Sri Aurobindo & the Mother on

REBIRTH

Rebirth : A Spiritual Fact ... 4

Rebirth : A Spiritual Necessity ... 9

The Wisdom of Forgetfulness ... 15

Rebirth and the Personality ... 28

Rebirth and Freedom from Karma ... 37

Beyond Moksha and Mukti ... 43

Resurrection ... 46

Supreme Spiritual Rebirth ... 49

"Neither is it that I was not before nor thou nor these kings nor that all we shall not be hereafter." Not only Brahman, but beings and things in Brahman are eternal; their creation and destruction is a play of hide and seek with our outward consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo



To weep because a glorious sun

To weep because a glorious sun has set
Which the next morn shall gild the east again;
To mourn that mighty strengths must yield to fate
Which by that force a double strength attain;
To shrink from pain without whose friendly strife
Joy could not be, to make a terror of death
Who smiling beckons us to farther life,
And is a bridge for the persistent breath;
Despair and anguish and the tragic grief
Of dry set eyes, or such disastrous tears
As rend the heart, though meant for its relief,
And all man's ghastly company of fears
Are born of folly that believes the span
Of life the limit of immortal man.

Sri Aurobindo

Rebirth: A Spiritual Fact

The soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its immortality. For there comes a time when it is consciously immortal, aware of itself in its eternal and immutable essence. Once that realisation is accomplished, all intellectual questionings for and against the immortality of the soul fall away like a vain clamour of ignorance around the self-evident and ever-present truth. *Tato na vicikitsate*. That is the true dynamic belief in immortality when it becomes to us not an intellectual dogma but a fact as evident as the physical fact of our breathing and as little in need of proof or argument. So also there comes a time when the soul becomes aware of itself in its eternal and mutable movement; it is then aware of the ages behind that constituted the present organisation of the movement, sees how this was prepared in an uninterrupted past, remembers something of the bygone soul-states, environments, particular forms of activity which built up its present constituents and knows to what it is moving by development in an uninterrupted future. This is the true dynamic belief in rebirth, and there too the play of the questioning intellect ceases; the soul's vision and the soul's memory are all. Certainly, there remains the question of the mechanism of the development and of the laws of rebirth where the intellect and its inquiries and generalisations can still have some play. And here the more one thinks and experiences, the more the ordinary, simple, cut-and-dried account of reincarnation seems to be of doubtful validity. There is surely here a greater complexity, a law evolved with a more difficult movement and a more intricate harmony out of the possibilities of the Infinite. But this is a question which demands long and ample

consideration; for subtle is the law of it. *AKur hye Ia dharmaU.*

*

Rebirth is for the modern mind no more than a speculation and a theory; it has never been proved by the methods of modern science or to the satisfaction of the new critical mind formed by a scientific culture. Neither has it been disproved; for modern science knows nothing about a before-life or an after-life for the human soul, knows nothing indeed about a soul at all, nor can know; its province stops with the flesh and brain and nerve, the embryo and its formation and development. Neither has modern criticism any apparatus by which the truth or untruth of rebirth can be established. In fact, modern criticism, with all its pretensions to searching investigation and scrupulous certainty, is no very efficient truth-finder. Outside the sphere of the immediate physical it is almost helpless. It is good at discovering data, but except where the data themselves bear on the surface their own conclusion, it has no means of being rightly sure of the generalisations it announces from them so confidently in one generation and destroys in the next. It has no means of finding out with surety the truth or untruth of a doubtful historical assertion; after a century of dispute it has not even been able to tell us yes or no, whether Jesus Christ ever existed. How then shall it deal with such a matter as this of rebirth which is stuff of psychology and must be settled rather by psychological than physical evidence?

The arguments which are usually put forward by supporters and opponents, are often weak or futile and even at their best insufficient either to prove or to disprove anything in the world. One argument, for instance, often put forward triumphantly in disproof is this that we have no

memory of our past lives and therefore there were no past lives! One smiles to see such reasoning seriously used by those who imagine that they are something more than intellectual children. The argument proceeds on psychological grounds and yet it ignores the very nature of our ordinary or physical memory which is all that the normal man can employ. How much do we remember of our actual lives which we are undoubtedly living at the present moment? Our memory is normally good for what is near, becomes vaguer or less comprehensive as its objects recede into the distance, farther off seizes only some salient points and, finally, for the beginning of our lives falls into a mere blankness. Do we remember even the mere fact, the simple state of being an infant on the mother's breast? and yet that state of infancy was, on any but a Buddhist theory, part of the same life and belonged to the same individual,—the very one who cannot remember it just as he cannot remember his past lives. Yet we demand that this physical memory, this memory of the brute brain of man which cannot remember our infancy and has lost so much of our later years, shall recall that which was before infancy, before birth, before itself was formed. And if it cannot, we are to cry, "Disproved your reincarnation theory!" The sapient insipiency of our ordinary human reasoning could go no farther than in this sort of ratiocination. Obviously, if our past lives are to be remembered whether as fact and state or in their events and images, it can only be by a psychical memory awaking which will overcome the limits of the physical and resuscitate impressions other than those stamped on the physical being by physical cerebration.

I doubt whether, even if we could have evidence of the physical memory of past lives or of such a psychical awak-

ening, the theory would be considered any better proved than before. We now hear of many such instances confidently alleged though without that apparatus of verified evidence responsibly examined which gives weight to the results of psychical research. The sceptic can always challenge them as mere fiction and imagination unless and until they are placed on a firm basis of evidence. Even if the facts alleged are verified, he has the resource of affirming that they are not really memories but were known to the person alleging them by ordinary physical means or were suggested to him by others and have been converted into reincarnate memory either by conscious deception or by a process of self-deception and self-hallucination. And even supposing the evidence were too strong and unexceptionable to be got rid of by these familiar devices, they might yet not be accepted as proof of rebirth; the mind can discover a hundred theoretical explanations for a single group of facts.

