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Rebirth

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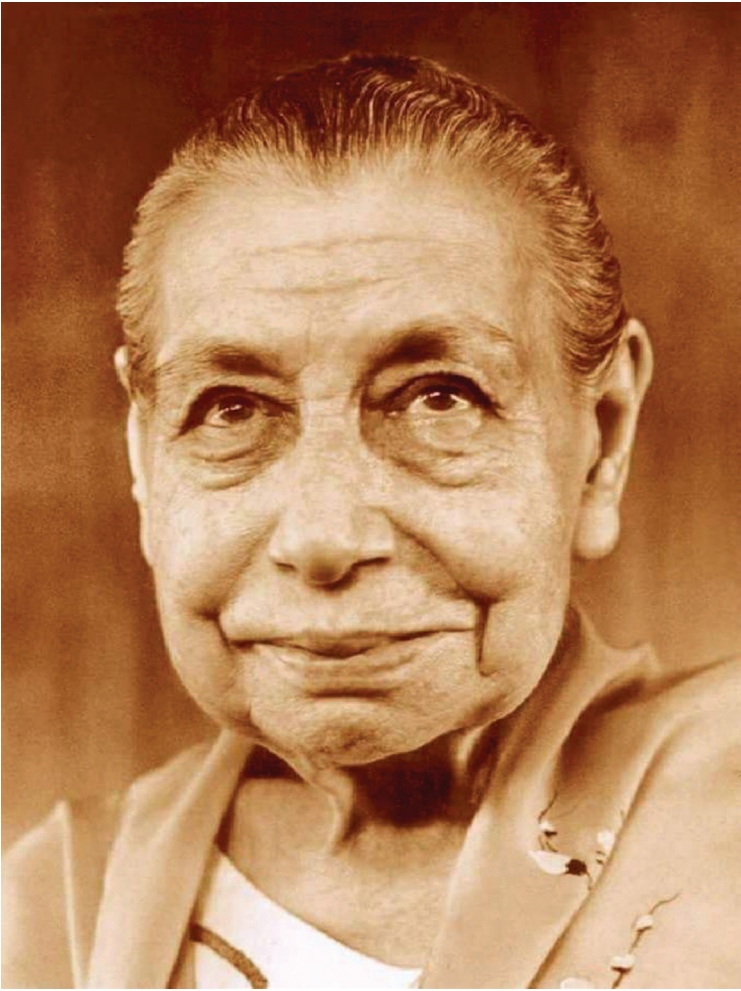
REBIRTH

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial Note: The subject of Rebirth is engaging for both the spiritual seeker as well as the scientist keen to study the phenomenon of after-death and its deeper mysteries. Death is like an iron wall beyond which our senses cannot reach. We see the end of the body but man intuitively knows that we are not just the body but a living personality as well. To this the mystic adds that we are, above all, a conscious immortal soul in a perishable body. The mystic who has developed subtle senses that reach beyond the limits of our material cage reveals to us not only the secret of the soul but also its journey through the many bodies and different personalities. But what is the purpose of it all, if purpose there is? What is the inner sense of this return to earth into this perishable mortal body again and again? These questions have vexed mankind through the Ages. In this issue we shall try to look for the answers to these perennial questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



But since she knows the toil of mind and life
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart.

Savitri, p.526

Sri Aurobindo

The Immortal Soul

A spark of the Divine Fire

The soul is described as a spark of the Divine Fire in life and matter, that is an image. It has not been described as a spark of consciousness.

There is mental, vital, physical consciousness — different from the psychic. The psychic being and consciousness are not identical.

When the soul or “spark of the Divine Fire” begins to develop a psychic individuality, that psychic individuality is called the psychic being.

The soul or spark is there before the development of an organised vital and mind. The soul is something of the Divine that descends into the evolution as a divine Principle within it to support the evolution of the individual out of the Ignorance into the Light. It develops in the course of the evolution a psychic individual or soul individuality which grows from life to life, using the evolving mind, vital and body as its instruments. It is the soul that is immortal while the rest disintegrates; it passes from life to life carrying its experience in essence and the continuity of the evolution of the individual.

CWSA 28: 117-18

Psychic presence and the psychic being

With regard to the evolution upwards, it is more correct to speak of the psychic presence than the psychic being. For it is the psychic presence which little by little becomes the psychic being. In each evolving form there is this presence, but it is not individualised. It is something which is capable of growth and follows the movement of the evolution. It is not a descent of the involution from above. It is formed

progressively round the spark of Divine Consciousness which is meant to be the centre of a growing being which becomes the psychic being when it is at last individualised. It is this spark that is permanent and gathers round itself all sorts of elements for the formation of that individuality; the true psychic being is formed only when the psychic personality is fully grown, fully built up, round the eternal divine spark; it attains its culmination, its total fulfilment if and when it unites with a being or personality from above. ...

Of course one cannot say that every man has got a psychic being, just as one cannot refuse to grant it to every animal. Many animals that have lived near man have some beginnings of it, while so often one comes across people who do not seem to be anything else than brutes. Here, too, there has been a good deal of levelling. But on the whole, the psychic in the true sense starts at the human stage: that is also why the Catholic religion declares that only man has a soul. In man alone there is the possibility of the psychic being growing to its full stature even so far as to be able in the end to join and unite with a descending being, a god-head from above.

CWM 3: 150-51

Origin of psychic being

This is how things happen. The origin of the psychic life, the divine Presence in Matter is one and the same, that's understood, but there are beings in the higher world who have never taken a body upon earth and who want to act there, have a terrestrial action. So they wait till some psychic beings attain their full development and unite with them to do some work according to their nature. Their consciousness is added to the psychic consciousness upon earth. These are beings who have never taken birth here, beings who

materialised themselves more and more as the creation proceeded. They are perhaps the first emanations, beings sent into the universe for special reasons — men call them “gods” or “demi-gods”. So, one of these beings may have chosen, for some special reason, a psychic being in formation — he helps it, follows its development and, when this psychic is sufficiently ready and sufficiently strong to be able to support the identification, he unites with it, identifies with it to do some work upon earth. This is not very frequent, but it has happened and still happens. You find stories in ancient traditions about gods incarnating upon earth; some mythologies speak of them. That corresponds to something true. But all psychic beings are not necessarily united with a being of the higher planes.

CWM 4: 184

Progress of psychic being

There are in the psychic being two very different kinds of progress: one consisting in its formation, building and organisation. For the psychic starts by being only a kind of tiny divine spark within the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will. The psychic being at its origin is only a spark of the divine consciousness and it is through successive lives that it builds up a conscious individuality. It is a progress similar to that of a growing child. It is a thing in the making. For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is a being in the making. It is not a fully individualised, fully conscious being and master of itself and it needs all its rebirths, one after another, in order to build itself and become fully conscious.

But this sort of progress has an end. There comes a time when the being is fully developed, fully individualised,

fully master of itself and its destiny. When this being or one of these psychic beings has reached that stage and takes birth in a human being, that makes a very great difference: the human being, so to say, is born free. He is not tied to circumstances, to surroundings, to his origin and atavism, like ordinary people. He comes into the world with the purpose of doing something, with a work to carry out, a mission to fulfil. From this point of view his progress in growth has come to an end, that is, it is not indispensable for him to take birth again in a body. Till then rebirth is a necessity, for it is through rebirth that he grows; it is in the physical life and in a physical body that he gradually develops and becomes a fully conscious being. But once he is fully formed, he is free, in this sense that he can take birth or not, at will. So there, one kind of progress stops.

