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“Attacks from adverse forces are inevitable: you have to take them as tests on your way and go courageously through the ordeal. The struggle may be hard, but when you come out of it, you have gained something, you have advanced a step. There is even a necessity for the existence of the hostile forces. They make your determination stronger, your aspiration clearer.

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

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (5 May 1929)

Sometimes when an adverse force attacks us and we come out successful, why are we attacked once again by the same force?

Because something was left inside. We have said that the force can attack only when there is something which responds in the nature — however slight it may be. There is a kind of affinity, something corresponding, there is a disorder or an imperfection which attracts the adverse force by responding to it. So, if the attack comes, you must keep perfectly quiet and send it back, but it does not necessarily follow that you have got rid of that small part in you which allows the attack to come.

You have something in you which attracts this force; take, for example (it is one of the most frequent things), the force of depression, that kind of attack of a wave of depression that falls upon you: you lose confidence, you lose hope, you have the

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feeling you will never be able to do anything, you are cast down. It means there is in your vital being something which is naturally egoistic, surely a little vain, which needs encouragement to remain in a good state. So it is like a little signal for those forces which intimates to them: "You can come, the door is open." But there is another part in the being that was watching when these forces arrived; instead of allowing them to enter, the part which sees clearly, which knows, which has power, which resists, says: "No, I do not want that, it is not true, I do not want it", and sends them back. But you have not necessarily been cured of the little thing within you which permitted them to come. You must go very deep within, work within you persistently to be able to efface all possibility of calling. And so long as you have not completely effaced it, the attack will recur almost unexpectedly. You push it back — it is like a ball you throw against the wall, back it returns; you push it back once again and again it returns — until the moment there is no longer anything to attract it. Then it does not return again.

Therefore, the most important thing to do when you are attacked by an adverse force, is to say to yourself: "Yes, the force comes from outside and the attack is there, but there must certainly be a correspondence in my nature, otherwise it could not have attacked me. Well, I am going to look and find within me what allows this force to come and I am going to send it back or transform it or put the light of consciousness upon it so that it may be converted, or drive it away so that it remains no longer within me...." There is a way, you see? When the force comes, the adverse force, when it attacks, the part which corresponds rushes out to meet it, it goes forward. A kind of meeting takes place. If at that time, instead of being altogether overwhelmed or taken by surprise and off your guard, you observe very closely what it was within you that vibrated (it makes the sound tat, tat, tat: another thing has entered), then you can catch it. At that moment, you catch it and say to it: "Get out with your friends, I don't want you any longer!" You send away the two together,

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the part that attracted and the thing it attracted; they are sent away and you are absolutely clear.

For that, you must be very vigilant and have a little courage, in the sense that at times you have to grip it hard and then pull it out — it hurts a little — and then you throw it out along with the forces you send away. After that, it is finished. And so long as this is not done, it comes back and back again; and then if one is not in oneself sufficiently courageous or vigilant or persevering, the fourth or fifth time one falls flat and says: “That’s too much, I have had enough!” So the force installs itself, contented, satisfied with its work; and then you can see it laughing, it enjoys itself immensely, it got what it wanted. Now to send it back again means a very considerable work. But if you follow the other method, if you look closely this way: “Well, I am going to catch the thing that has allowed it to come”, you see somewhere within you something rising, wriggling, coming up in response to the evil force which is approaching. That is the moment to seize it and throw it out with all the rest.

But when we throw it out, it does not die. Then it can go elsewhere once more, for it remains in the world.

Exactly. It remains in the world and it will surely go elsewhere — until it meets someone who has sufficient spiritual and occult power to dissolve it, and that is very difficult.... One must be very strong, possess a very great knowledge and power to dissolve a movement that has (this can be said at least) its reason for existence in the world — I do not say it is legitimate, but still it has its reason for existence. There are things which can be dissolved; but if somewhere in the world it exists in someone, he can reconstitute it. It is the same thing when people are attacked by small beings of the vital world, hostile beings who attack them, install themselves in their atmosphere, trying to possess them, that is, enter into them and use their body and all the rest. These beings — it is very difficult for the individual to get

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rid of them: that needs a very, very hard yoga. But one who has the knowledge and the power and who sees them can very well get them out of the atmosphere and destroy them. But if one who is attacked keeps within himself this little affinity which allowed the thing to enter, then he will recall it. I have had several examples of the kind, several.

