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This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 14, "Some Explanations".

"Q: What is the place of occult power in Yoga?"

"A: To know and use the subtle forces of the supraphysical planes is part of the Yoga."

"Q: What is the meaning of occult endeavour and power?"

"A: It depends on the context. Usually it would mean power to use the secret forces of Nature and an endeavour by means of these forces. But 'occult' may mean something else in another context."

"Q: Has every Yogi to pass through occult endeavour?"

"A: No, everyone has not the capacity. Those who do not have it, must wait till it is given to them."

That's the end of the book!

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo is speaking about occult endeavour here and says that those who don't have the capacity must wait till it is given to them. Can't they get it through practice?

No. That is, if it is latent in someone, it can be developed by practice. But if one doesn't have occult power, he may try for fifty years, he won't get anywhere. Everybody cannot have occult power. It is as though you were asking whether everybody could be a musician, everybody could be a painter, everybody could... Some can, some can't. It is a question of temperament.

What is the difference between occultism and mysticism?

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They are not at all the same thing.

Mysticism is a more or less emotive relation with what one senses to be a divine power — that kind of highly emotional, affective, very intense relation with something invisible which is or is taken for the Divine. That is mysticism.

Occultism is exactly what he has said: it is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science. It is altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry, for it is the same kind of knowledge as the knowledge of chemistry for material things. It is a knowledge of invisible forces, their different vibrations, their interrelations, the combinations which can be made by bringing them together and the power one can exercise over them. It is absolutely scientific; and it ought to be learnt like a science; that is, one cannot practise occultism as something emotional or something vague and imprecise. You must work at it as you would do at chemistry, and learn all the rules or find them if there is nobody to teach you. But it is at some risk to yourself that you can find them. There are combinations here as explosive as certain chemical combinations.

Is occultism necessary in this life?

In this life? That depends upon what one wants to do. You mean in the life of yoga? Not at all necessary. And besides, as he says, there are many who are not gifted, who don't have the faculty. Lots of people, as soon as they have the least experience, the least experience, for instance when they just begin to come out of their body, are panic-stricken, and this indeed is something very difficult to cure. It can be cured if one has a strong will and a great self-mastery. But many people are not able to dissociate their states of being. If they dissociate them, something goes wrong, their body suffers; while there are others who go out, take a walk, return. For them this is quite natural. Usually, those who are interested in this — unless

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it is only a kind of mental curiosity — are also gifted. They may not know it but they can be taught. But these things have to be practised with precaution. For instance — I am going to give you an example: as soon as one goes out of the body, no matter how slightly, and even just mentally, well, that part of the mind which controls the functioning goes out; and the automatic side of the mind which makes or produces movements or glandular secretions, that whole automatic side, you see, remains without the protection and control of the conscious, thinking part. Well, in the atmosphere there are always numerous little entities, very tiny, usually originating from human disintegrations, which are like physical microbes, some kind of microbes of the vital. They are more visible and have a will of their own. One can't say they are wicked but they are full of mischief. They like to have a good time and enjoy themselves at people's expense. So, as soon as they see that you are not sufficiently protected, they get hold of the automatic mind and bring upon you all sorts of quite unpleasant things — as, for example, some people swallow their tongue when in a trance; this suffocates them if they don't take care. Others bite their tongue; sometimes this hurts very badly. All sorts of things like this may happen to you — which means that normally you should never enter into a trance without having somebody nearby to watch over you, and not only watch just physically but... watch with the conscious power of preventing these little entities from getting hold of your nervous centres which are not protected by the conscious Presence. This is a general rule. There are greater dangers than that. When one goes out of the body materially — and nothing but the contact of a link remains, you understand, it is a kind of link like a thread of light joining the being that has gone out with the one that remains behind — if this link is protected, nothing happens. But if it is not protected, there may be adverse forces, not only full of mischief but with much ill-will also, which could come and cut it. And then, once it is cut, you

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may try as hard as you like, but you cannot get back into the body.

One dies?