But if this fully formed being wants to become an instrument of work for the Divine, if instead of retiring to repose in a psychic bliss, in its own domain, he chooses to be a worker upon earth to help in the fulfilment of the Divine Work, then he has a fresh progress to make, a progress in the capacity for work, for organisation of his work and for expression of the Divine Will. So there is a time when the thing changes. So long as he remains in the world, so long as he chooses to work for the Divine, he will progress. Only if he withdraws into the psychic world and refuses to continue doing the Divine Work or renounces it, can he remain in a static condition outside all progress, because, as I have told you, only upon earth is there progress, only in the physical world; it is not acquired everywhere. In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose. One remains what one is, without any movement.

CWM 5: 203-04

Death and Progress

But for those who are not conscious of their psychic?

They are compelled to progress whether they want it or not.

The psychic being itself progresses in them and they are not conscious of it. But they themselves are compelled to progress. That is to say, they follow a curve. They follow an ascent in life. It is the same progress as that of the growing child; there comes a time when it is at the summit of its growth and then, unless it changes the plane of progress, unless the purely physical progress turns into a mental progress, a psychic progress, a spiritual progress, it goes down the curve and then there will be a decomposition and it will not exist any longer.

It is just because progress is not constant and perpetual in the physical world that there is a growth, an apogee, a decline and a decomposition. For anything that does not advance, falls back; all that does not progress, regresses.

So this is just what happens physically. The physical world has not learnt how to progress indefinitely; it arrives at a certain point, then it is either tired of progressing or is not capable of progressing in the present constitution, but in any case it stops progressing and after a time decomposes. Those who lead a purely physical life reach a kind of summit, then they slide down very quickly. But now, with the general collective human progress, there is behind the physical progress a vital progress and a mental progress, so that the mental progress can go on for a very long time, even after the physical progress has come to a stop, and through this mental progress one keeps up a kind of ascent long after the physical has ceased to progress.

And then there are those who do yoga, who become

conscious of their psychic being, are united with it, participate in its life; these, indeed, progress till the last breath of their life. And they do not stop even after death, when they have left their body under the plea that the body cannot last any longer: they continue to progress.

CWM 5: 204-05

The Mother

The centre of organisation and transformation is always the presence of the psychic in the body. Therefore, it is a very big mistake to believe that the progress continues or even, as some believe, that it is more complete and rapid in the periods of transition between two physical lives; in general, there is no progress at all, for the psychic enters into a state of rest and the other parts, after a more or less ephemeral life in their own domain, are dissolved.

Earthly life is the place for progress. It is here, on earth, that progress is possible, during the period of earthly existence. And it is the psychic which carries the progress over from one life to another, by organising its own evolution and development itself.

CWM 9: 269-70

The Mother

The Purpose of Rebirth

Rebirth is not about Reward/Punishment

How comforting it would be if we could tell a good man and even the amount of his goodness, — for should not the Supreme be a strict and honourable accountant? — by the amount of ghee that he is allowed to put into his stomach and the number of rupees he can jingle into his bank and the various kinds of good luck that accrue to him. Yes, and how comforting too if we could point our finger at the wicked stripped of all concealment and cry at him, “O thou wicked one! for if thou wert not evil, wouldst thou in a world governed by God or at least by good, be thus ragged, hungry, unfortunate, pursued by griefs, void of honour among men? Yes, thou art proved wicked, because thou art ragged. God’s justice is established.” The Supreme Intelligence being fortunately wiser and nobler than man’s childishness, this is impossible. But let us take comfort! It appears that if the good man has not enough good luck and ghee and rupees, it is because he is really a scoundrel suffering for his crimes, — but a scoundrel in his past life who has suddenly turned a new leaf in his mother’s womb; and if yonder wicked man flourishes and tramples gloriously on the world, it is because of his goodness — in a past life, the saint that was then having since been converted — was it by his experience of the temporal vanity of virtue? — to the cult of sin. All is explained, all is justified. We suffer for our sins in another body; we shall be rewarded in another body for our virtues in this; and so it will go on *ad infinitum*. No wonder, the philosophers found this a bad business and proposed as a remedy to get rid of both sin and virtue and even as our highest good to scramble anyhow out of a world so amazingly governed.

Obviously, this scheme of things is only a variation of the old spiritual-material bribe and menace, the bribe of a Heaven of fat joys for the good and the threat of a hell of eternal fire or bestial tortures for the wicked. The idea of the Law of the world as primarily a dispenser of rewards and punishments is cognate to the idea of the Supreme Being as a judge, "father" and school-master who is continually rewarding with lollipops his good boys and continually caning his naughty urchins. It is cognate also to the barbarous and unthinking system of sometimes savage and always degrading punishment for social offences on which human society, unable still to find out or organise a more satisfactory way, is still founded. Man insists continually on making God in his own image instead of seeking to make himself more and more in the image of God, and all these ideas are the reflection of the child and the savage and the animal in us which we have still failed to transform or outgrow.

CWSA 13: 265-66

The true foundation of rebirth

The true foundation of the theory of rebirth is the evolution of the soul, or rather its efflorescence out of the veil of Matter and its gradual self-finding. ... But what is the aim of that evolution? Not conventional or interested virtue and the faultless counting out of the small coin of good in the hope of an apportioned material reward, but the continual growth towards a divine knowledge, strength, love and purity. These things alone are real virtue and this virtue is its own reward. The one true reward of the works of love is to grow ever in capacity and delight of love up to the ecstasy of the spirit's all-seizing embrace and universal passion; the one reward of the works of right Knowledge is to grow perpetually into the infinite Light; the one reward of the

works of right Power is to harbour more and more of the Force Divine, and of the works of purity to be freed more and more from egoism into that immaculate wideness where all things are transformed and reconciled into the divine equality. To seek other reward is to bind oneself to a foolishness and a childish ignorance; and to regard even these things as a reward is an unripeness and an imperfection.

And what of suffering and happiness, misfortune and prosperity? These are experiences of the soul in its training, helps, props, means, disciplines, tests, ordeals, — and prosperity often a worse ordeal than suffering. Indeed, adversity, suffering may often be regarded rather as a reward to virtue than as a punishment for sin, since it turns out to be the greatest help and purifier of the soul struggling to unfold itself. To regard it merely as the stern award of a Judge, the anger of an irritated Ruler or even the mechanical recoil of result of evil upon cause of evil is to take the most superficial view possible of God's dealings with the soul and the law of the world's evolution. And what of worldly prosperity, wealth, progeny, the outward enjoyment of art, beauty, power? Good, if they be achieved without loss to the soul and enjoyed only as the outflowing of the divine Joy and Grace upon our material existence. But let us seek them first for others or rather for all, and for ourselves only as a part of the universal condition or as one means of bringing perfection nearer.

CWSA 13: 267-68

Sri Aurobindo

*A spirit that is a flame of God abides,
A fiery portion of the Wonderful,
Artist of his own beauty and delight,
Immortal in our mortal poverty.*

Savitri, p.23

Sri Aurobindo

Rebirth and Progress

Granting, for example, that the psychic being has had the experience of a man who was a writer and could translate his experience through books and speeches; thus he covered a particular field of experience due to the associations and circumstances in which this being lived. But there is a field of experience he misses. For example, he says: "I have lived with my brain, with the reactions of an intellectual to life, now I want to live with my feeling." For usually this over-activity of the intellect in ordinary life diminishes very much the capacity of feeling. Therefore in order to have another field of experience, of development, he renounces his intellectual height; he is no longer a genius, a writer of genius, he becomes an ordinary man, but with a remarkable heart, very kind, very generous. I said "idiot", but it is a question of comparison. It is not rare, for example, that a psychic being which has reached its maximum growth, after having enjoyed the experiences of a ruling authority (*of all that the life of an emperor or king may bring*) may want to be able to work in an obscure life, without being fettered all the time by governmental pomps, and may very well choose to be born in quite an ordinary environment, an ordinary bourgeois family, in the most mediocre conditions, so as to have that kind of incognito which will allow it to work without being hampered by all the necessities of governmental display that are binding on one who is at the head of a country. So if you look at the thing from one point of view, you say: "How is it? what is this downfall?" It is not a downfall. It is meeting the problem from another angle, from another point of view. For the consciousness (I mean the true consciousness, the divine consciousness) success or failure are the same, glory or mediocrity are the same. What is important is the growth

of the consciousness. And certain conditions that appear very favourable to human beings can be very unfavourable for the growth of the consciousness....

