3 March 1954

This talk is based upon Mother’s essay “The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It”.

_Sweet Mother, I did not understand the ending, the last paragraph: “There is yet another way to conquer the fear of death, but it is within the reach of so few that it is mentioned here only as a matter of information. It is to enter into the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive, and then to return from this region and re-enter the physical body, resuming the course of material existence with full knowledge. But for that one must be an initiate.”_ 

What do you want to say? You have not understood what I meant?... I am not surprised! Has anyone understood?...

This is a domain about which I have so far refrained from speaking to you, for one must be already very conscious of oneself, have a good mastery over one’s reflexes and be above all fear, precisely — above all possibility of fear, in order to be able to enter upon it. It is a knowledge which in the modern world is hardly recognised as scientific, but it is scientific in the sense that it follows some definite processes and that if the circumstances are correctly reproduced, the same results are obtained. It is a progressive science and one can devote oneself to it, can make quite a regular progress, as logical as in all the sciences that are acknowledged as such in modern times. But this one concerns a reality or certain realities which do not belong to the most material domain. One needs special capacities and a special development to be conscious in that domain, for it escapes our ordinary senses.

We have subtle senses; even as we have a physical body, we have other more subtle bodies which also have senses, and
much more refined senses, much more precise and much more powerful than our physical senses. But naturally, as it is not customary in modern education to work in these domains, these things generally escape our ordinary knowledge. Yet children spontaneously live a great deal in this domain. They see things which are as real for them as physical things, they speak about them—and they are usually told that they are stupid because they speak of things others don’t see but which are as true for them, as tangible and real as what can be seen by everyone. Their dreams have an intensity and a capital importance in their life, and it is only with intensive mental growth that those capacities diminish. Now, there are people who are fortunate to be born with their inner senses naturally developed, and nothing can prevent them from remaining awake. If these people meet in good time someone who can help them in a methodical development, they can become very interesting instruments for the study and discovery of this occult world. In all ages there have been initiatory schools which took up these particularly talented people and educated them in this kind of science. These schools were always more or less secret or hidden, for ordinary men are quite intolerant of those capacities which are beyond them—and disturb them. But there were fine periods in human history when these schools were recognised and much appreciated and respected, as in ancient Egypt, ancient Chaldea, ancient India, and even partially in Greece and Rome. There were always schools of initiation, even in mediaeval Europe, but there they had to be very carefully hidden, for they were pursued and persecuted by the official Christian religion, and if perchance it was discovered that such and such men or women were practising these occult sciences, they were tied to the stake and burnt alive as sorcerers!... In our times this knowledge is almost lost; there are only a very few people who have it; but with mental growth the intolerance also has gone. People don’t like these things very much—they are disturbed, annoyed by them—but still they are obliged to admit that these things are not crimes and
people practising occultism are no longer burnt at the stake or imprisoned. Only, there are many people who claim to know but there are very few who do know. In any case, before entering upon this study, one must have, as I told you at the beginning, a very great self-mastery, must have attained a kind of abnegation, a self-forgetfulness, an egolessness, a disinterestedness and sense of sacrifice which enables one to practise this without any danger. For, if you keep all egoistic or passionate movements, full of desires, you are sure, in the practice of this science, to meet with accidents which may have fatal consequences. As I said at the beginning, the absolutely indispensable condition is to have an intrepidity which does not allow any fear to enter into you. For this has been very often said, and it is quite true, that when you enter the invisible realm, the first things you meet are literally terrifying. If you have no fear, there is no danger, but the least fear puts you into danger. So, before anybody at all was allowed to practise this science, for a very long time, sometimes for years, the novice was submitted to a discipline which gave him the assurance that he could practise it without experiencing the least fear and without any danger. That is why, my children, I have never spoken to you about it. This article was not specially for you — the Bulletin goes to the whole world and it can reach here and there people who are prepared. But still, because it is written, I am telling you about it this evening, and I tell you that if anyone among you feels a special inclination, possesses special faculties and is ready to overcome every weakness, all egoism and all fear, I am ready to help him on the way and reveal these secrets to him. Voilà!

Now, you will have to be a little more mature for me to undertake this task.

When will we be ready, Sweet Mother?

That depends upon you, my children! I practised occultism when I was twelve. But I must say I had no fear, I feared nothing. One
goes out of one’s body, but is tied by something resembling an almost imperceptible thread; if the thread is cut, it is all over. Life also is ended. One goes out, and then can begin seeing the world he has entered. And usually the first things one sees, as I said, are terrifying. Because, for you the air is empty, there is nothing in it — you see something blue or white, there are clouds, sunbeams, and all that is very pretty — but when you have the other sight, you see that it is filled with a multitude of small formations which are all residues of desires or of mental deformation and these swarm inside it, you see, in a mass, and this is not always very pretty. At times it is extremely ugly. This assails you; it comes, presses upon you, attacks you; and if you are afraid, it takes absolutely frightful forms. Naturally, if you do not flinch, if you can look upon all that with a healthy curiosity, you perceive that it is not at all so terrifying. It may not be pretty, but it is not terrifying.

I could tell you a little story.