Yes, after a while. Which means that all this is not at all a joke, you understand, or just a matter of having fun or something one can do simply to amuse oneself. It must be done in the right way and in the required conditions, and with great care. And then, one thing is *absolutely* essential, absolutely: you must not touch this occult science if you have the least fear in you. For instance, if in your dreams you meet terrible things and get frightened, you should not practise occultism. If, on the other hand, the most frightful dreams you have leave you absolutely calm, and even at times amused and very much interested, if you can handle all that and know how to get out of the difficulty in every circumstance, then that means you have the ability and can do it. Some people are very brave warriors in their dreams. When they meet enemies, they know how to fight; they know not only how to defend themselves, but also to conquer; they are full of ardour, energy, courage; these indeed are the true candidates for occultism. But those who rush back into their body as fast as a rat into its hole, they should surely not touch it. And then, you must also have an infinite patience; because just as it takes many years to learn how to handle the different chemical substances, just as you have to work for long periods without getting any visible results when you want to discover the least thing that's new, so in occultism you may try for years together and not have the least experience. And that becomes very monotonous and hardly interesting; and there is always in man that kind of physical mind, practical and positive, which keeps on telling you, "Why are you trying? You see quite well there is nothing in it, these are all stories people tell you; why are you working for nothing? You are wasting your time. There is nothing at all in it, it is all imagination." It is very difficult

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to keep one's conviction and faith when there is nothing upon which to found them.

Sweet Mother, are religious exercises very important for those who have an ordinary consciousness?

Religious exercises? I don't know! What do you mean by religious exercises?

Japa, etc.

Oh, those things! If it helps you, it is all right. If it doesn't help you, it is just... This is one of those altogether relative things. It is altogether relative. Its value lies only in the effect it has on you and the extent to which you believe in it. If it helps you to concentrate, it is good. The ordinary consciousness always does it just through superstition, with the idea that "If I do this, if I go to the temple or church once a week, if I offer prayers, something very fine will happen to me." This is superstition, spread all over the world, but it has no value at all from the spiritual point of view.

Mother, for instance, on certain days of the year we have Lakshmi-puja, Mahakali-puja, and all that....

That's because it amuses you, my children!

But on these days you give us blessings also!

Yes, because that amuses you! (*Laughter*) Eh?

You give us blessings only to amuse us?

Come now! It pleases you; I said "amuses"; it's... I was disrespectful; but it's because it pleases you.

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Mahakali day, for instance...

Yes, yes, sometimes Kali comes three days earlier or four days later or at some other time in the year. She is not necessarily there on that very day; at times, to make you happy, I call her a little. (*Laughter*) In any case, it is not I who believe in these things!

In all religious monuments, in monuments considered the most... well, as belonging to the highest religion, whether in France or any other country or Japan — it was never the same temples or churches nor the same gods, and yet my experience was everywhere almost the same, with very small differences — I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable — in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people's devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this thing. But they had their faith which could change that evil thing into something good in them; they had their faith. So, truly, if I had gone and told them, "Do you think you are praying to God? It is an enormous vital spider that's feeding upon all your forces!", that would really not have been very charitable. And that's how it is most of the time, almost everywhere; it is a vital force which is there, for these vital entities feed upon the vibration of human emotions, and very few people, very few, an insignificant number, go to church or temple with a true religious feeling, that is, not to pray and beg for something from God but to offer themselves, give

thanks, aspire, give themselves. There is hardly one in a million who does that. So they do not have the power of changing the atmosphere. Perhaps when they are there, they manage to get across, break through and go somewhere and touch something divine. But the large majority of people who go only because of superstition, egoism and self-interest, create an atmosphere of this kind, and that is what you breathe in when you go to a church or temple. Only, as you go there with a very good feeling, you tell yourself, "Oh, what a quiet place for meditation!"

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. I remember painting in a basilica of Venice, and while I was working, in the confessional a priest was hearing the confession of a poor woman. Well, it was truly a frightful sight! I don't know what the priest was like, what his character was, he could not be seen — you know, don't you, that they are not seen. They are shut up in a box and receive the confession through a grille. There was such a dark and sucking power over him, and that poor woman was in such a state of fearful terror that it was truly painful to see it. And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon. Besides, in the invisible world hardly any beings love to be worshipped, except those of the vital. These, as I said, are quite pleased by it. And then, it gives them importance. They are puffed up with pride and feel very happy, and when they can get a herd of people to worship them they are quite satisfied.

But if you take real divine beings, this is not at all something they value. They do not like to be worshipped. No, it does not give them any special pleasure at all! Don't think they are happy, for they have no pride. It is because of pride that a man likes

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to be worshipped; if a man has no pride he doesn't like to be worshipped; and if, for instance, they see a good intention or a fine feeling or a movement of unselfishness or enthusiasm, a joy, a spiritual joy, these things have for them an infinitely greater value than prayers and acts of worship and pujas...