CWM 5: 267-68

Nature's method of progress

"In rebirth it is not the external being, that which is formed by parents, environment and circumstances, — the mental, the vital and the physical, — that is born again: it is only the psychic being that passes from body to body. Logically, then, neither the mental nor the vital being can remember past lives or recognise itself in the character or mode of life of this or that person. The psychic being alone can remember; and it is by becoming conscious of our psychic being that we can have at the same time exact impressions about our past lives.

Besides, it is much more important for us to fix our attention upon what we want to become than upon what we have been."

CWM 15: 124

If it is not the mind, vital or physical which take birth again but only the psychic being, then the vital or mental progress made before is of no value in another life?

It happens only to the extent the progress of these parts has brought them close to the psychic, that is, to the extent the progress lies in putting all the parts of the being successively under the psychic influence. For all that is under the psychic influence and identified with the psychic continues, and it is that alone which continues. But if the psychic is made the centre of one's life and consciousness, and if the whole being is organised around it, the whole being passes under the psychic influence, becomes united with it, and can continue — if it is necessary for it to continue. Indeed, if

the physical body could be given the same movement — the same movements of progress and the same capacity to ascend that the psychic being has — well, it wouldn't be necessary for it to decompose. But that indeed is the difficulty.

CWM 5: 358-59

Process of progress used by Nature

What you say — dying and being born again, dying and being reborn — that is the process of individual evolution, provided that something of the individual persists through life and death, for if he died entirely and disintegrated entirely, what could be reborn? Necessarily something must persist — persist through the rebirths — otherwise it is no longer the same person. If nothing persists, it is not the individual who progresses, it is Nature. Nature makes use of matter; with this matter she produces forms — I am telling you this in an oversimplified way, but still — she has at her disposal a mass of matter and she makes combinations; she makes a form, then this form develops, but it disintegrates, it does not persist as an individual element. Why doesn't it persist? Because Nature needs matter, substance to make other forms. So she unmakes what she has made, then out of this she makes something else, and she continues in this way, and this could go on indefinitely without the individual progressing: the *whole* progresses.

Supposing you have some plasticine — you know plasticine for modelling, don't you? Good. You make a form, then when you have finished, you don't like it, so you break it up and make it into a paste again and try another form. You have made some progress, you try, you arrange; you say, "That didn't work, I am going to try this", and your form is a little better but it is still not what you want; so once again

you break it, put some water, make a paste and then begin another form. And you can go on indefinitely. It is always the same substance but not the same being, for each one of your forms has its own particular existence as a form, and the moment you break it, nothing is left.

You may try to perfect the same form or try other forms; you may try, for instance, to make a dog or a horse, and then if you have not succeeded, you may begin again and make another horse or dog, but you may also begin something else. If you build a house and don't like your house, you demolish it and build another on another model, but nothing is left of the first house except the memory, if you want to keep it. In the same way, Nature begins with completely unconscious and amorphous matter, then tries one form and another; only, instead of doing as we would, one thing at a time, she makes millions of them all at once.

CWM 9: 227-28

Usefulness of past life experiences

Mother, since in each new life the mind and vital as well as the body are new, how can the experiences of past lives be useful for them? Do we have to go through all the experiences once again?

That depends on people!

It is not the mind and vital which develop and progress from life to life — except in altogether exceptional cases and at a very advanced stage of evolution — it is the psychic. So, this is what happens: the psychic has alternate periods of activity and rest; it has a life of progress resulting from experiences of the physical life, of active life in a physical body, with all the experiences of the body, the vital and the mind; then, normally, the psychic goes into a kind of rest for assimilation where the result of the progress accomplished

during its active existence is worked out, and when this assimilation is finished, when it has absorbed the progress it had prepared in its active life on earth, it comes down again in a new body bringing with it the result of all its progress and, at an advanced stage, it even chooses the environment and the kind of body and the kind of life in which it will live to complete its experience concerning one point or another. In some very advanced cases the psychic can, before leaving the body, decide what kind of life it will have in its next incarnation.

When it has become an almost completely formed and already very conscious being, it presides over the formation of the new body, and usually through an inner influence it chooses the elements and the substance which will form its body in such a way that the body is adapted to the needs of its new experience. But this is at a rather advanced stage. And later, when it is fully formed and returns to earth with the idea of service, of collective help and participation in the divine Work, then it is able to bring to the body in formation certain elements of the mind and vital from previous lives which, having been organised and impregnated with psychic forces in previous lives, could be preserved and, consequently, can participate in the general progress. But this is at a very, very advanced stage.

When the psychic is fully developed and very conscious, when it becomes a conscious instrument of the divine Will, it organises the vital and the mind in such a way that they too participate in the general harmony and can be preserved.

A high degree of development allows at least some parts of the mental and vital beings to be preserved in spite of the dissolution of the body. If, for instance, some parts — mental or vital — of the human activity have been particularly developed, these elements of the mind and vital

are maintained even “in their form” — in the form of the activity which has been fully organised — as, for example, in highly intellectual people who have particularly developed their brains, the mental part of their being keeps this structure and is preserved in the form of an organised brain which has its own life and can be kept unchanged until a future life so as to participate in it with all its gains.

In artists, as for instance in certain musicians who have used their hands in a particularly conscious way, the vital and mental substance is preserved in the form of hands, and these hands remain fully conscious, they can even use the body of living people if there is a special affinity — and so on.

Otherwise, in ordinary people in whom the psychic form is not fully developed and organised, when the psychic leaves the body, the mental and vital forms may persist for a certain time if the death has been particularly peaceful and concentrated, but if a man dies suddenly and in a state of passion, with numerous attachments, well, the different parts of the being are dispersed and live for a shorter or longer time their own life in their own domain, then disappear.

CWM 9: 268 -69

Need for evolution and the next life

Is it sure that in the next life too one will be here or in the Ashram? Or will it be that one will go somewhere else for other experiences?

Well, it depends absolutely on the condition in which they died and their last wish, and on the resolution of the psychic. It is not a mechanical or imposed thing, it is different for each one.

I have already told you many times that, for the desti-

ny which follows after death, the last state of consciousness is usually the most important. That is, if at the moment of death one has the intense aspiration to return to continue his work, then the conditions are arranged for it to be done. But, you see, there are all the possibilities for what happens after death. There are people who return in the psychic. You see, I have told you that the outer being is very rarely preserved; so we speak only of the psychic consciousness which, indeed, always persists. And then there are people for whom the psychic returns to the psychic domain to assimilate the experience they have had and to prepare their future life. This may take centuries, it depends on the people.

The more evolved the psychic is, the nearer it is to its complete maturity, the greater the time between the births. There are beings who reincarnate only after a thousand years, two thousand years.

The closer one is to the beginning of the formation, the closer are the reincarnations; and sometimes even, altogether at the lower level, when man is quite near the animal, it goes like this (*gesture*), that is, it is not unusual for people to re-incarnate in the children of their children, like that, something like that, or just in the next generation. But this is always on a very primitive level of evolution, and the psychic being is not very conscious, it is in the state of formation. And as it becomes more developed, the reincarnations, as I said, are at a greater distance from one another. When the psychic being is fully developed, when it no longer needs to return to earth for its development, when it is absolutely free, it has the choice between no longer coming back to earth if it finds that its work lies elsewhere or if it prefers to remain in the purely psychic consciousness, without reincarnating; or else it can come when it wants, as it wants, where it wants, perfectly consciously. And there are those who have united with forces of a universal order and with entities of the

Overmind or elsewhere, who remain all the time in the earth atmosphere and take on bodies successively for the work. This means that the moment the psychic being is completely formed and absolutely free — when it is completely formed it becomes absolutely free — it can do anything it likes, it depends on what it chooses; therefore one can't say, "It will be like this, it will be like that"; it does exactly what it wants and it can even announce (that has happened), at the moment of the death of the body, what its next reincarnation will be and what it will do, and already choose what it is going to do. But before this state, which is not very frequent — it depends absolutely on the degree of development of the psychic and the hope formulated by the integral consciousness of the being — there is still the mental, vital and physical consciousness, united with the psychic consciousness; so at that moment, the moment of death, the moment of leaving the body, it formulates a hope or an aspiration or a will, and usually this decides the future life.