I had the example of a person who was three-fourths possessed and at the moment manifested a kind of power, a force that was not very good, but all the same it gave the impression of a force, a power, a capacity. Only he recognised that it was bad and was for evil, and prayed to be relieved of it. The opportunity comes: the being shows itself separately from the person it possesses, it can be seized, pulled out and dissolved. Then the one who had been possessed suddenly feels that he is becoming as commonplace as anybody else. That feeling of power he had is now lost and he feels he is becoming quite ordinary and says: "I have no special faculties, I have no special value, I have no special capacity, I am quite an ordinary person and less than ordinary, of a sickening commonness!" Now what does he do? He prays to have his possession back again. And so a few days later, I find him as possessed as ever.

Well, here it is truly not worth the trouble. One has only to leave them to their fate. This has happened many a time. In such people, you know, it is a kind of vanity which generally opens the door to those forces; they wished to be big, powerful, to play an important role, to be somebody; that attracts the force and so they become like that, possessed. The thing is taken away from them: all their remarkable capacity disappears at the same time and their self-satisfied vanity as well. They have the feeling they have become something quite ordinary and a tiny little thing within them says: "Oh! it was better before...." For one that is destroyed, there are always ten ready to come in. That's how it is, it is a strange task!

You know the story of Durga, don't you? Durga who every year has to destroy her asura; and always she is compelled to

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begin again. It goes on in this way till the end of the reign allotted to the titans. When they will be banished from this world, it will not be thus any longer. But till then, that is as long as they are useful (as I have said in this book) for intensifying the aspiration, clarifying the consciousness, for putting to the test the sincerity of people, they will be there. The day the test will not be needed, the day the sincerity will be pure and self-existent they will disappear. Then that day, Durga will no longer need to begin her battle over again every year.

Would it not be better to change them?

Ah! my child, certainly it would be better, much better. But then...

It is a domain of which I have a thorough experience. After forty years of sustained effort I have found out that it is absolutely impossible to change anyone unless in truth he wants it sincerely. If he does not set himself to the task with an absolute sincerity, well — I have tried for forty years, one can try it for a hundred and forty years, it will be the same thing — he won't stir. It is the very character of these beings to be perfectly satisfied with themselves, and they do not desire, they have not the least intention to change! Even now, among the beings who are concerned with the earth, the asuric beings, the greatest of the asuras who is still busy with the earth at present, who is the asura of falsehood and calls himself the "Lord of the Nations" — he has taken a beautiful name, he is Lord of the Nations — it is he, wherever there is something going wrong, you may be sure it is he or a representative of his who is there. It is also perfectly sure that very soon his hour will come and all will be over for him, that he will have to disappear. And he absolutely refuses to change. He has no intention to do it, for immediately he will lose all his power. It is impossible. And he knows that he will disappear. But he proclaims categorically that before disappearing he will destroy all he can.... At heart, he would

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not consent to disappear unless everything disappeared at the same time as he. Unfortunately for him, this is not possible. But he will do all that lies in his power to destroy, demolish, ruin, corrupt as many things as he can. That is certain. Afterwards it is the downfall. He accepts the downfall on this condition. It has never crossed his mind that he might be converted. It would no longer be he, don't you see, he would no longer be himself.