I assure you what I am telling you is very serious: if you seat a real god in a chair and oblige him to remain there all the while you are doing puja, he may perhaps have a little fun watching you do it, but it certainly gives him no satisfaction. None at all! He does not feel either flattered or happy or glorified by your puja. You must get rid of that idea. There is an entire domain between the spiritual and the material worlds which belongs to vital beings, and it is this domain that is full of all these things, because these beings live upon that, are happy with it, and it immediately gives them importance; and the one who has the greatest number of believers, devotees and worshippers is the happiest and the most puffed up. But how can anyone imagine that the gods could value... The gods — I am speaking of the true gods, even those of the Overmind, though they are still a bit... well, so-so... they seem to have taken on many human defects, but still, despite all that, they really have a higher consciousness — it does not please them at all. An act of true goodness, intelligence, unselfishness or a subtle understanding or a very sincere aspiration are for them infinitely higher than a small religious ceremony. Infinitely! There is no comparison. Religious ceremony! For example, there are so many of these entities called Kali — who are given, besides, quite terrible appearances — so many are even placed in houses as the family-goddess; they are full of a terrible vital force! I knew people who were so frightened of the Kali they had at home that indeed they trembled to make the least mistake, for when catastrophes came they thought it was Kali who sent them! It is a frightful thing, thought. I know them, those entities. I know them very well, but they are vital beings, vital forms which, so to say, are given a form by human thought, and what forms! And to think that

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men worship such terrible and monstrous things; and what's more that these poor gods are given, are paid the compliment of believing that it is...

From this point of view, it is good that for some time men get out of this religious atmosphere, so full of fear, and this sort of blind, superstitious submission of which the hostile forces have taken a dreadful advantage. The period of denial, positivism, is from this viewpoint quite indispensable in order to free men from superstition. It is only when one comes out of that and the abject submission to monstrous vital forces that one can rise to truly spiritual heights and there become the collaborator and true instrument of the forces of Truth, the real Consciousness, the true Power.

One must leave all this far behind before one can climb higher.

Mother, the other day you said that you go everywhere during the night, didn't you? Then you know everything that happens in the Ashram....

I act as a policeman!

And then, Mother, what is the difference between what you know in this way and what you know physically? That is, why is it necessary for all the...

Do you suppose I can go everywhere and see everything? Unfortunately, I have only one head, two arms and two legs, and all that would take a long time; I would be spending my time running about everywhere.

No! I mean since you already know what is going on in the Ashram, why is it necessary for the heads of departments to come and give you the information?

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No, no, they do not come to give me information: they come to ask me for orders. That's not the same thing. And if I were to give them my orders in the night, they would not hear me, or if by chance they heard something, it would probably be the contrary! They would do any odd thing according to their own fancy. No, no! Information? That's because it pleases them to say what they have to say. If I were to tell them at once, "It is all right, I know, I know!"... At times I do that, when I am in a great hurry; but they are quite shocked and think, "How can she know? She has not asked me!" They alone can give me the exact information, according to them. If they don't explain things to me, I don't know them. That's what they think, so I have to let them explain. Sometimes, if it takes too long, and I don't have much time, I tell them, "It's all right, it's all right, I know it; come on, come to the point, what do you want to know?" Well, that upsets them a great deal.

For example, Mother, if one has done something...

Bad.

Yes.

Sometimes good, eh?

*No, mostly bad; then one thinks, "Mother knows it."
Instead of that, wouldn't it be better to come and tell
you about it?*

Yes. Because here there is... Note that if one has done something bad, if one has done something one knows very well should not be done; for instance, if one tells oneself, "Mother knows about it, I don't need to tell her", then one takes that in. One carefully shuts a door upon it and then keeps it in one's heart, or elsewhere. While if one doesn't think of all that... one feels

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uneasy, something turns there inside, it is not pleasant... “Well, I am going to tell Mother about it.” When you set out you have to make a great effort, eh? There’s a lump in the throat, the tongue goes dry, and then it is so difficult to find your words — truly, one doesn’t know how to go about it, eh! But now you have resolved, you make a big effort: you draw out the words one by one, like that, with much effort and finally speak, and you try to say it as exactly as possible. My child, that opens a door as wide as this, and I can enter straight into the psychic being, just through this effort of sincerity that you have made. And then, when I enter, I pour in all the light, all the force, the will, the consciousness, all the resolution necessary, so that you cannot repeat what you have done; much... as when too much is poured into a cup, it overflows — there is much that overflows, but all the same a little remains and this little works. And if you repeat this effort once again, until you feel — well, that you have nothing more to say, for there is now nothing more to hide — then that’s very fine, you have made great progress.