CWM 7: 85-87

Reincarnation and Soul Evolution

You must avoid a common popular blunder about reincarnation. The popular idea is that Titus Balbus is reborn again as John Smith, a man with the same personality, character, attainments as he had in his former life with the sole difference that he wears coat and trousers instead of a toga and speaks in cockney English instead of popular Latin. That is not the case. What would be the earthly use of repeating the same personality or character a million times from the beginning of time till its end! The soul comes into birth for experience, for growth, for evolution till it can bring the Divine into matter. It is the central being that incarnates, not the outer personality — the personality is simply a mould that it creates for its figures

of experience in that one life. In another birth it will create for itself a different personality, different capacities, a different life and career. Supposing Virgil is born again, he may take up poetry in one or two other lives, but he will certainly not write an epic but rather perhaps slight but elegant and beautiful lyrics such as he wanted to write, but did not succeed, in Rome. In another birth he is likely to be no poet at all, but a philosopher and a Yogin seeking to attain and to express the highest truth — for that too was an unrealised trend of his consciousness in that life. Perhaps before he had been a warrior or ruler doing deeds like Aeneas or Augustus before he sang them. And so on — on this side or that the central being develops a new character, a new personality, grows, develops, passes through all kinds of terrestrial experience.

As the evolving being develops still more and becomes more rich and complex, it accumulates its personalities, as it were. Sometimes they stand behind the active elements, throwing in some colour, some trait, some capacity here and there, — or they stand in front and there is a multiple personality, a many-sided character or a many-sided, sometimes what looks like a universal capacity. But if a former personality, a former capacity is brought fully forward, it will not be to repeat what was already done, but to cast the same capacity into new forms and new shapes and fuse it into a new harmony of the being which will not be a reproduction of what it was before. Thus you must not expect to be what the warrior and the poet were — something of the outer characteristics may reappear but very much changed and new-cast in a new combination. It is in a new direction that the energies will be guided to do what was not done before.

Another thing. It is not the personality, the character that is of the first importance in rebirth — it is the psychic being who stands behind the evolution of the nature and evolves with it.

CWSA 28: 543-44

Only the essential experiences carried to next life

The psychic when it departs from the body, shedding even the mental and vital on its way to its resting place, carries with it the heart of its experiences, — not the physical events, not the vital movements, not the mental buildings, not the capacities or characters, but something essential that it gathered from them, what might be called the divine element for the sake of which the rest existed. That is the permanent addition, it is that that helps in the growth towards the Divine. That is why there is usually no memory of the outward events and circumstances of past lives — for this memory there must be a strong development towards unbroken continuance of the mind, the vital, even the subtle physical; for though it all remains in a kind of seed memory, it does not ordinarily emerge. What was the divine element in the magnanimity of the warrior, that which expressed itself in his loyalty, nobility, high courage, what was the divine element behind the harmonious mentality and generous vitality of the poet and expressed itself in them, that remains and in a new harmony of character may find a new expression or, if the life is turned towards the Divine, be taken up as powers for the realisation or for the work that has to be done for the Divine.

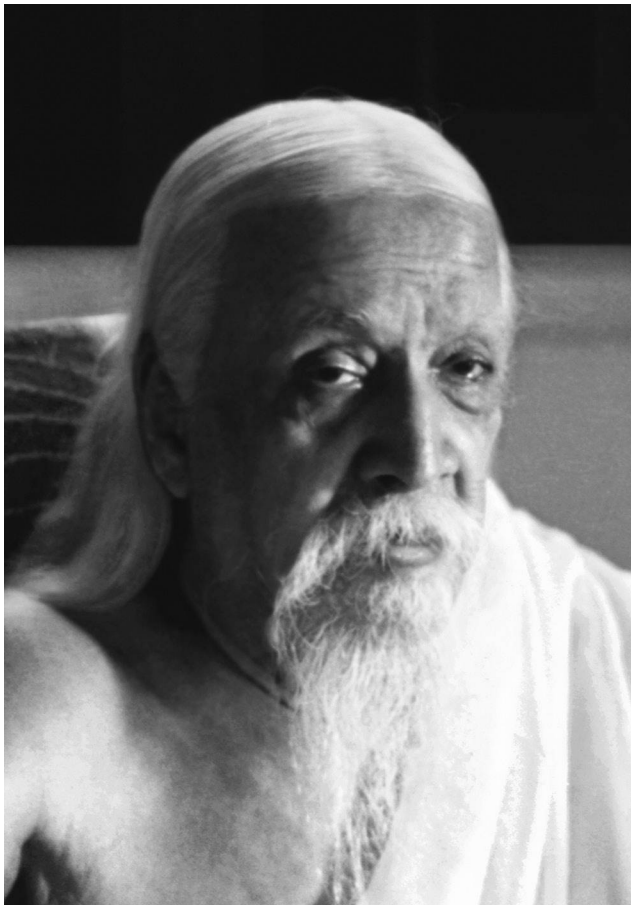
CWSA 28: 544

Sri Aurobindo

In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.

Savitri, p.527

Sri Aurobindo



This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite,
This screened unrecognised Inhabitant,
Initiate of his own veiled mysteries,
Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought.

Savitri, p. 23

Sri Aurobindo

The Process of Rebirth

Rules of rebirth

As to rebirth, it must be confessed that no rule holds good for all cases. Some people are reborn almost immediately — it most often happens with parents that a part of them gets assimilated into their children if the latter are very much attached to them. Some people, however, take centuries and even thousands of years to be reincarnated. They wait for the necessary conditions to mature which will provide them with a suitable *milieu*. If one is yogically conscious he can actually prepare the body of his next birth. Before the body is born he shapes and moulds it, so that it is he who is the true maker of it while the parents of the new child are only the adventitious, purely physical agents.

I must here remark in passing that there is a common misconception about rebirth. People believe that it is they who are reincarnated, yet this is a palpable error, though it is true that parts of their being are amalgamated with others and so act through new bodies. Their whole being is not reborn, because of the simple fact that what they evidently mean by their “self” is not a real individualised entity but their exterior personality, the personality composed of the outward name and form. Hence it is wrong to say that A is reborn as B: A is a personality organically distinct from B and cannot be said to have reincarnated as B. You would be right only if you said that the same line of consciousness uses both A and B as the instruments of its manifestation. For, what does remain constant is the psychic being which is not the outward personality at all, but something deep within, something which is not the exterior name and form.

CWM 3: 145

Does something of the old personality survive?

The ordinary mass of men are so closely identified with their bodies that nothing of them survives when the physical disintegrates. Not that absolutely nothing survives — the vital and mental stuff always remains but it is not identical with the physical personality. What survives has not the clear impress of the exterior personality because the latter was content to remain a jumble of impulses and desires, a temporary organic unity constituted by the cohesion and coordination of bodily functions, and when these functions cease their pseudo-unity also naturally comes to an end. Only if there has been a mental discipline imposed on the different parts and they have been made to subserve a common mental ideal, can there be some sort of genuine individuality which retains the memory of its earthly life and so survives consciously. The artist, the philosopher and other developed persons who have organised, individualised and to a certain extent converted their vital being can be said to survive, because they have brought into their exterior consciousness some shadow of the psychic entity which is immortal by its very nature and whose aim is to progressively build up the being around the central Divine Will.