Sri Aurobindo

If we go a little way within ourselves,
we shall discover that there is in each of us
a consciousness that has been living throughout
the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms.

The Mother

Rebirth

Not soon is God's delight in us completed,
Nor with one life we end;
Termlessly in us are our spirits seated
And termless joy intend.

Our souls and heaven are of an equal stature
And have a dateless birth;
The unending seed, the infinite mould of Nature,
They were not made on earth,

Nor to the earth do they bequeath their ashes,
But in themselves they last.
An endless future brims beneath thy lashes,
Child of an endless past.

…Our past that we forget, is with us deathless,
Our births and later end
Already accomplished. To a summit breathless
Sometimes our souls ascend,

…And even from this veil of mind the spirit
Looks out sometimes and sees
The bygone aeons that our lives inherit,
The unborn centuries:

…Or else the web behind us is unravelled
And on its threads we gaze, —
Past motions of the stars, scenes long since travelled
In Time's far-backward days.

Sri Aurobindo

Rebirth: A Spiritual Necessity

If evolution is a truth and is not only a physical evolution of species, but an evolution of consciousness, it must be a spiritual and not only a physical fact. In that case, it is the individual who evolves and grows into a more and more developed and perfect consciousness and obviously that cannot be done in the course of a brief single human life. If there is the evolution of a conscious individual, then there must be rebirth. Rebirth is a logical necessity and a spiritual fact of which we can have the experience.

*

The bare idea of repeated births as the process of our soul existence does not carry us much farther than the simple material reality of this single life in the body, that first fact of our conscious sensation and memory which is the occasion of all our speculations. Behind our present starting-point and preceding this one lappet of our race in the fields of being rebirth reminds us indeed of a past, of pregnant anterior courses, a soul-existence in many previous bodies which have immediately created what we now are. But to what use or advantage if there is no progressive significance in our pre-existence and our persevering continuity?

...For the burden of death to man the thinking, willing, feeling creature is not the loss of this poor case or chariot of body, but it is the blind psychical finality death suggests, the stupid material end of our will and thought and aspiration and endeavour, the brute breaking off of the heart's kind and sweet relations and affections, the futile convicting discontinuity of that marvellous and all-supporting soul-sense which gives us our radiant glimpses of the glory

and delight of existence,—that is the discord and harsh inconsequence against which the thinking living creature revolts as incredible and inadmissible. The fiery straining to immortality of our life, mind, psyche, which can assent to cessation only by turning in enmity upon their own flame of nature, and the denial of it which the dull acquiescence of a body consenting inertly to death as to life brings in on us, is the whole painful irreconcilable contradiction of our double nature. Rebirth takes the difficulty and solves it in the sense of a soul continuity with a beat of physical repetition. Like other non-materialistic solutions it gives the right to the soul's suggestion as against the body's and sanctions the demand for survival, but unlike some others it justifies the bodily life by its utility to the soul's continued self-experience; our too swift act in the body ceases to be an isolated accident or an abrupt interlude, it gets the justification of a fulfilling future as well as a creating past for its otherwise haphazard actions and relations. But simple persistence, mechanical continuity is not enough; that is not all our psychical being signifies, not the whole luminous meaning of survival and continuity; without ascension, without expansion, without some growing up straight into light in the strength of our spirit our higher members toil here uncompleted, our birth in matter is not justified by any adequate meaning. We are very little better off than if death remained our ending; for our life in the end becomes then an indefinitely continued and renewed and temporarily consequent in place of an inconsequent, abruptly ended and soon convicted futility.

By rebirth, too, this world around us, our environment, its suggestions, its opportunities are no longer left as the field of an ephemeral physical flowering or as a Life which

cares very little for and means very little to the individual, though it may offer much perhaps during its uncertain longer time to the species. The world grows to us a field of soul-experience, a system of soul-recurrences, a means of self-effectuation, perhaps a crystallising of the conscious being's effective self-reflections. But to what end if our recurrence is only a repetition or a hesitating fluctuation within a few set types with a very limited, always uncompleted circle of accomplishment? For that is what it comes to, if there is no upward outlet, no infinite progression or no escape or enlarging into the soul's infinities. Rebirth tells us that what we are is a soul performing constantly the miracle of self-embodiment; but why this embodiment, what this soul has to do here with itself and what use it is to make of this world which is given to it for its grandiose scene, its difficult, plastic material and its besieging battery of multiform stimulus and suggestions, is hardly at all clearer than before. But the perception of rebirth as an occasion and means for a spiritual evolution fills in every hiatus. It makes life a significant ascension and not a mechanical recurrence; it opens to us the divine vistas of a growing soul; it makes the worlds a nexus of spiritual self-expansion; it sets us seeking, and with a sure promise to all of a great finding now or hereafter, for the self-knowledge of our spirit and the self-fulfilment of a wise and divine intention in our existence.