There is a great difference between a human being and these beings of the vital plane. I have told you this many times, I am going to repeat it:

In a human being, there is the divine Presence and the psychic being — at the beginning embryonic, but in the end a being wholly formed, conscious, independent, individualised. That does not exist in the vital world. It is a special grace given to human beings dwelling in matter and upon earth. And because of this, there is no human being who cannot be converted, if he wants it; that is, there is a possibility of his wanting it and the moment he wants it, he can do it. He is sure to succeed the moment he wants it, whereas those beings of the vital do not have a psychic being in them, they do not have the direct divine Presence (naturally, at the Origin, they descended directly from the Divine, but that was at the Origin, that is very far away). They are not in direct contact with the Divine within them, they have no psychic being. And if they were converted, there would remain nothing of them! For they are made up entirely of the opposite movement: they are entirely made up of personal self-assertion, despotic authority, separation from the Origin, and, of a great disdain for all that is pure, beautiful and noble. They do not have within them this psychic element which in man, even in the most debased, makes him respect what is beautiful and pure; even the basest man, in spite of himself, against his own will, respects what is pure, noble and beautiful. But those beings do not have that. They are wholly on the other side, totally on the other side. It disgusts them in every way. It is for them something which should not be touched, because it destroys; it is

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the thing that makes them disappear. Goodwill, sincerity, purity and beauty are things which make them disappear. So they hate these things.

Now I do not know on what grounds one could convert them. What would be the point of support? I do not find it. Even in the greatest. That is, some of these beings will not disappear until hatred disappears from the earth.... One might put it the other way round. One might say that hatred will disappear from the earth when those beings disappear; but, for the reason I have just given, the power to make light spring forth in the place of darkness, beauty in the place of ugliness, goodness instead of evil, that power man possesses, the Asura does not. Therefore it is man who will do that work, it is he who will change, it is he who will transform his earth and it is he who will compel the Asura to flee into other worlds or to dissolve. After that, all will be quiet. There you are.

Any questions?

You have said here, in reference to the mind: "Any part of the being that keeps to its proper place and plays its appointed role is helpful; but directly it steps beyond its sphere, it becomes twisted and perverted and therefore false. A power has the right movement when it is set into activity for the Divine purpose; it has the wrong movement when it is set into activity for its own satisfaction."

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (5 May 1929)

When a part of the being steps beyond its sphere, why does it get deformed and perverted?

I use the word "sphere" in the sense of the place and the role one has to play. Each part of the being has its place in the whole and a definite role to play. If instead of playing that role, it wishes to play another, naturally it loses the qualities necessary for it to

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play its true role, and it cannot take up any others because they are foreign to it. So necessarily it gets deformed and perverted. For example, we say here that the true role of the mind is a formative role in relation to action. An idea enters the mind, the mind seizes it and gives it a form to realise it, changes it into a motive of action and sends it out towards the material field. The mind organises the idea so that it may be realised in action. This is its true role, and so long as it does that and does it with care, it fulfils its role, it abides in its place and is quite useful. But if the mind imagines that it knows, that it has no need of receiving knowledge and ideas from another part of the being — a higher part — if it imagines that it knows and, by the association of inner movements, believes it has found some knowledge, which can never be but a reflection of something else, and if it wants to impose this knowledge upon the physical life, then it leaves its role and becomes a tyrant — this happens quite often to it, it is then completely perverted and instead of helping the sadhana, it brings it down. You can easily make this observation. Naturally, one must be able to follow the true working, the activities within oneself.

It is the same thing with the vital. The vital is meant to put in the drive, the realising force, the enthusiasm, the energy necessary for the idea formed by the mind to be transmitted to the body and realised in action. Well, so long as the vital limits itself to this activity, that is, sets all its energy, enthusiasm, strength to work in order to collaborate with the idea, it is very good. But if instead of that, all of a sudden, it is seized by a desire — and this happens to it quite often — and it uses all its qualities to realise, not the higher idea which wanted to manifest, but its own desire, then it steps beyond its zone of action, it gets perverted, it deforms everything and succeeds in creating catastrophes.

Sometimes we do not notice that the adverse forces are attacking us; why don't we?