CWM 3: 146

Rebirth and degree of psychic being's development

All depends on the category to which one belongs, and the degree of the psychic being's development. If the psychic being is in an advanced stage, near maturity, the choice before death, about which I spoke to you the other day, is quite real and this choice means that everything is possible; but in other cases, the rebirth takes place almost automatically. The will of the psychic being is not developed and it does not choose. Hence, there are no rules. It

depends very much on circumstances, and especially on the line of formation which the psychic being will follow, and that depends on its origin. It is difficult to say. In the matter of sex, that may vary for a long time. As the consciousness grows and gains some unity of action, of consciousness, it can choose to follow one line to the exclusion of another, but before this choice, through innumerable creations you have been undoubtedly of different sexes. That is why perhaps some women have a masculine character, and vice versa, or have tendencies opposite to their sex. But at the time of the “choice” one may decide to belong to the creatrix Consciousness or to the immobile Witness. That depends upon the origin.

CWM 4: 183-84

Time and process for the incarnation of the soul

I may say that I have been present at innumerable incarnations of evolved souls in beings either preparing to be born or already born. As I said, the cases are quite different; it depends more on psychological conditions than on material ones, but it also depends on material conditions. It depends on the state of development of the soul which wants to reincarnate—we take the word “soul” here in the sense of the psychic being, what we call the psychic being — it depends on its state of development, on the milieu in which it is going to incarnate, on the mission it has to fulfil — that makes many different conditions.... It depends very largely on the state of consciousness of the parents. For it goes without saying that there is a stupendous difference between conceiving a child deliberately, with a conscious aspiration, a call to the invisible world and a spiritual ardour, and conceiving a child by accident and without intending to have it, and sometimes even without wanting it at all. I

don't say that in the latter case there cannot also be an incarnation, but it usually takes place later, not at the conception.

For the formation of the child it makes a great difference.

If the incarnation takes place at the conception, the whole formation of the child to be born is directed and governed by the consciousness which is going to incarnate: the choice of the elements, the attraction of the substance — a choice of the forces and even the substance of the matter which is assimilated. There is already a selection. And this naturally creates altogether special conditions for the formation of the body, which may already be fairly developed, evolved, harmonised before its birth. I must say that this is quite, quite exceptional; but still it does happen.

More frequently there are cases in which, just at the moment of its birth, that is to say, of its first gesture of independence, when the child begins to develop its lungs by crying as much as it can, at that moment, very often, this sort of call from life makes the descent easier and more effective.

Sometimes days and at times months pass, and the preparation is slow and the entry takes place very gradually, in quite a subtle and almost imperceptible way.

Sometimes it comes much later, when the child itself becomes a little conscious and feels a very subtle but very real relation with something from above, far above, which is like an influence pressing upon it; and then it can begin to feel the need of being in contact with this something which it does not know, does not understand, but which it can only feel; and this aspiration draws the psychic and makes it descend into the child.

I am giving you here a few fairly common instances; there are many others; this may happen in innumerable different ways. What I have described to you are the most

frequent cases I have seen.

So, the soul which wants to incarnate stays at times in a domain of the higher mind, quite close to the earth, having chosen its future home; or else it can descend further, into the vital, and from there have a more direct action; or again it can enter the subtle physical and very closely govern the development of its future body.

CWM 8: 334-35

Psychic being and the conditions for the next life

Let us take a divine spark which, through attraction, through affinity and selection, gathers around it a beginning of psychic consciousness (this work is already very perceptible in animals — don't think you are exceptional beings, that you alone have a psychic being and the rest of creation hasn't. It begins in the mineral, it is a little more developed in the plant, and in the animal there is a first glimmer of the psychic presence). Then there comes a moment when this psychic being is sufficiently developed to have an independent consciousness and a personal will. And then after innumerable lives more or less individualised, it becomes conscious of itself, of its movements and of the environment it has chosen for its growth. Arriving at a certain state of perception, it decides — generally at the last minute of the life it has just finished upon earth — the conditions in which its next life will be passed. Here I must tell you a very important thing: the psychic being can progress and form itself only in the physical life and upon earth. As soon as it leaves a body, it enters into a rest which lasts for a more or less long time according to its own choice and its degree of development — a rest for assimilation, for a passive progress so to say, a rest for passive growth which will allow this same psychic being to pass on to new experiences

and make a more active progress. But after having finished one life (which usually ends only when it has done what it wanted to do), it will have chosen the environment where it will be born, the approximate place where it will be born, the conditions and the kind of life in which it will be born, and a very precise programme of the experiences through which it will have to pass to be able to make the progress it wants to make.

CWM 4: 143-44

Masculine or feminine line of birth

X asked me if in the course of rebirths a woman can become a man, and a man a woman. He thought of certain feminine traits in him that could be explained thus. I would also like to know if there is in the psychic being itself something like sex?

Not sex exactly [*is present in the psychic being*], but what might be called the masculine and feminine principle. It is a difficult question [*whether a man can be reborn as a woman or a woman as a man*]. There are certain lines the reincarnation follows and so far as my experience goes and general experience goes, one follows usually a single line. But the alteration of sex cannot be declared impossible. There may be some who do alternate. The presence of feminine traits in a male does not necessarily indicate a past feminine birth—they may come in the general play of forces and their formations. There are besides qualities common to both sexes. Also a fragment of the psychological personality may have been associated with a birth not one's own. One can say of a certain person of the past, "That was not myself, but a fragment of my psychological personality was present in him." Rebirth is a complex affair and not so simple in its mechanism as in the popular idea.

CWSA 28: 548-49

Dying man's wish

The dying wish of the man is only something on the surface — it may be determined by the psychic and so help to shape the future but it does not determine the psychic's choice. That is something behind the veil. It is not the outer consciousness's action that determines the inner process, but the other way round. Sometimes, however, there are signs or fragments of the inner action that come up on the surface, e.g. some people have a vision or remembrance of the circumstances of their past in a panoramic flash at the time of death, that is the psychic's review of the life before departing.

*

Not a rigid machinery

The psychic being's choice at the time of death doesn't work out the next formation of personality, it fixes it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth — but the less developed beings do not work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work. Also when it comes to birth, it is not sure that the forces of the physical world will not come across the working out of what it wanted — its own new instrumentation may not be strong enough for that purpose; for there is the interaction of its own energies and the cosmic forces here. There may be frustration, diversion, a partial working out — many things may happen. All that is not a rigid machinery, it is a working out of complex forces. It may be added however that a developed psychic being is much more conscious in this transition and works much of it out itself. The time

depends also on the development and on a certain rhythm of the being — for some there is practically immediate rebirth, for others it takes longer, for some it may take centuries; but here again, once the psychic being is sufficiently developed, it is free to choose its own rhythm and its own intervals.

*

The ordinary theories of Karma

The ordinary theories are too mechanical — and that is the case also with the idea of *punya* and *pāpa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantile principle. A good man's sufferings in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for the good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil.

CWSA 28: 532-33

The psychic being at the time of death chooses what it will work out in the next birth and determines the character and conditions of the new personality. Life is for the evolutionary growth by experience in the conditions of the Ignorance till one is ready for the higher light.

CWSA 28: 532

— **Sri Aurobindo**

Assimilation in the Psychic World

The soul after it leaves the body travels through several states or planes until the psychic being has shed its temporary sheaths, then it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep till it is ready for reincarnation. What it keeps with it of the human experience in the end is only the essence of all that it has gone through, what it can use for its development. This is the general rule, but it does not apply to exceptional cases or to very developed beings who have achieved a greater consciousness than the ordinary human level.