Sweet Mother, in class when we ask you questions, at times they come quite easily, automatically, and at times we hesitate...

You know, most of the questions are badly worded, because you really do not know what you want to know. I mean, you are not quite clearly aware of the thing you want to know. There’s a grouping of words in your head, not the consciousness of an idea trying to become clear; there are only words knocking about in your brain which you cannot manage to fit in, so as to be able to understand what they mean. So you cannot speak easily, because you do not think. It does not proceed from thought. It is a kind of automatic thing coming from the brain; if you have a clear awareness of an experience you want to state accurately or some knowledge you want to arrange in your head, then you can state it very clearly and at the same

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time your brain is ready to receive the answer; but if, merely with the clash of words — words come like that, don't they? You connect three or four words and then launch an idea.... I answer, because I think there will always be someone... that it could drop into a brain somewhere; but otherwise, most of the time, the head is not ready to understand even what I say. You must think well and be well concentrated and see very clearly what you want to ask before asking. Otherwise, it is not the part of the mind which can understand that asks. It is just a surface which is in a perpetual movement of words linking up more or less aptly, coming and going and passing on, and it is this which speaks, it's this which asks and this, indeed, cannot understand.

How many times have I told you things — the same thing, and if I ask you about it, sometimes just a week later, you do not remember it! How many times you ask me the same question, because you asked the question but were not at all in a condition to understand the answer. Nothing remains inside, these are only passing words, just that. It's as when you learn a lesson by heart: they are only passing words. There is nothing, there's nothing which enters within, gets settled somewhere in the real thought, and so it has no effect and does not help you to understand anything at all. The proof: how many times I have asked you, said to you, "But indeed I have told you this"; you don't even remember it!

It has often happened, hasn't it? — but usually with the very small children — and well, even with you it has sometimes happened, that someone has asked me a question, I have answered. Another person asks me the same question in different words. If you had listened to what I just said, I have already replied to what you are asking me! All that goes by like that, you know, altogether passingly like that, absolutely in the superficial thought, nothing enters within and gets settled in an inner understanding. That is why you cannot ask questions: it is because you don't think... only words playing about....

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Mother, one last question: Tomorrow we are having sports. So...

Now, if we were to offer a fine little superstitious prayer to ask that it does not rain! (*Laughter*) But you know, in the clouds, the wind, there are little entities. These entities belong to the vital domain; they are not all wicked, they are often very mischievous. Most of the time they obey the laws of Nature of a much vaster and more general order, but some of these entities are half-independent and bring about local rain, etc. Perhaps (we said that they like prayers, these small entities), perhaps if we tell them, “I beg of you, be a little kind, tomorrow we have our opening, don’t be up to mischief, wait till the evening to send rain if you want to do so, don’t come and disturb our little session”, perhaps this will have some effect!

Do you remember how when there was no rain, people told us that if we prayed, we would bring rain? And what a good time we had one day trying that out — calling the rain — and it rained? It really rained afterwards. Well, that’s how it happens. This domain is that of the vital.

Now say what you wanted to say!

Mother, especially on the day we have an event, we call you a lot. Then, Mother, isn’t it...

Yes, yes, my children.

Mother, then it is not bad to call you in order to satisfy one’s own purpose?

Own purpose? You are here for that. If you call me in order to do things as well as you can, there’s nothing wrong. But, it is true, you know, when I come back from there, at the end of the session, well, I am drained. I have to rest.... It draws and draws, sometimes terribly.... The performances we have on the

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1st and 2nd of December or other events of this kind, draw, draw, draw.... After a while it is made up for again. It isn't serious but it's true that it draws.

But I have no objection; on the contrary, I myself tell you, "My children, if you are doing something difficult, call me, call me." No, not in order to come first or gain a victory, but so that nothing unpleasant happens to you. Call me so that things may go as well as possible, not for showing off but for the joy of doing well. And you may also call in order to do the thing as an offering, and then it becomes very good.

Sweet Mother, isn't there another way of calling, rather than drawing?

Yes, my child, but that's much more difficult. Yes, there is another way. There is a true way... it is more difficult.

But this one is all right, I have nothing to say against it, it is all right. I prefer this to having the experience, when looking at people, of seeing a little black cloud turning around their head, of feeling that there's going to be an accident, something that's going to happen, and trying to break through that to give protection, and finding myself before someone who is absolutely closed up, unconscious and convinced that he alone is capable of protecting himself and... not being able to avoid the accident! That has happened! This is much more unpleasant for me.

I prefer to be called....

So, no rain tomorrow, yes!

Au revoir.