*

These words [*muohayoni Iu* or *adho gacchanti*] do not necessarily refer to the animal birth, but it is true that there has been a general belief of that kind not only in India but wherever "transmigration" or "metempsychosis" was believed

in. ...But the soul, the psychic being, once having reached the human consciousness cannot go back to the inferior animal consciousness any more than it can go back into a tree or an ephemeral insect. What is true is that some part of the vital energy or the formed instrumental consciousness or nature can and very frequently does so, if it is strongly attached to anything in the earth life. This may account for some cases of immediate rebirth with full memory in human forms also. Ordinarily, it is only by yogic development or by clairvoyance that the exact memory of past lives can be brought back.

*

It is when the vital gets broken up, some strong movements of it, desires, greeds, may precipitate themselves into animal forms, e.g., sexual desire with the part of the vital consciousness under its control into a dog or some habitual movement of excessive greed may carry part of the vital consciousness into a pig. The animals represent the vital consciousness with mind involved in the vital, so that it is naturally there that such things would gravitate for satisfaction.

*

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 re-

ward 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.

Sri Aurobindo

The Meditations of Mandavya

I know, O God, the day shall dawn at last
When man shall rise from playing with the mud
And taking in his hands the sun and stars
Remould appearance, law and process old.
Then, pain and discord vanished from the world,
Shall the dead wilderness accept the rose
And the hushed desert babble of its rills;
Man once more seem the image true of God.

*

I will not faint, O God. There is a thirst,
And thirst supposes water somewhere. Yes,
But in this life we may not ever find;
Old nature sits a phantom by the way,
Old passions may forbid, old doubts return.
Then are there other lives here or beyond
To satisfy us? I will persist, O Lord.

Sri Aurobindo

The Wisdom of Forgetfulness

If indeed rebirth were governed by a system of rewards and punishments, if life's whole intention were to teach the embodied spirit to be good and moral,—supposing that that is the intention in the dispensation of Karma and it is not what it looks like in this presentation of it, a mechanical law of recompense and retribution without any reformatory meaning or purpose,—then there is evidently a great stupidity and injustice in denying to the mind in its new incarnation all memory of its past births and actions. For it deprives the reborn being of all chance to realise why he is rewarded or punished or to get any advantage from the lesson of the profitableness of virtue and the unprofitableness of sin vouchsafed to him or inflicted on him. Even, since life seems often to teach the opposite lesson,—for he sees the good suffer for their goodness and the wicked prosper by their wickedness,—he is rather likely to conclude in this perverse sense, because he has not the memory of an assured and constant result of experience which would show him that the suffering of the good man was due to his past wickedness and the prosperity of the sinner due to the splendour of his past virtues, so that virtue is the best policy in the long run for any reasonable and prudent soul entering into this dispensation of Nature. It might be said that the psychic being within remembers; but such a secret memory would seem to have little effect or value on the surface. Or it may be said that it realises what has happened and learns its lesson when it reviews and assimilates its experiences after issuing from the body: but this intermittent memory does not very apparently help in the next birth; for most of us persist in sin and error and

show no tangible signs of having profited by the teaching of our past experience.

But if a constant development of being by a developing cosmic experience is the meaning and the building of a new personality in a new birth is the method, then any persistent or complete memory of the past life or lives might be a chain and a serious obstacle: it would be a force for prolonging the old temperament, character, preoccupations, and a tremendous burden hampering the free development of the new personality and its formulation of new experience. A clear and detailed memory of past lives, hatreds, rancours, attachments, connections would be equally a stupendous inconvenience; for it would bind the reborn being to a useless repetition or a compulsory continuation of his surface past and stand heavily in the way of his bringing out new possibilities from the depths of the spirit. If, indeed, a mental learning of things were the heart of the matter, if that were the process of our development, memory would have a great importance: but what happens is a growth of the soul-personality and a growth of the nature by an assimilation into our substance of being, a creative and effective absorption of the essential results of past energies; in this process conscious memory is of no importance. As the tree grows by a subconscient or inconscient assimilation of action of sun and rain and wind and absorption of earth-elements, so the being grows by a subliminal or intraconscient assimilation and absorption of its results of past becoming and an output of potentialities of future becoming. The law that deprives us of the memory of past lives is a law of the cosmic Wisdom and serves, not disserves its evolutionary purpose.

Sri Aurobindo

You must always distrust people who go rambling in some kind of mental or vital domain, and then tell you stories imagining that they remember their past lives. You know the classical example of that well-known lady who narrated her lives from the time she had been a monkey! I may assure you that it is pure imagination, for it is impossible to remember like that.

This is what happens. 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.

I am going to give you quite a concrete example. Let us take a psychic being that has decided, for some reason or other, to enter the body of a being destined to become king, because there is a whole series of experiences it can have only under those conditions. After having passed through these experiences of a king, it finds that there is a whole domain in which it cannot make a progress due to these very conditions of life where it is. So when it has finished its term upon earth and decides to go away, it decides that in its next life it will take birth in an ordinary environment and in ordinary conditions, neither high nor low, but such that the body which it will take up will be free to do what it likes. For I do not tell you anything new when I say that the life of a king is the life of a slave; a king is obliged to submit to a whole protocol and to all kinds of ceremonies to keep his prestige (it is perhaps very pleasant for vain people, but for a psychic being it is not pleasant, for this deprives it of the possibility of a large number of experiences). So having taken this decision, it carries in itself all the memories which a royal life can give it and it takes rest for the period it considers necessary. (Here, I must say that I am speaking of a psychic being exclusively occupied with itself, not one consecrated to a work, because in that case it is the work which decides the future lives and their conditions; I am speaking of a psychic being at work completing its development.) Hence it decides that at a certain moment it will take a body.

