

22 December 1954

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 3, "In Difficulty".

When a being is possessed by a hostile force, what becomes of his psychic?

It depends on the degree of the possession. Usually it is something progressive. First there is an influence under which one comes, and comes in a fragmentary way, not even totally in his being, but in certain parts and for a time. This is the first stage. The second: the influence becomes permanent and there is one part of the being which deteriorates, which is constantly under this influence and expresses it. After this, the being which has cast this influence tries to enter that part. Then, usually, this produces a conflict, a kind of inner battle. People have fits, sometimes even nervous morbid fits. In trying to resist, the two parts of the being come constantly into conflict, and this produces great imbalance, even physical imbalance. But if one doesn't know how to resist and doesn't succeed in shaking off the hold, then gradually the being that has seized upon a part of the person acts like an octopus and spreads its tentacles like that, slowly and everywhere; and finally it is a total possession. At the moment of the total possession, either the possessed person becomes completely unbalanced or he becomes a kind of monster and his psychic being leaves him.

These cases are extremely rare, fortunately. Usually, in the human being the psychic is strong enough to be able to resist, and the most frequent case is that of constant conflict between the two parts, until the psychic being, if it is strong enough and knows how to lean on a greater strength than its own, is capable of rejecting this influence and freeing itself. It is only

in an extreme case of a total possession that the psychic being goes away. But these are extremely rare cases, extremely rare. It sometimes happens that a child is still-born, that is, just at the moment of birth it dies or a few minutes later, or an hour or two later, you see, just at that time. In these cases it happens that it is the psychic being which has decided not to use this body. But if, for example, the doctor who is looking after the case is a clever man or the nurse a clever person and they can bring back life into the body by artificial respiration or such means, most often it is a hostile being which gets hold of this body. There have been cases like that, children who seemed to be dead, that is, the psychic being had left the body, and before it had died completely, a vital being had entered and taken its place. Such cases have been known. And these beings are demons. In life they become veritable demons. There are not many of them.

There are beings of the vital, but of a higher kind, emanations of Asuras, for example, who have decided for one reason or another that they would try to be converted, not to be anti-divine, and manage to enter into relation with the Divine. They know that the best way is to identify themselves with a human body in order to be under the control of a psychic being. And they incarnate in human bodies, but not with the intention of driving out the psychic being, on the contrary, to try to submit to the influence of the psychic being and be converted by it. These cases also are not frequent, but still they have been known, and in these cases these human beings are gifted with very exceptional capacities, but usually they also have very exceptional difficulties, because the power which has incarnated in them is one which was, at least, if it is not still so, a hostile power; and, you see, it is difficult to get rid of all these movements of revolt immediately; sometimes it takes a whole lifetime to succeed in doing it.

Some of these asuric beings have tried to convert themselves and not succeeded. They ought to have left the body they had

Questions and Answers

chosen, because they could not convert themselves. It was too difficult a task for them, it demanded too great an effort.

But all these cases about which I have just spoken to you are very rare ones, you see. We can't say that such things happen and are met with at every turn: a gentleman who is the incarnation of an adverse force or another who is possessed. Such cases are very rare, very rare.

But the case of an influence — being under an influence and expressing it — this, unfortunately, is very frequent, especially with people who undertake yoga without being sufficiently purified beforehand, or otherwise with egoistic intentions; to people who begin to do yoga for reasons of ambition or vanity it happens very often that they put themselves under the influence of certain adverse forces.

And there are also many people who are under certain influences in a way... how to put it?... one can't call it accidental, but... for example, there are psychic beings who choose a certain environment to incarnate in because they think that there they will have the experiences they want, and owing to some circumstances in this environment there is a hostile influence at work; so the body they put on is to a certain extent under this hostile influence and they have to fight against that terribly all their life. They can at a particular moment, as I said — if they know how to rely on greater forces than their own — they can conquer and gain a great victory. It is a great victory to get rid of the influence of an adverse force. It is truly a victory which goes beyond the individual's own person and has a repercussion on the whole terrestrial state. Each victory gained like this by an individual over a hostile force influencing him, is a long step forward to the day when the earth will be completely free of the presence of hostile forces. It represents a great progress for the earth.

Sweet Mother, how can the hostile forces be converted?