I knew a Danish painter who was quite talented and who wanted to learn occultism. He had come here, you know, had met Sri Aurobindo; he had even done his portrait. That was during the war, and when he came back to France, he wanted me to teach him a little of this occult science. I taught him how to go out of his body etc., and the controls, all that. And I told him that, above all, the first thing was not to have any fear. Then, one day he came to tell me that he had had a dream the night before. But it was not a dream, for, as I have told you, he knew a bit about how to go out of his body, and he had gone out consciously. And once he had gone out he was looking around seeing what was to be seen, when suddenly he saw a formidable tiger coming towards him, drawing close with the most frightful intentions.... He remembered what I had told him, that he must not be afraid. So he began to say to himself, “There is no danger, I am protected, nothing can happen to me, I am wrapped up in the power of protection”, and he began looking at the tiger in that way, without any fear. And as he went on looking at
Questions and Answers

the tiger, immediately it began to grow smaller and smaller and smaller and — it became a tiny little cat! *(Laughter)*

*What does the tiger represent?*

It was probably... That day he had become angry with somebody, he had lost his temper and entertained bad thoughts; he had hoped that something very unpleasant would happen to this person. Now, in occultism there is the “rebound”. You send out a bad thought, it returns to you as an attack. That is exactly one of the reasons why you must have a complete control over your feelings, sensations, thoughts, for if you become angry with someone or think badly of him, or if, still worse, you wish him ill, well, in your very dream you see this person coming with an extreme violence to attack you. Then, if you do not know these things, you say, “Why, I was right in having bad thoughts against him!” But in fact, it is not at all that. It is your own thought that comes back to you. And the person may be absolutely unaware of all that has happened, for — and this is one of the commonest laws in occultism — if you make a formation, for instance a mental formation that an accident or something unpleasant should happen to a certain person and you send out this formation, if it so happens that this person is in a very high state of consciousness, does not at all wish anything bad, is quite indifferent and disinterested in the affair, the formation will come up against his atmosphere and instead of entering will rebound upon the one who has made it. In this way serious accidents have taken place. There were certain people who practised that low deformation of occultism which is called magic and they had made formations through magic against someone. But this person happened to be far above this and could not be touched by those formations. So they returned upon those people, fatally. If they had made a formation of death, it would have been they who died.

I don’t know whether you remember or not the story of the
stones which fell in Sri Aurobindo’s house? Everybody knows it, so I won’t narrate it.

What happens to this formation once it has worked ill?
Does it continue?

No. When a formation of this kind acts, it goes with a definite purpose. It has been made with a definite purpose. It acts and once its action is over, it disappears, it has no longer any raison d’être. It was a formation for a particular action. When the action is accomplished, the formation dissolves. There are many other kinds of formations with more or less durable lives. I tell you it is a science — you cannot learn chemistry in an hour! But still, in a case like that, when the formation returns and strikes the one who has made it, it is finished. Its action is accomplished and comes to an end.

Everybody doesn’t know the story of the stones.... You narrated it only to the little children, Sweet Mother.

I narrated it to the little ones....

Yes, but the older ones were not there! (Laughter)

It is nine o’clock. You have no other questions? If I tell you the story...

Sweet Mother, this morning you told us you would narrate...

Look here, I had another. How many stories can I tell you!

Well, the other one is very short. It is also interesting. It is about curing oneself of fear. (Perhaps Pavitra knows the name!)... There was a French scientist who had written a book in which he narrated an experience he had had in the Jardin des
Questions and Answers

_Plantes_. He wanted to know to what extent reason can have an effect over reflexes. I don’t remember now — for years I knew his name; I have forgotten it, but still the story remains. He was a well-known scientist and he has written about his experiment in a book. It is often quoted as an example. He was very much interested in knowing to what extent reason, intelligence with clear knowledge, could have an effect upon reflexes, that is, upon movements which come up spontaneously from the subconscious, automatic movements, and he made this experiment: he went to the _Jardin des Plantes_ in Paris where not only plants but animals also are kept. And among these animals there were huge snakes. There was a snake there (I knew it, that snake), which had the reputation of having a very bad temper. That is, it could be made angry very easily. It was a very large snake and was very beautiful; it was black. And the scientist had been told by the keeper that this snake was very aggressive. These snakes are enclosed in huge glass cases, the glass being sufficiently thick to prevent any accident, as you may well imagine. So, he went to the cage of this serpent just when it was hungry (it had not eaten; when they have eaten they sleep). It had not eaten, so it was active. And he stood there in front of the cage, quite close to the glass and began exciting the snake — I don’t remember now what he did — until it started getting angry. Then it coiled up and shot out like a released spring against the glass, against the face of that gentleman who was on the other side, and the man — who knew very well that the glass was there and nothing could happen to him — jumped back! And he repeated the experiment several times, and not once could he control his movement of recoil. He recoiled — every time the snake jumped he recoiled! (_Laughter_

So he has spoken of his experiment. But he lacked one element of knowledge, for he did not know that the physical movement was accompanied by a considerable vital projection of the nervous force of the snake, and that it was this that affected him. It was because of this. He tried in vain to remain
stiff, to tell himself, “But after all there is no danger, nothing can happen to me, there is the glass; why do I recoil?” (Laughter) It was that which came and gave him a shock and he jumped back.

There you are, now au revoir, my children. The story of the stones for another day. It is too late now.