Having already had a number of experiences, it knows that in a certain country, a certain part of the consciousness has developed; in another, another part, and so on; so it chooses the place which offers it easy possibilities of development: the country, the conditions of living, the approximate nature of the parents, and also the condition of the body itself, its physical structure and the qualities it needs for its experiences. It takes rest, then at the required moment, wakes up and projects its consciousness upon earth centralising it in the chosen domain and the chosen conditions—or almost so; there is a small margin you know, for in the psychic consciousness one is too far away from the material physical consciousness to be able to see with a clear vision; it is an approximation. It does not make a mistake about the country or the environment and it sees quite clearly the inner vibrations of the people chosen, but there may happen to be a slight indecision. But if, just at this moment, there is a couple upon earth or rather a woman who has a psychic aspiration herself and, for some reason or other, without knowing why or how, would like to have an exceptional child, answering certain exceptional conditions; if at this moment there is this aspiration upon earth, it creates a vibration, a psychic light which the psychic being sees immediately and, without hesitation it rushes towards it. Then, from that moment (which is the moment of conception), it watches over the formation of the child, so that this formation may be as favourable as possible to the plan it has; consequently its influence is there over the child even before it appears in the physical world.

If all goes well, if there is no accident (accidents can always happen), if all goes well at the moment the child is about to be born, the psychic force (perhaps not in its total-

ity, but a part of the psychic consciousness) rushes into the being and from its very first cry gives it a push towards the experiences it wants the child to acquire. The result is that even if the parents are not conscious, even if the child in its external consciousness is not quite conscious (a little child does not have the necessary brain for that, it forms slowly, little by little), in spite of that, it will be possible for the psychic influence to direct all the events, all the circumstances of the life of this child till the moment it becomes capable of coming into conscious contact with its psychic being (physically it is generally between the age of four and seven, sometimes sooner, sometimes almost immediately, but in such a case we deal with children who are not "children", who have "supernatural" qualities, as they say—they are not "supernatural", but simply the expression of the presence of the psychic being). But there are people who have not had the chance or rather the good fortune if one may call it that, of meeting someone, physically, who could instruct them. And yet they have the feeling that every step of their existence, every circumstance of their life is arranged by someone conscious, so that they may make the maximum progress. When they need a certain circumstance, it comes; when they need to meet certain people, they come; when they need to read certain books, they find them within their reach. Everything is arranged like that, as if someone was watching over them so that their life may have the maximum possibilities of development. These people may very well say: "But what is a psychic being?", for no one has ever used these words in speaking to them or they have not found anybody who could explain to them all that; but for them often just one meeting is sufficient, just one look, in order to wake up; one word suffices to make them remember: "But I

knew all that!"

This is exactly what happens to a psychic being which has reached the last stage of its development. After that, it will no longer be bound by the necessity of coming upon earth, it will have completed its development and will be able to choose freely either to consecrate itself to the divine Work or go elsewhere, that is, in the higher worlds. But generally, having come to this stage, it remembers all that has happened to it and understands the great necessity of coming to the help of those who are yet struggling in the midst of difficulties. These psychic beings give their whole existence to the divine Work—this is not absolute, inevitable, they choose freely, but ninety times out of a hundred this is what they do.

But in ordinary lives—and by that I mean the life of a certain elite of sufficiently well-developed people—the contact between the external being and the psychic is quite intermittent; it is the result of certain experiences or certain inner needs. At that moment the psychic being is "in front", as Sri Aurobindo says, that is, it comes to the surface of the consciousness, it is in direct contact with material circumstances, with forms and words and sounds, etc., for a very short time; so it records all that like a photograph or a cinema, but it is just a minute, a few moments in a lifetime. These moments may repeat themselves several times, but they do not last; and it is this the psychic being remembers; and when you have real psychic memories, sincere, spontaneous, not fabricated by the mind or the vital, that is, purely psychic, exact, your memory is *intermittent*. And it is often very difficult to locate your past lives, to say: "I was this or that." It is only when the psychic experience has taken place at a very important moment of your life and a whole set of

circumstances gives you, so to say, the key to the story (dresses, spoken words, customs or an environment giving you the key) that you can say: "Oh! That life, I have lived it." But if someone comes and narrates to you all his previous lives from the monkey onwards, with a mass of details, you may be sure that he is a humbug!

*

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.

*

But this memory is not a thing of the mental kind. Those who claim to have been such a baron of the Middle Ages or such a person who lived at such a place and such a time, are fanciful, they are simply victims of their own mental imagination. In fact, what remains of past lives are not beautiful pictures in which you appear as a mighty lord in a castle or a victorious general at the head of an army—that is only romance. What remains is the memory of those instants when the psychic being emerged from the depths of your being and revealed itself to you—that is to say, the memory of those instants when you were wholly conscious. That growth of consciousness is progressively effectuated in the course of evolution, and the memory of past lives is generally limited to the critical moments of evolution, to the decisive turns that marked the progress of your consciousness.

At the time when you live such moments of your life, you do not care at all about remembering that you were Mr. X, such a person, living at such a place and in such an epoch; it is not the memory of your civic status that remains. On the contrary, you lose all consciousness of these petty external things, accessories and perishables, so that you may be wholly in the flare of the soul revelation or of the divine contact. When you remember such instants of your past lives, the memory is so intense that it seems to be still very close, still living, and much more living than most of the ordinary memories of our present life. At times, in dreams, when you come into contact with certain planes of consciousness, you may have memories of such intensity, such vibrant colour, so to say, even more intense than the colours and things of the physical world. For these are the moments of true consciousness, and everything then puts on an extraordinary brilliance, everything is vibrant, everything is imbued with a quality that escapes the ordinary eye.