Well, if they want to, why can't they? There is nothing in

the universe which doesn't have one single origin — that is, a supreme origin — the hostile forces like everything else; and if they give up their revolt and separation and aspire to return to their source, they can very well be converted. It may require much more effort from them than is necessary for a human being to change his defects, that of course is obvious. It is a much greater effort and, above all, much deeper, because the origin of their revolt is very deep; it is not superficial. But still, they can manage it. They have the power also; these are very powerful beings who, if they resolve to be converted, can do it; and then they become some of the most wonderful instruments for the divine work. The very ones who were some of the greatest adversaries.

I am looking for someone who told me that she would ask me a question. It is Sujata. Where is she perched? At the end of the world! I shall never be able to hear her. What did you want to ask?

Could I ask you another question? Is mental imbalance due to the same cause, Sweet Mother?

(Pavitra, repeating) *Is mental imbalance due to the same cause?*

Very often, but not always. Mental imbalance can be due to many different causes. One of them may be simply a physical structure which is defective, a cerebral insufficiency. Now, one may say that this cerebral insufficiency is probably the expression of an inner vital imbalance. But in the case of cerebral insufficiency it is usually hereditary or organic, still... that is, something produced at the time of conception. So one can't say that it is due to an additional influence: it was an influence which acted before birth, and the one who suffers from this mental imbalance is not necessarily under a direct adverse influence. It can be a consequence of malformation.

Now, when people are divided in their mind, and in one part of their mind aspire for the truth and transformation and

Questions and Answers

in another don't want them, and not only resist but revolt — which happens often — this indeed creates a terrible inner cerebral struggle, first mental and then cerebral, and this may bring about a serious mental imbalance.

There are cases in which it is precisely the opening to a suggestion, an adverse influence, an opening which is the result of a wrong movement — a movement of revolt or of hatred or of violent desire. One can, in a wrong movement, open oneself — in a rage, for example — one can open to an adverse force and bring in an influence which could end up by a possession. At the beginning these things are relatively easy to cure if there is a conscious part of the being and a very strong will to get rid of this bad movement and this influence. One succeeds easily enough, relatively speaking, if the aspiration is sincere; but if one looks on the thing with complacency and tells oneself, “Ah, it is like that, it can't be otherwise”, then this becomes dangerous. One must not tolerate the enemy in the place. As soon as one notices his presence, one must throw him out very far, as far as one can, pitilessly.

Sweet Mother, to be pure means what?

To be pure, what does it mean? One is truly perfectly pure only when the whole being, in all its elements and all its movements, adheres fully, exclusively, to the divine Will. This indeed is total purity. It does not depend on any moral or social law, any mental convention of any kind. It depends exclusively on this: when all the elements and all the movements of the being adhere exclusively and totally to the divine Will.

Now, there are stages, there are degrees. For example, insincerity, which is one of the greatest impurities, always arises from the fact that a movement or a set of movements, an element of the being or a number of elements, want to follow their own will and not be the expression of the divine Will. So this produces in the being either a revolt or a falsehood. I don't mean that one tells

lies, but I mean that one is in a state of falsehood, of insincerity. And then, the consequences are more or less serious and more or less extensive according to the gravity of the movement itself and its importance. But these, if one sees from the point of view of purity, these are the real impurities.

For example, if you take your stand on a moral viewpoint — which is itself altogether wrong from the spiritual point of view — there are people who apparently lead an altogether perfectly moral life, who conform to all the social laws, all the customs, the moral conventions, and who are a mass of impurity — from the spiritual point of view these beings are profoundly impure. On the other hand there are some poor people who do things... who are born, for instance, with a sense of freedom, and do things which are not considered very respectable from the social or moral point of view, and who can be in a state of inner aspiration and inner sincerity which makes them infinitely purer than the others. This is one of the big difficulties. As soon as one speaks of these things, there arises the deformation produced in the consciousness by all the social and moral conventions. As soon as you speak of purity, a moral monument comes in front of you which completely falsifies your notion. And note that it is infinitely easier to be moral from the social point of view than to be moral from the spiritual point of view. To be moral from the social viewpoint one has only to take good care to do nothing which is not approved of by others; this may be somewhat difficult, but still it is not impossible; and one may be, as I said, a monument of insincerity and impurity while doing this; whereas to be pure from the spiritual point of view means a vigilance, a consciousness, a sincerity that stand all tests.