It is not the soul (the psychic being) that takes a lesser form [*in its next birth*], it is some part of the manifested being, usually some part of the vital that does it, owing to some desire, affinity, need of particular experience. This happens fairly often to the ordinary man.

*

Preparation for a new life

After leaving the body, the soul, after certain experiences in other worlds, throws off its mental and vital personality and goes into rest to assimilate the essence of its past and prepare for a new life. It is this preparation that determines the circumstances of the new birth and guides it in its reconstitution of a new personality and the choice of its materials.

The departed soul retains the memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form or detail. It is only if the soul brings back some past personality or personalities as part of its present manifestation that it is likely to remember the details of the past life. Otherwise, it is only by Yogadrishti that the memory comes.

There may be what seem to be retrograde movements [*in the evolution of the soul*], but these are only like zigzag movements, not a real falling back, but a return on some-

thing not worked out so as to go on better afterwards.

The soul does not go back to the animal condition; but part of the vital personality may disjoin itself and join an animal birth to work out its animal propensities there.

There is no truth in the popular belief about the avaricious man becoming a serpent. These are popular romantic superstitions.

CWSA 28: 533-34

Rebirth of special capacities and organised faculties

Do these beings who want to manifest themselves keep the same desire when they are born once again?

No, it is not the same thing. It is not the whole being, it is the special faculty which remains in the earth atmosphere, does not leave it and go away, which remains in the earth atmosphere in order to continue manifesting itself. But the psychic being can very well return to the psychic world and it is the psychic being which takes a body again. I explained to you the other day that before leaving the physical body, the psychic being decides most often what its next rebirth will be, the environment in which it will take birth and what its occupation will be, because it needs a certain field for its experience. So it may happen that very big writers and very big musicians take birth another time in somebody quite imbecile. And you say: "What! it is not possible!" Naturally it does not always happen like that, but it may. There was a case in which the contrary happened: it was a violin player, the most wonderful of the century.... (*Mother tries to remember.*) Just wait, I knew his name and it is gone — it came back and is gone again. What was his name?... Ysayë! he was a Belgian and a violinist, truly the most wonderful violinist of the epoch. Well, that man had most certainly in him a rein-

carnation of Beethoven. Not perhaps a reincarnation of his entire psychic being, but in any case, that of his musical capacity. He had the appearance, the head of Beethoven, I saw him, I heard him (I did not know him, I knew nothing, I was at a concert in Paris and they were giving the concerto in D major), I saw him coming on the stage to play and I said: "Strange! How much this man looks like Beethoven, he is the very portrait of Beethoven!" Then it just started with a stroke of the bow, three, four notes.... Everything changed, the atmosphere was changed. All became absolutely wonderful. Three notes started off with such power, such grandeur, so wonderful it was, nothing stirred, all waited. And he played that from beginning to end in an absolutely unique manner with an understanding I have not met with in any other executant. And then I saw that the musical genius of Beethoven was in him.... But perhaps Beethoven's psychic being had taken body in a shoemaker or anybody else, one does not know! It wanted to have another kind of experience.

For what I saw in this man was a formation belonging to an earthly plane, it was mental-vital; and as Beethoven had disciplined his whole mental, vital and physical being around his musical capacity, that had remained in form, it was a living thing, and had incarnated in that man, just as it was, but not necessarily Beethoven's psychic being. In his former life it was the psychic being of Beethoven that had shaped all those other beings, the psychic being that had disciplined them around musical creation; but after his death, it cannot at all be said whether the psychic being remained there; it must have returned to the psychic world as is the usual rule. That however had been formed, had its own life, independent and existing in itself. It was formed for a certain manifestation and it remained to manifest

itself. And as soon as it found a fit instrument, it entered there to manifest itself.

CWM 5: 262-63

Factors in reincarnation and past life memories

To understand rightly the problem of what is popularly called reincarnation, you must perceive that there are two factors in it which require consideration. First, there is the line of divine consciousness which seeks to manifest from above and upholds a certain series of formations, peculiar to itself, in the universe which is its field of manifestation. Secondly, there is the psychic consciousness which climbs up from below, the seed of the Divine developing through time till it meets the Force from above and takes the impress of the supramental Truth. This psychic consciousness is the inner being of a man, the material from which his true soul or *jiva* can be fashioned when, in response to its aspiration, the Supramental descends to give it a consistent personality. The exterior being of man is a perishable formation out of the stuff of universal Nature — mental, vital, physical — and is due to the complex interplay of all kinds of forces. The psychic absorbs the essence, as it were, of the experiences of the various formations behind which it stands; but not being in constant contact with them it does not retain the memory of the lives in their totality to which it supplies the background. Hence by merely contacting the psychic one cannot have the recollection of all those past lives: what commonly goes by the name of such recollection is, mostly, either deliberate imposture or a fabrication out of a few spasmodic hints received from within. Many people claim to remember their animal lives as well: they say that they were such and such a monkey living in this or that part of the globe. But if anything is certain, it is that the monkey has

no contact whatever with the psychic consciousness and so transmits not one jot of his experiences to it. The impressions of his exterior monkey-nature vanish with the crumbling of his animal body: to pretend to a knowledge of them is to betray the grossest ignorance of the actual facts of the problem under consideration. Even with regard to human lives, it is only when the psychic has come to the fore that it carries and preserves definite memories, but certainly not of all the details of life unless it is constantly in front and one with the exterior being. For, as a rule, the physical mind and the physical vital dissolve with the death of the organism: they disintegrate and return to the universal Nature and nothing remains of their experiences. Not until they have become united with the psychic, so that there are not two halves but a single consciousness, the whole nature unified round the central Divine Will and this centralised being is connected up with the divine line of consciousness which is above — not until this happens can one receive the knowledge belonging to that consciousness and become aware of the entire series of forms and lives which were upheld by it as its own successive means of gradual self-expression. Before this is done, it is meaningless to speak of *one's* past births and their various incidents.

CWM 3: 148-49

One soul in many bodies

The psychic being is the result of evolution, that is to say, evolution of the divine Consciousness which spread into Matter and slowly lifted up Matter, made it develop to return to the Divine. The psychic being was formed by this divine centre progressively through all the births. There comes a time when it reaches a kind of perfection, perfection in its growth and formation. Then, most often, as it

has an aspiration for realisation, for a greater perfection to manifest yet better the Divine, it generally draws towards itself a being from the involution, that is to say, one of those entities belonging to what Sri Aurobindo calls Overmind, who comes then to incarnate in this psychic being. It can be one of those entities men generally call gods, some kind of deities. And when this fusion occurs the psychic being naturally is magnified and shares in the nature of the being incarnated in it. And then it has the power to produce emanations. These beings have the power to produce emanations, that is to say, they project out of themselves a part of themselves which becomes independent and goes into others to incarnate itself. So there can be not only two, but three, four or five emanations. That depends upon cases, it can happen thus. That is to say, one can have the same origin, psycho-divine, we might say. And generally when there are a number of emanations, the different persons feel themselves to be that being, and rightly so, for they carry in themselves something of that godhead: it is as though a part of the godhead has cast itself out of itself and become independent in another being. It is not a self-duplication but a kind of self-projection.

CWM 5: 263-64

Forgetfulness of past life

There is no rule of complete forgetfulness in the return of the soul to rebirth. There are, especially in childhood, many impressions of the past life which can be strong and vivid enough, but a materialising education and the overpowering influences of the environment must often, but not quite always, prevent their true nature from being recognised. There are even a number of people who have definite recollections of a past life. But these things are discouraged

by education and the atmosphere and cannot remain or develop; in most cases they are stifled out of existence. At the same time it must be noted that what the psychic being mainly carries away with it and brings back is ordinarily the essence and effect of the experiences it had in former lives, and not the details, so that you cannot expect the same coherent memory as one has of past happenings in the present existence.