These minutes of contact with the soul are often those that mark a decisive turn of our life, a forward step, a progress in consciousness, and that frequently corresponds with a crisis, an extremely intense situation when there comes a call in the whole being, a call so strong that the inner consciousness pierces the layers of unconsciousness covering it and is revealed all luminous on the surface. This call of the being, when very strong, can also bring about the descent of a divine emanation, an individuality, a divine aspect which joins with your individuality at a given moment in order to do a given work, win a battle, express one thing or another. The work done, the emanation very often withdraws. Then one may retain the memory of the circumstances that were around those minutes of revelation or

inspiration: one sees again the scenery, the colour of the dress that one had put on, the colour of one's own skin, the things about you at that time—all that is fixed indelibly with an extraordinary intensity, because the things of the ordinary life revealed themselves then in their true intensity and their true colour. The consciousness that reveals itself in you, reveals at the same time the consciousness that is in things. At times, with the help of these details you may reconstitute the age in which you lived or the action that you did, find out the country where you were; but it is very easy also to make a romance and take imagination for reality.

Yet you must not believe that all memories of past lives are those of moments of great crisis, of important mission or of revelation. Some times they are moments very simple, transparent, when an integral, a perfect harmony of the being was expressed. And that may correspond to altogether insignificant external situations.

Apart from the things that were in your immediate surrounding at that moment, apart from that moment of contact with your psychic being, nothing remains. Once the privileged moment passes, the psychic being plunges into an inner somnolence and the whole outer life melts into a grey monotony which does not leave any trace. Besides, it is almost the same phenomenon as what happens in the course of the life that you lead at present: apart from those exceptional moments when you are at the summit of your being, mental or vital or even physical, the rest of your life seems to melt into a kind of neutral colour which has no great interest, when it matters little whether you were at such a place instead of being at another, whether you did this thing or that. If you try to look at your life all at once, in

order to gather, as it were, its essence, the twenty or thirty or forty years behind you, you will see rise up spontaneously two or three images which were the true moments of your life; the rest is effaced. A kind of spontaneous choice works in your consciousness and there is a tremendous elimination. This will give you a little idea of what happens in regard to past lives: the choice of a few select moments and an immense elimination.

It is very true that the earliest lives are very rudimentary; very few things subsist out of that, scattered memories few and far between. But the more one progresses in consciousness, the more the psychic being is consciously associated with the outer activities; the memories grow in number and become more coherent and precise. But still, here also, the memory that remains is that of the contact with the soul and at times that of things which were associated with the psychic revelation—not the civic status or the changing scenes around. And this will explain to you why the so-called memories of past animal lives are the most fantastic: the divine spark in them is buried much too deep down to be able to come up consciously to the surface and be associated with the outer life. One must become a wholly conscious being, conscious in all its parts, totally united with one's divine origin before one can truly say that one remembers his past lives.

The Mother

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 the materialising education and influence of

the environments prevent their true nature from being recognised. There are even a great 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 carries away with it and brings back is ordinarily the essence of the experiences it had in former lives, and not the details so that you cannot expect the same memory as one has of the present existence.

Sri Aurobindo

Renewal

When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling
Things that were once and again can be never,
When the bow falls and the drawn string is broken,
Hands that were clasped, yet for ever are parted,

When the soul passes to new births and bodies,
Lands never seen and meetings with new faces,
Is the bow raised and the fall'n arrow fitted,
Acts that were vain rewedded to the Fate-curve?

To the lives sundered can Time bring rejoining,
Love that was slain be reborn with the body?
In the mind null, from the heart's chords rejected,
Lost to the sense, but the spirit remembers!

Sri Aurobindo

Rebirth and the Personality

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 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. 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.

*

The being as it passes through the series of its lives takes on various kinds of personalities and passes through various types of experiences, but it does not carry these on to the next life, as a rule. It takes on a new mind, vital and body. The mental capacities, occupations, interests, idiosyncrasies of the past mind and vital are not taken over by the new mind and vital, except to the extent that is useful for the new life. One may have the power of poetic expression in one life, but in the next not have any such power or any interest in poetry. On the other hand, tendencies suppressed or missed or imperfectly developed in one life may come out in the next. There would be therefore nothing surprising in the contrast which you noted. The essence of past experiences is kept by the psychic being but the forms of experience or of personality are not, except such as are needed for the new stage in the soul's progress.

The being in its long course of experience may permit for a time the search after sensual pleasure and afterwards discard it and turn to higher things. This can happen even in the course of a life-time, a *fortiori* in a second life where the old personalities would not be carried over.

*

You say "relationships of one birth persist in successive births, the chances depending on the strength of the attachment". This is possible, but not a law—as a rule the same relationship would not be constantly repeated—the same people often meet again and again on earth in different lives, but the relations are different. The purpose of rebirth would not be served if the same personality with the same relations and experiences are incessantly repeated.

*

It is a difficult question [whether sex is altered in rebirth]. 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.