Now, I may put you on your guard against something — I think it is precisely in this very book that Sri Aurobindo has spoken about it — about people who live in their vital consciousness and say, “I indeed am above moral laws, I follow a higher law, I am free from all moral laws.” And they say this because they want to indulge in all irregularities. These people, then, have a

Questions and Answers

double impurity: they have spiritual impurity and in addition social impurity. And these usually have a very good opinion of themselves, and they assert their wish to live their life with an unequalled impudence. But such people we don't want.

Yet usually the people whom I have found most difficult to convert are very respectable people. I am sorry, but I have had much more difficulty with respectable people than with those who were not so, for they had such a good opinion of themselves that it was impossible to open them. But the true thing *is* difficult. That is to say, one must be very vigilant and very self-controlled, very patient, and have a never-failing goodwill. One must not neglect having a small dose of humility, a sufficient one, and one must never be satisfied with the sincerity one has. One must always want more.

(*To a child*) What do you have to say, you? Nothing? Nobody has anything to say? Where is he, the other boy? He is not in his place. He is not in his place, he isn't there. He was afraid I would ask him questions. So then, nothing more? Nobody has anything to say?

"To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith." How does it discourage the faith?

The faith spoken about is faith in the divine Grace and the final success of the undertaking. You have begun the yoga and have faith that you will go through to the end of your yoga. But if you spend your time looking at all that prevents you from advancing, then finally you say, "Ah, I shall never succeed! It is not possible. If it goes on in this way, I shall never get there." So this is to lose one's faith. One must always keep the faith that one is sure to succeed.

Many people begin, and then after some time come and tell you, "Oh, I shall never be able to go through. I have too many difficulties." So this means not having faith. If one has started,

one begins with the faith that one will reach the goal. Well, this faith should be kept till the very end. Keeping one's faith, one attains the end. But if in the middle of the road you turn back saying, "No, I can't", then, obviously you will not reach the end. Some people start on the way and then, after some time, they find it heavy-going, tiring, difficult, and also that they themselves, their legs, don't walk well, their feet begin to ache, etc. You see, they say, "Oh, it is very hard to go forward." So instead of saying, "I have started, I shall go through", which is the only thing to do, they stand there, stop there, lamenting and saying, "Oh, I shall never be able to succeed", and then they leave the path. So, obviously, if they leave the path, they will never succeed. This is to lose one's faith.

To keep one's faith is to say, "Good, I have difficulties but I am going on." Despair — that's what cuts off your legs, stops you, leaves you like this: "It is over, I can't go on any longer." It is indeed finished, and that's something which should not be allowed.

When you have started, you must go to the very end. Sometimes, you see, to people who come to me with enthusiasm I say, "Think a little, it is not an easy path, you will need time, you will need patience. You will need much endurance, much perseverance and courage and an untiring goodwill. Look and see if you are capable of having all this, and then start. But once you have started, it is finished, there is no going back any more; you must go to the very end."

Sometimes I tell them, I tell them that I give them a few days or a few months. There are some to whom I have given a few years for reflection. I told them, "Look well, be quite sure." But once they come and say, "Now I have decided, I want to start", it is good. Now, one must go on to the very end, whatever the cost; even if it is very difficult, one has to go to the very end.

*When one draws back from the path, one draws back
for the present life or...*

Questions and Answers

In this, you see, there are many different cases, and they depend on the nature of the drawing back. If it is a small set-back or a small halt, you can start again. But it is ten times more difficult than before.

Why?

Why? Because it is so. Because you have accumulated obstacles in yourself by your cowardice and weakness. All those difficulties which you must conquer are like spiritual tests which you have to pass. And if you fail in your test, well, the next one will be much more difficult. This is the general occult law. One can't escape it. If you are faced with making an effort and making progress, if you fail... And note that in the present conditions you are not warned beforehand, which makes the test much more difficult to pass. In former days, the days of old, the candidates were told, "Now, prepare yourself. You are going to undergo terrible trials: you will be enclosed in a coffin, you will have to face terrible dangers. But these are tests to find out if you have the necessary qualities." A man forewarned, you understand, is as good as ten, as we say. Once they were warned that it was a trial, they did not take it seriously and it was much easier.