A soul can go straight to the psychic world but that depends on the state of consciousness at the time of departure. If the psychic is in front at the time, this immediate transition is possible. It does not depend on the acquisition of a mental and vital as well as a psychic immortality — those who have acquired that would rather have the power to move about in the different planes and even act on the physical world without being bound to it. On the whole it may be said that there is no one rigid rule for these things; manifold variations are possible depending upon the consciousness, its energies, tendencies and formations, although there is a general framework and design into which all fit and take their place.

CWSA 28: 536

Sri Aurobindo

Hell and heaven are often imaginary states of the soul, or rather of the vital being, which it constructs about it after its passing. What is meant by hell is a painful passage through some vital world or a dolorous lingering there, as for instance in many cases of suicide where one remains surrounded by the forces of suffering and turmoil created by this unnatural and violent exit. There are also, of course, real worlds of mind and vital worlds which are penetrated with joyful or dark experiences, and one may pass through these as the result of things formed in the nature which create the necessary affinities. But the idea of reward or retribution is a crude and vulgar conception and we can disregard it as a mere popular error.

CWSA 28: 535-36

Sri Aurobindo

Remembrance of Past Lives

Remembrance of past lives

How many of us remember former lives?

In all, in some part of our consciousness, there is a remembrance. But this is a dangerous subject, because the human mind is too fond of romance. As soon as it comes to know something of this truth of rebirth, it wants to build up beautiful stories around it. Many people would tell you wonderful tales of how the world was built and how it will proceed in the future, how and where you were born in the past and what you will be hereafter, the lives you have lived and the lives you will still live. All this has nothing to do with spiritual life. The true remembrance of past births may indeed be part of an integral knowledge; but it cannot be got by that way of imaginative fancies. If it is on one side an objective knowledge, on the other it depends largely on personal and subjective experience, and here there is much chance of invention, distortion or false building. To reach the truth of these things, your experiencing consciousness must be pure and limpid, free from any mental interference or any vital interference, liberated from your personal notions and feelings and from your mind's habit of interpreting or explaining in its own way. An experience of past lives may be true, but between what you have seen and your mind's explanation or construction about it there is bound to be always a great gulf. It is only when you can rise above human feelings and get back from your mind, that you can reach the truth.

CWM 3: 40-41

Psychic life

And then there are those who have learnt a little, who are more or less occultists or believe in rebirth in a childish way, believe that it is a tiny person who has put on a physical robe, that is, a body, and when this garment falls off, it goes away and puts on another and then another... like a doll whose dress is changed. For them it is like that: one changes one's body, as one changes one's clothes. Some people have even written books very seriously telling you about all their lives since they were monkeys! That indeed is absolute childishness. For in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, it is just the tiny psychic formation at the centre of the being that continues after death; all the rest is dissolved, goes to pieces, scattered here and there, the individuality exists no longer. Now, how often in the physical life does the psychic being take part consciously in what the physical being does?... I am not speaking of people who do yoga and are a little disciplined; I am speaking of average people who have a psychic capacity in the sense that their psychic is already sufficiently developed to be able to intervene in life and guide it — some pass years and years without the psychic intervening. And they come and tell you in which country they were born and what their father and mother were like and the house they lived in, the roof of the church and the forest that was by the side and all the most casual events of their life! It is absolutely idiotic, for it is all rubbed off, these things don't exist any longer; whilst the memory that one may still have is that of the particular moment in life when there is a special circumstance, "vital" moments, so to say, in which the psychic suddenly takes part, through an inner call or an absolute necessity — all of a sudden the psychic intervenes — and that then is engraved in the psychic memory. When you have the

psychic memory you remember a set of circumstances at one *moment* of life, particularly of the inner emotion, of the consciousness that acted at that moment. And then that passes into the consciousness along with some associations, with all that was around you, perhaps a word spoken, a phrase heard; but what was most important was the state of the soul in which you were: for that indeed remains very clearly engraved. These are the landmarks of the psychic life, things that have left a deep impression and taken part in its formation. Hence when you find your psychic being in you again constantly, continuously, clearly, it is things like these that you remember. There may be quite a few, but they are flashes in one's life, and one cannot say: "I was such and such a person, I did such and such a thing, I was called by this name and I was doing this or that." Or otherwise it would mean that at that moment (a rare one) there was a combination of circumstances good enough for one to be able to fix the date or the place, the country and the age. That can happen.

CWM 5: 32-33

Psychic memories and fancy stories about past lives

There are people who tell the life of others.

Yes, I know. I know many things, I have heard all that one can hear. They tell stories after stories.... They look at you and say: "You were so-and-so in that life, you did such and such a thing." Well I guarantee, it is not true. For I know how one can find out where one has seen a person and what he was and how it is — it is not just a little story that you can write in a book. When you look within a person, when you have the perception, precisely of the psychic world,

which enables you to recognise the psychic there where it was, then all of a sudden you can see a scene, an image, a form, a word; there is a sort of association due to which even in the present being of this person there still remain certain sympathies and attractions which come from previous lives. But, as I was saying, these are “moments” of life. And so one sees, one can see these various moments, but one cannot narrate a whole life.

I believe Sri Aurobindo has written something very amusing about this, the number of Caesars one knew, the number of all the great beings, the Napoleons and all the important personages, the Shakespeares, all the people whose names have survived in history! How many are there! There are hundreds of them! And you hear their stories: “I was this, I was that, I did this”, or in séances the so-called spirits come and speak to you. A large number of people indulge in this playing with “spirits”, practising automatic writing and particularly in communicating with spirits. Now, there are garrulous spirits. They come to many places at the same time, especially people like Napoleon (I do not know why they have a partiality for Napoleon), everywhere Napoleon arrives and tells you extraordinary stories of his life and usually very contradictory stories and perhaps all at the same time! These are really very active people. Well, it is extremely comic — and it is impossible.

The truth is that these are small vital entities, a class of beings formed by the decomposition of desires that have persisted after a man’s death and retained their form; of imaginations that have remained coagulated and try to manifest and reappear. Sometimes they are small beings of the vital world, not very well-disposed; as soon as they see people playing at such things — automatic writing, spirit-communication — they come and play. And as they are in a

domain from where it is easy to read human thought, they tell you very well what you have in your head. They respond to what you expect. You wish to have a particular answer: they give you the answer even before you have put the question! They can give you precise details, they can tell you that such and such a thing happened to you, that such and such a member of your family... They know quite well. They do excellent thought-reading and tell you things altogether convincingly. "I did not say that I was married and had three sons and four daughters, how did he know all that?" — Because it was in your head.

Psychic memories have a very special character and a wonderful intensity. But that cannot be narrated in this way.... They are unforgettable moments of life when the consciousness is intense, luminous, strong, active, powerful, and sometimes turning-points in life that have changed the direction of one's life. But one will never be able to say what dress one was wearing or the gentleman with whom one spoke and the neighbours and the kind of field where one was.

CWM 5: 34 – 36

Cat doing yoga and rebirth

There was a cat... what its name was I don't know; and I had many cats, you know, so I don't remember now; there was one called Kiki, it was the first son of this cat, and then there was another, its second son (that is to say, born another time) which was called Brownie.

This one was admirable and it died of the cat disease — as there is a disease of the dogs, there is a disease of the kittens — I don't know how it caught the thing, but it was wonderful during its illness and I was taking care of it as of a child. And it always expressed a kind of aspiration. There was a

time before it fell ill... we used to have in those days meditation in a room of the Library House, in the room there — Sri Aurobindo's own room — and we used to sit on the floor. And there was an armchair in a corner, and when we gathered for the meditation this cat came every time and settled in the armchair and literally it entered into a trance, it had movements of trance; it did not sleep, it was not asleep, it was truly in a trance; it gave signs of that and had astonishing movements, as when animals dream; and it didn't want to come out from it, it refused to come out, it remained in it for hours. But it never came in until we were beginning the meditation. It settled there and remained there throughout the meditation. We indeed had finished but it remained, and it was only when I went to take it, called it in a particular way, brought it back into its body, that it consented to go away; otherwise no matter who came and called it, it did not move. Well, this cat always had a great aspiration, a kind of aspiration to become a human being; and in fact, when it left its body it entered a human body. Only it was a very tiny part of the consciousness, you see, of the human being; it was like the opposite movement from that of the woman with the other cat. But this one was a cat which leaped over many births, so to say, many psychic stages to enter into contact with a human body. It was a simple enough human body, but still, all the same...