*

This brings us to another element of the ordinary conception of rebirth which is not acceptable, since it is an obvious error of the physical mind,—the idea of the soul itself as a limited personality which survives unchanged from one birth to another. This too simple and superficial

idea of the soul and personality is born of the physical mind's inability to look beyond its own apparent self-formation in this single existence. In its conception, what returns in the reincarnation must be not only the same spiritual being, the same psychic entity, but the same formation of nature that inhabited the body of the last birth; the body changes, the circumstances are different, but the form of the being, the mind, the character, the disposition, temperament, tendencies are the same: John Smith in his new life is the same John Smith that he was in his last avatar. But if that were so, there would be no spiritual utility or meaning at all in rebirth; for there would be the repetition of the same little personality, the same small mental and vital formation to the end of Time. For the growth of the embodied being towards the full stature of its reality, not only a new experience, but a new personality is indispensable; to repeat the same personality would only be helpful if something had been incomplete in its formation of its experience which needed to be worked out in the same cadre of self, in the same building of mind and with the same formed capacity of energy. But normally this would be quite otiose: the soul that has been John Smith cannot gain anything or fulfil itself by remaining John Smith for ever; it cannot achieve growth or perfection by repeating the same character, interests, occupations, types of inner and outer movements for ever. Our life and rebirth would be always the same recurring decimal; it would be not an evolution but the meaningless continuity of an eternal repetition. Our attachment to our present personality demands such a continuity, such a repetition; John Smith wants to be John Smith for ever: but the demand is obviously ignorant and, if it were satisfied, that would be a frustration, not a fulfilment. It is only by a

change of outer self, a constant progression of the nature, a growth in the spirit that we can justify our existence.

Personality is only a temporary mental, vital, physical formation which the being, the real Person, the psychic entity, puts forward on the surface,—it is not the self in its abiding reality. In each return to earth the Person, the Purusha, makes a new formation, builds a new personal quantum suitable for a new experience, for a new growth of its being. ...The essential form of the past personality may remain as one element among many, one personality among many personalities of the same Person, but in the background, in the subliminal behind the veil of the surface mind and life and body, contributing from there whatever is needed of itself to the new formation; but it will not itself be the whole formation or build anew the old unchanged type of nature. It may even be that the new quantum or structure of being will exhibit a quite contrary character and temperament, quite other capacities, other very different tendencies; for latent potentials may be ready to emerge, or something already in action but inchoate may have been held back in the last life which needed to be worked out but was kept over for a later and more suitable combination of the possibilities of the nature. All the past is indeed there, with its accelerated impetus and potentialities for the formation of the future, but all of it is not ostensibly present and active. The greater the variety of formations that have existed in the past and can be utilised, the more rich and multitudinous the accumulated buildings of experience, the more their essential result of capacity for knowledge, power, action, character, manifold response to the universe can be brought forward and harmonised in the new birth, the more numerous the veiled personalities mental, vital, subtle-

physical that combine to enrich the new personality on the surface, the greater and more opulent will be that personality and the nearer to the possible transition out of the completed mental stage of evolution to something beyond it. Such a complexity and gathering up of many personalities in one person can be a sign of a very advanced stage of the individual's evolution when there is a strong central being that holds all together and works towards harmonization and integration of the whole many-sided movement of the nature. But this opulent taking up of the past would not be a repetition of personality; it would be a new formation and large consummation. It is not as a machinery for the persistent renewal or prolongation of an unchanging personality that rebirth exists, but as a means for the evolution of the spiritual being in Nature.

Sri Aurobindo

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.

...You want to know if all men retain their identities after the dissolution of their bodies. Well, it depends. 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.

*

Q : For past lives, are there any general rules, broad outlines, or is everything possible?

All depends on the category to which one belongs, and the degree of the psychic being's development. If the psy-

chic 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.

The Mother

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

The Mother

Rebirth and Freedom from Karma

Obviously we must leave far behind us the current theory of Karma and its shallow attempt to justify the ways of the Cosmic Spirit by forcing on them a crude identity with the summary notions of law and justice, the crude and often savagely primitive methods of reward and punishment, lure and deterrent dear to the surface human mind. There is here a more authentic and spiritual truth at the base of Nature's action and a far less mechanically calculable movement. Here is no rigid and narrow ethical law bound down to a petty human significance, no teaching of a child soul by a mixed system of blows and lollipops, no unprofitable wheel of a brutal cosmic justice automatically moved in the traces of man's ignorant judgments and earthy desires and instincts. Life and rebirth do not follow these artificial constructions, but a movement spiritual and intimate to the deepest intention of Nature. A cosmic Will and Wisdom observant of the ascending march of the soul's consciousness and experience as it emerges out of subconscient Matter and climbs to its own luminous divinity fixes the norm and constantly enlarges the lines of the law— or, let us say, since law is a too mechanical conception,—the truth of Karma.

*

The psychic being's choice at the time of death does not *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 out much of it 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 are too mechanical—and that is the case also with the idea of *puṇya* 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 suffering 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 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.

Sri Aurobindo

This sort of fatality that one sometimes feels weighing heavy on one's life, which is called Karma in India, is the result of past lives; indeed, it is something that has to be exhausted, something that weighs on one's consciousness.

...But if only once the soul has made an appeal, if once it has made contact with the Grace, then in the following life, one immediately finds oneself in conditions where everything can be swept away at one stroke. At that moment you need to have a great courage, a great endurance, though at times a true love is sufficient. And if there is faith—a little, a very very little is enough—then everything is swept away. But in most cases what you need is a great stoic courage, a capacity to endure and to hold out: the resistance, especially in the case of a previous suicide, resistance to the temptation to again begin this foolishness—because it makes a terrible formation. There is also this habit of not looking the difficulty straight in the face, which is translated by taking flight. When suffering comes, fly, fly, instead of absorbing the difficulty, instead of holding tight, that is to say, not stirring within, not yielding, yes, above all, not yielding when you feel within: "I cannot bear it any longer." Hold your head as quiet as possible, do not follow the movement, do not obey the vibration.