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You do not notice it! That happens when you are not alert, when you are not attentive, when you are busy with altogether external things, the tiny little things of daily practical life. Then the forces can attack you, enter into you, install themselves without even your noticing it. Most often, they do not attack you directly thus, because if they attack you directly, there is a chance of your feeling it (you may feel uneasy suddenly, that may awaken your attention). They go down into the unconscious and then come up, like that, quietly from below. So you do not know at all what is happening to you. When you are aware of it, it is already there, thoroughly installed, quite comfortably.

Sometimes one cannot distinguish adverse forces from other forces.

That happens when one is quite unconscious.

There are only two cases when this is possible: you are either very unconscious of the movements of your being — you have not studied, you have not observed, you do not know what is happening within you — or you are absolutely insincere, that is, you play the ostrich in order not to see the reality of things: you hide your head, you hide your observation, your knowledge and you say, “It is not there.” But indeed the latter I hope is not in question here. Hence it is simply because one has not the habit of observing oneself that one is so unconscious of what is happening within.

Have you ever practised distinguishing what comes from your mind, what comes from your vital, what comes from your physical?... For it is mixed up; it is mixed up in the outward appearance. If you do not take care to distinguish, it makes a kind of soup, all that together. So it is indistinct and difficult to discover. But if you observe yourself, after some time you see certain things, you feel them to be there, like that, as though they were in your skin; for some other things you feel you would have to go within yourself to find out from where they come;

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for other things, you have to go still further inside, or otherwise you have to rise up a little: it comes from unconsciousness. And there are others; then you must go very deep, very deep to find out from where they come. This is just a beginning.

Simply observe. You are in a certain condition, a certain undefinable condition. Then look: "What! how is it I am like that?" You try to see first if you have fever or some other illness; but it is all right, everything is all right, there's neither headache nor fever, the stomach is not protesting, the heart is functioning as it should, indeed, all's well, you are normal. "Why then am I feeling so uneasy?"... So you go a little further within. It depends on cases. Sometimes you find out immediately: yes, there was a little incident which wasn't pleasant, someone said a word that was not happy or one had failed in his task or perhaps did not know one's lesson very well, the teacher had made a remark. At the time, one did not pay attention properly, but later on, it begins to work, leaves a painful impression. That is the second stage. Afterwards, if nothing happened: "All's well, everything is normal, everything usual, I have nothing to note down, nothing has happened: why then do I feel like that?" Now it begins to be interesting, because one must enter much more deeply within oneself. And then it can be all sorts of things: it may be precisely the expression of an attack that is preparing; it may be a little inner anxiety seeking the progress that has to be made; it may be a premonition that there is somewhere in contact with oneself something not altogether harmonious which one has to change: something one must see, discover, change, on which light is to be put, something that is still there, deep down, and which should no longer be there. Then if you look at yourself very carefully, you find out: "There! I am still like that; in that little corner, there is still something of that kind, not clear: a little selfishness, a little ill-will, something refusing to change." So you see it, you take it by the tip of its nose or by the ear and hold it up in full light: "So, you were hiding! you are hiding? But I don't want you any longer." And then it has to go away.

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This is a great progress.

If this sort of thing happens in the class, if one feels uneasy...

That happens to you in the class? It means you do not listen to your teacher, otherwise it would not happen. If you were very attentive in your class and paid attention to your lesson, that could not happen to you. When you came out of it, then you would feel that, but not in the class. This means that you were dreaming or living within you or following your imagination, but you were not listening to your lessons.... But it is this that's wonderful, my children: when you are learning something, when you are studying, when you are concentrated on your lesson, these things never happen to you. They may happen before, they may happen afterwards; but they won't happen at that time. For if you are quite concentrated, all your energies are concentrated on your study and there is nothing unpleasant there. You understand what you learn and you are interested in what you learn.

Sometimes, one tries to concentrate but one can't.

If truly you can't, then you have only to spend your time in seeking within yourself for the reason why it is so! Then if the teacher asks you a question, you have to tell him: "I am sorry, I was not listening."

You don't like to learn?

Yes

Then how can this happen?

But in some classes, I do not understand.

