance of succeeding, and with perseverance you will certainly get there.

You must never get discouraged when you find yourself before a wall, never say, “Oh! What shall I do? It is still there.” In this way the difficulty will still be there and still there and still there, till the very end. It is only when you reach the goal that everything will suddenly crumble down.

181