That is what is needed, just that: faith in the Grace, perception of the Grace, or else, intensity of call, or better still,

the response, the response, the knot opening, breaking, the response to this wonderful love of the Grace.

It is difficult without a strong will, and above all, above all, the capacity to resist the temptation which has been the fatal temptation through all the lives because of its accumulated power. Each defeat gives fresh force to it. A small victory can dissolve it.

The most terrible thing is when you do not have the strength, the courage, something indomitable. How often they come and tell me: "I want to die, I want to run away, I want to die." They get the answer: "Well, then, die to yourself! You are not asked to let your ego survive! Die to yourself since you want to die! Have that courage, the true courage to die to your egoism."

But because it is a Karma, you have to do something yourself. Karma is a construction of the ego; the ego must do something, everything cannot be done for it. The truth is this: Karma is the result of the actions of the ego, and it is only when the ego abdicates that Karma is dissolved. You can aid the ego, you can assist it, you can give it force and infuse it with courage, but it must use them.

There is such a gulf between what we truly are and what we are at present that it turns your head giddy at times. You must not yield to the giddiness. Do not move. Be still like a stone until the thing passes away.

Generally, when the time has come for a Karma to be conquered and absorbed by the Grace, there also comes the image or the knowledge or the experience of the exact facts that are the cause of the Karma, and then at that moment you can start the cleaning.

But it is just at the most painful point, there where the suggestions are the strongest, that you must bear the blow.

Otherwise you will always have to start over again, always start over again.

One day a moment comes when the thing has to be done, when one must make the true inner gesture that liberates. To tell the truth, just now there is upon earth an opportunity which presents itself only after thousands of years, a conscious help with the necessary power. It was once believed that nothing had the power to wipe away the consequences of a Karma, that it was only by exhausting it through a series of purificatory acts that the consequences could be transformed, exhausted, effaced. But with the supramental power, this can be done without the need of going through all the steps of the process of liberation.

The Mother

The highest heavens of the cosmic plan are subject to a return to rebirth; but there is no rebirth imposed on the soul that departs to the Purushottama. Therefore whatever fruit can be had from the aspiration of knowledge to the indefinable Brahman, is acquired also by this other and comprehensive aspiration through knowledge, works and love to the self-existent Godhead who is the Master of works and the Friend of mankind and of all beings. To know him so and so to seek him does not bind to rebirth or to the chain of Karma; the soul can satisfy its desire to escape permanently from the transient and painful condition of our mortal being.

*

The escape from birth was a universal ideal at that time except with one or two sects of the Shaivas, I believe. It is not at all consistent with the Divine taking many births, for the

Gita speaks of the highest condition not as a *laya*, but as a dwelling in the Divine. If so there seems to be no reason why the *mukta* and *siddha* who has reached that dwelling in the consciousness of the Divine should fear rebirth and its troubles any more than the Divine does.

Sri Aurobindo

There is no such thing as an insuperable difficulty from past lives. There are formations that help and formations that hamper; the latter have to be dismissed and dissolved, not to be allowed to repeat themselves.

Sri Aurobindo

*

The outer form only dissolves, unless that too is made conscious and is organised round the divine centre. But the true mental, the true vital and even the true subtle physical persist: it is that which keeps all the impressions received in earthly life and builds the chain of Karma.

*

Knowledge of past lives is interesting for an understanding of one's nature and a mastery of one's imperfections. But to tell the truth, it is not of capital importance, and it is far more important to concentrate on the future, on the consciousness to be acquired and on the development of the nature, which is almost unlimited for those who know how to do it.

The Mother

Beyond Moksha and Mukti

If human mind is the last word of its possibility on earth, then rebirth must end in man and proceed by some abrupt ceasing either to an existence on other planes or to an annulment of its spiritual circle. But if there are higher powers of the spirit which are attainable by birth, then the ascent is not finished, greater assumptions may lie before the soul which has now reached and is lifted to a perfecting of the high scale of humanity. It may even be that this ascending rebirth is not the long upward rocket shooting of a conscious being out of matter or its whirling motion in mind destined to break up and dissolve in some high air of calm nothingness or of silent timeless infinity, but a progress to some great act and high display of the Divinity which shall give a wise and glorious significance to his persistent intention in an eternal creation. Or that at least may be one power of the Eternal's infinite potentiality.

*

As to the impossibility of return, that is a knotty question. A divine being can always return—as Ramakrishna said, the Ishwarakoti can at will ascend or descend the stair between Birth and Immortality. For the others, it is probable that they may rest for a relative infinity of time, *QDQvatmU samDU*, if that is the will in them, but a return cannot be barred out unless they have reached their highest possible status.

No, that [return to the psychic world before a new birth] is part of the evolutionary line only, not obligatory for divine returns.

An advanced psychic being may mean here one who has

arrived at the soul's freedom and is immersed in the Divine—immersed does not mean abolished. Such a being does not sleep in the psychic world, but may remain in his state of blissful immersion or come back for some purpose.

No, the psychic being cannot take up more than one body. There is only one psychic being for each human being, but the beings of the higher planes, e.g., the Gods of the overmind can manifest in more than one human body at a time by sending different emanations into different bodies. These would be called Vibhutis of these Devatas.