Then in some classes, you do not like to learn! You can say

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generally, “Yes, yes, I like to learn!” but if one really likes to learn, there isn’t a class in which one could not learn. Surely, whatever the class, there is always something one does not know, one can always learn. You are not a living encyclopaedia! Even if you go over the same book again (this happens, I believe, in some classes), and you may say: “Oh! I have already gone through this book, this is boring”, but that’s simply because you do not want to learn: because certainly if you repeat the same book, it means that you have not learnt it properly the first time and you must take particular care to learn what you have not learnt. Even a book of grammar! I do not say that books of grammar are very exciting, but even a grammar-book becomes interesting if you set out to learn it—even the most abstract rules of grammar. You cannot imagine how amusing it is when you truly want to learn, when you want to understand why it is so; instead of just committing to memory, learning by heart, if you want to understand: what are these words put there? For what idea, what real knowledge are they put there? What do they represent?... Any rule whatsoever is simply a human mental formula of something that exists in itself. Take any rule at all, it shows simply that a few heads have made an effort to formulate in the way most clear to them, most condensed, something which exists in itself. So if one goes behind the words and begins searching for this something—the thing existing in itself, which is there, behind the words—how interesting it becomes! It is throbbing, thrilling! It is like passing through a jungle to discover a new country, like going on an exploration to the North Pole! So, if you do that with the laws of grammar, I assure you nothing in the world can bore you afterwards.

Understand instead of learning.

I admit this asks for a very great concentration. It demands a concentration capable of penetrating, digging a hole into the mental shell and passing through to the other side. And afterwards, it becomes worth the trouble.... You have been pushed against something cold, rigid, hard, unelastic. Then you concen-

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trate, concentrate, concentrate sufficiently until... suddenly you are on the other side, and then you emerge into the light and you understand: "Ah! that's wonderful! Now I understand." A very tiny thing gives you a great joy.

You see it is possible not to get bored at school.

At school one has to finish a course in a year. One must hasten a little at times. Before one has been able to understand a question well, one has to go to the next chapter.

There, my child, I fully agree with you, it is not quite right. But we shall try to change all that; because after all I don't see why one has to finish a book in a year. It is quite arbitrary. One should not leave a chapter until it has been fully grasped; only then take up the next one and so on. And if a chapter is finished, it is finished: and if it is not finished it is not finished.

The truth is that the teacher, instead of basing his course on a text-book, should take the trouble of preparing the course himself. He must know enough and take sufficient pains to prepare his course from day to day, and in this way he will close a subject only when — I do not say when everyone has understood, for that is impossible — but at least when those whom he considers the interesting elements of his class have understood. Then the next subject is taken up. And if that continues, if a particular type of subject extends over two years instead of one or for a year and a half instead of two, it matters little; because it is his own production, his own course written by him and he writes according to the need of his class. That is my conception of teaching. Now, it has indeed its difficulties. But that is the true way of working, because by taking a book and following it, particularly a book which may very well be not at all suited to the students.... I do not say that a particular course could suit all, it is impossible to satisfy everybody. But there are those who want to make an effort; it is these that you must consider. Those

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who are lazy, somnolent or indolent — well, you must leave them to their laziness or somnolence or indolence. If they want to sleep all their lives, let them sleep until something shakes them up sufficiently and awakens them! But what is interesting in a class is the section that wishes to learn, those who really want to learn and it is for them that the class should be taken. Don't you see, the present method of education is a kind of levelling; everyone must be at the same stage. So those who have their heads higher up have them cut off, and those who are too small are pushed up from below. But that doesn't do any good. One must be concerned only with those who come up, the others will take what they can. And indeed I do not see any necessity for everybody knowing the same thing — for that is not normal. But those who want to know and who can know, those who must work, these should be given all possible means for working, must be pushed up as much as possible, must always be given new food. They are the hungry ones, they must be fed.... Ah! If I had the time I would take a class. That would interest me much, to show how it must be done. Only one cannot be everywhere at the same time!

There you are, my children, now it is very late. Good night.