There is a difference in the development of a cat and of a human being...

It happens... I think these are exceptional cases, but still it happens.

CWM 7: 98–99

The Mother



*The form deceives, the person is a mask;
Hid deep in man celestial powers can dwell.
His fragile ship conveys through the sea of years
An incognito of the Imperishable.
A spirit that is a flame of God abides,
A fiery portion of the Wonderful,
Artist of his own beauty and delight,
Immortal in our mortal poverty.
This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite,
This screened unrecognised Inhabitant,
Initiate of his own veiled mysteries,
Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought.
In the mute strength of the occult Idea
Determining predestined shape and act,
Passenger from life to life, from scale to scale,
Changing his imaged self from form to form,
He regards the icon growing by his gaze
And in the worm foresees the coming god.*

Savitri, p. 23

Sri Aurobindo



An Announcement

Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Education Centre, Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan)

The basic object of this centre established by Sri Aurobindo society is to work for the realisation of a divine life upon earth as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It aspires to create a community of spiritual aspirants who seek this goal.

This education centre has been functioning since 15th August 1994. The new academic session begins every year from 15th August for children aged between 6 to 12 years. It is a residential school with English as the medium of instruction. The education is completely free. There are no tuition fees, nor any charges for lodging and boarding.

The centre aspires to provide an integral education and to offer scope for the full development of the being. Parents who are not interested in degrees and diplomas or Government recognised certificates for their children, but who simply aspire for the better growth of their children's consciousness and total personality, and wish to admit them in this school, may write to the organisers at the earliest. Admissions are open throughout the year.

Also are invited the seekers of divine life who would like to stay at the centre, pursue a life of sadhana and dedicate their lives for this cause. For details please write to:

**Pankaj Bagaria,
Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Education Centre,
Mira Ambika Bhawan, Khetan Mohalla,
Jhunjhunu - 333 001, Rajasthan, India
Tel. Nos. (01592)-232887, 237428
E-mail: sadlecjnn@gmail.com
URL: www.sadlec.org**



Sri Aurobindo Society

AUROPUBLICATIONS

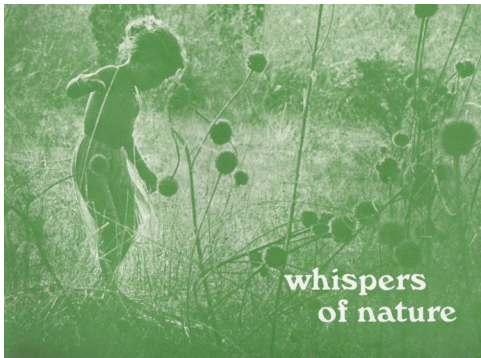
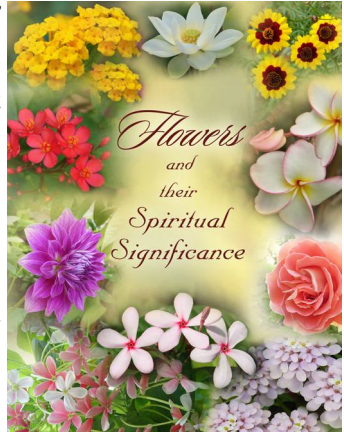
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

Flowers are the moment's representations of things that are in themselves eternal. —Sri Aurobindo

Flowers – their Spiritual Significance

The Mother says that plants and flowers aspire for the Divine, but they express their aspiration through silence and beauty. With numerous photographs, illustrations, charts and articles, this interesting and informative book gives the spiritual significance of flowers as revealed by the Mother.

Pages - 96 | Size - 18 × 23 cm



Whispers of Nature

The book looks at Nature with a holistic vision and a new perspective in environmental education, and helps to understand and love the infinite expressions of Nature.

Pages - 88 | Size - 24 × 18 cm

Buy online at www.auropublications.org
For orders and other information, email us at
info@auropublications.org

Awakening — To the Beauty of the Future
A monthly magazine from the Women's Council
of Sri Aurobindo Society

The purpose of Awakening is to inspire and empower all, specially women, to the Beauty of the Future. The Mother says: But, women, women are in principle the executive power. You must never forget that. And in order to receive the inspiration, you can take support from a masculine consciousness if you feel the need for it. There is Supreme Consciousness which is more certain, but still, if you need an intermediary... But for the execution, it is you who have the power to carry it out in all the details, with all the power of organisation. I am instilling this into our women Members of Parliament – you know, there are women in Parliament, and I am teaching them that: do not be submissive to men. It is you who have the power of execution. This will have its effect.



Send e-M.o/Cheque/D.D in favour of Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry to the Editor, 'Awakening', Sri Aurobindo Society, No. 11, Saint Martin Street, Puducherry – 605 001, Ph: 0413 – 2334668, email: sushila@aurosociety.org

Subscription Rates

India	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years
	₹ 100	₹ 280	₹ 470
Overseas by Air	US \$ 10	US \$ 30	US \$ 50

Savitri Study Camp February 2019
(Continuing Study)

Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri": Book 10. Canto 3 onwards
Facilitator: Alok Pandey

Venue: Sri Aurobindo Society Beach Office

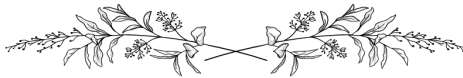
Dates: 22nd Feb to the 28th Feb 2019.

Timings: Two sessions every day as follows:

First Session: 5.15 to 6 PM

Second Session: 6.15 to 7 PM.

*(There will be only one session on the days when
dining room is early)*



With best compliments of:

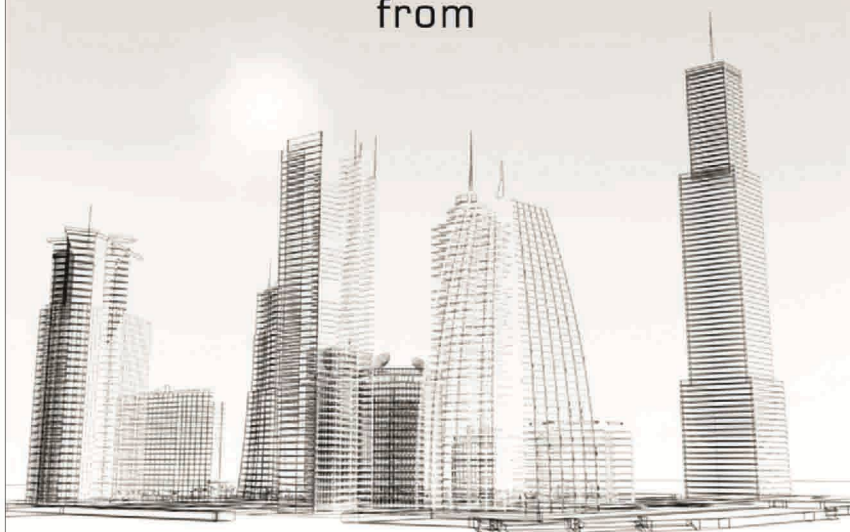
DEORAH SEVA NIDHI

(Founder Trustee: Late Shri S.L. Deorah)

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Dr. Nidhi Gogia

Mother of Sohah Sharma, Grade 4



ADMISSIONS OPEN

Academic Year 2018-19



MatriKiran

www.matrikiran.in

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