*

The soul... is something that comes down into birth and passes through death—although it does not itself die, for it is immortal—from one state to another, from the earth plane to other planes and back again to the earth-existence. It goes on with this progression from life to life through an evolution which leads it up to the human state and evolves through it all a being of itself which we call the psychic being that supports the evolution and develops a physical, a vital, a mental human consciousness as its instruments of world-experience and of a disguised, imperfect, but growing self-expression. All this it does from behind a veil showing something of its divine self only in so far as the imperfection of the instrumental being will allow it. But a time comes when it is able to prepare to come out from behind the veil, to take command and turn all the instrumental nature towards a divine fulfilment. This is the beginning of the true spiritual life. The soul is able now to make itself ready for a higher evolution of manifested consciousness than the mental human—it can pass from the mental to the spiritual and through degrees of the spiritual to the supra-

mental state. Till then there is no reason why it should cease from birth, it cannot in fact do so. **If having reached the spiritual state, it wills to pass out of the terrestrial manifestation, it may indeed do so—but there is also possible a higher manifestation, in the Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.**

...It is not the naked spirit, but the psychic being that goes to the psychic place to rest till it is called again to another life. There is, therefore, no need of a Force to compel it to take birth anew. It is in its nature something that is put forth from the Divine to support the evolution and it must do so till the Divine's purpose in its evolution is accomplished. Karma is only a machinery, it is not the fundamental cause of terrestrial existence—it cannot be, for when the soul first entered this existence, it had no Karma.

Sri Aurobindo

Every fully conscious and developed psychic being is free to choose what its next life will be and when that life will take place.

The Mother

Resurrection

Resurrection means, for us, the falling off of the old consciousness; but it is not only a rebirth, a sudden change which completely breaks with the past. There is a certain continuity in it between dying to your old self, your low exterior nature and starting quite anew. In the experience of resurrection the movement of discarding the old being is closely connected with that of the rising up from it of the new consciousness and the new strength, so that from what is thrown off the best can unite in a new creation with what has succeeded. The true significance of resurrection is that the Divine Consciousness awakes from the unconsciousness into which it has gone down and lost itself, the Divine Consciousness becomes once more aware of itself in spite of its descent into the world of death, night and obscurity. That world of obscurity is darker even than our physical night: if you came up after plunging into it you would actually find the most impenetrable night clear, just as returning from the true Light of the Divine Consciousness, the Supramental Light without obscurity, you would find the physical sun black. But even in the depths of that supreme darkness the supreme Light lies hidden. Let that Light and that Consciousness awaken in you, let there be the great Resurrection.

The Mother

Jivanmukta

…He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.

Sri Aurobindo

God's delegate in our humanity,
…She had come into the mortal body's room
To play at ball with Time and Circumstance.
…A laugh was her return to pleasure and pain.
All things she saw as a masquerade of Truth
Disguised in the costumes of Ignorance,
Crossing the years to immortality...

Sri Aurobindo

Supreme Spiritual Rebirth

The bodily transformation will be the supreme spiritual rebirth—an utter casting away of all the ordinary past. For spiritual rebirth means the constant throwing away of our previous associations and circumstances and proceeding to live as if at each virgin moment we were starting life anew. It is to be free of what is called Karma, the stream of our past actions: in other words, a liberation from the bondage of Nature's common activity of cause and effect. When this cutting away of the past is triumphantly accomplished in the consciousness, all those mistakes, blunders, errors and follies which, still vivid in our recollection, cling to us like leeches sucking our life-blood, drop away, leaving us most joyfully free. This freedom is not a mere matter of thought; it is the most solid, practical, material fact. We really are free, nothing binds us, nothing affects us, there is no obsession of responsibility. If we want to counteract, annul or outgrow our past, we cannot do it by mere repentance or similar things, we must forget that the untransformed past has ever been and enter into an enlightened state of consciousness which breaks loose from all moorings. To be reborn means to enter, first of all, into our psychic consciousness where we are one with the Divine and eternally free from the reactions of Karma. Without becoming aware of the psychic, it is not possible to do so; but once we are securely conscious of the true soul in us which is always surrendered to the Divine, all bondage ceases. Then incessantly life begins afresh, then the past no longer cleaves to us. To give you an idea of the final height of spiritual rebirth, I may say that there can be a constant experience of the whole universe actually disappearing at every instant and being at every instant newly created!

The Mother

Sources of the Passages Published in this Issue

CWM = Collected Works of the Mother
SABCL = Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library
CWSA = Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo

Page	Reference
1	**SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 92**
3	**SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 124**
4-7	**CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 268-69; *259-61***
7	**CWM, Vol. 15, p. 134**
8	**SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 51**
9	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 47**
9-11	**CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 295-97**
11-12	**SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 445-46**
12	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 446**
12-13	**CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 267-68**
14	**SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 89**
15-16	**SABCL, Vol. 19, pp. 818-19**
17-22	**CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 143-47**
22-23	**CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 148-49**
23-26	**CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 361-64**
26-27	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 437**
27	**SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 565**
28-30	**SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 451-52**
30	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 453**
31	**SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 435; 448**
31-34	**SABCL, Vol. 19, pp. 816-18**
34-35	**CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 145-46**
35-36	**CWM, Vol. 4, p. 183**
36	**CWM, Vol. 15, p. 135**
37	**CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 427**
37-39	**SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 444-45**
39-41	**CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 391-94**
41	**SABCL, Vol. 13, p. 283**
41-42	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 443**
42	**SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 445**
42	**CWM, Vol. 15, p. 134; Vol. 16, p. 353**
43	**CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 316**
43-45	**SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 442-43; 438-39**
45	**CWM, Vol. 15, p. 136**
46	**CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 147**
47	**SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 576**
48	**CWSA, Vol. 34, p.526**
49	**CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 176-77**

(Compilation and presentation by Alok Pandey)