But that's no longer the practice. This is no longer done. It is life itself, the circumstances of each day which are the trials through which you have to pass. Some people instinctively feel that they are facing a decision that's to be taken, a special effort that's to be made, and they make this effort within themselves and cross the step. These acquire a much greater strength to cross the next step. When one has gained a small victory over one's lower being, the next time one has a much greater strength to take the next step. On the contrary, if one is blind, ignorant, stupid or ill-willed and, instead of saying "yes" to the trial that faces him, he revolts or refuses it, then, you see, this is expressed by: "One has not passed his test, one has failed in his test." But the next time, one is compelled not only to make an effort

to conquer this, but to make a still greater effort to redress the wrong one has done to himself. So it is much more difficult.

But these things happen to everyone on the path, all the time, perhaps even daily. There are small things, there are things a little bigger. The small ones one can turn, you see, by chance the right way. For the big ones one must first have a kind of instinct. One must pay attention and do the right thing in the right way. But there are other things still. When one is at a critical moment of one's development, and it is absolutely necessary to cross the step in order to go forward — at that moment, there are always two possibilities: that of crossing the step, and then one immediately makes a terrific progress; or else to become slack, and then this indeed is more than a halt, even more than a set-back, it can be a very serious fall into a chasm. There are abysses from which one does not come up again; and so, in this case it means a life lost.

But if one has within oneself, besides the part that has given way and fallen, if somewhere one has a very ardent flame, if one is ready for anything, all possible suffering, all possible effort, all possible sacrifices to redress what one has done, in order to climb back from the bottom of the abyss, to find the path again, one can do it. This flame has the power to call the Grace. And with the Grace there is nothing impossible. But it must be a real flame, something very powerful, because when one is at the bottom of the hole it is not easy to come out of it. Between the first kind, which is simply a little halt on the way and which makes the next step just a little more difficult, and the last one I am speaking about, there are many degrees; and so one can't say that if one leaves the path it is for a lifetime. That would be only an extreme case.

But if one leaves the path, it is even very difficult to find it again. What is strange is that in leaving it one loses it. There are legends of this kind in all countries: of people who have left the path and then later searched for it and never found it again. It was as if it had vanished. They lost it and this truly is a very sad thing.

Questions and Answers

But when you are on the path, I said this — I was just saying it — when you are on the path, do not ever leave it. Wait a little, you can hesitate as long as you want before taking it; but the minute you set your foot on it, it is finished, don't leave it. Because this has consequences which can even extend to several lives. It is something very serious. That is why, besides, I never push anyone to enter the path of Yoga. You are quite a number of children here; I have never asked anyone — only those who came to me and told me, "I want it." And to these also, unless I am absolutely sure of them because it is written in their destiny that they have come for that, I always say, "Think about it, think, be quite sure that this is what you want and nothing else." And when they have reflected and decided, it is finished. One should no longer move away, one should go straight to the end. I mean, one should not leave the path any more. One should go forward at all costs and try not to stop too often on the way, because it is easier to continue even if it is hard, you see, than to begin all over again when one has stopped. A much greater effort is needed to get going again than to continue on the way. And you see, logically I should not say it, but I have already warned all who are here, I have told them, "Don't ever take lightly all the circumstances of each day, all the tiny little things of life, all the small events, you know; never take all this lightly." Never react with your lower being. Each time you are told to do something or not to do it — you are not told this very often, but each time you are told, before reacting think a little, try to find in yourself the part which reacts. Do not react just like that with what is most commonplace in you. Enter within yourself, try to find the best in yourself and with this you must react. *It is very important, it is very important.*

There are people who mark time for years because they haven't done this. There are others who seem to fly, so fast do they go, because they pay attention to this. And those who don't do that throw the blame always on the Divine. They accuse the Grace. They tell her, "It is You who deceived me, it is You

22 December 1954

who put me into difficulty, it is You who made me stumble, it is You who are a monster”, not exactly in these words, but their thought is like this. And so, naturally, they make their case worse because they push away even the help they could have had in their difficulty. There we are.

I could tell you many more things, but it will come gradually. In any case, if you can keep within yourself a confidence, a candid trust which does not argue, and the sense of... yes, it is truly a kind of trust that what is done for you, in spite of all appearances, is always the best thing to lead you in the quickest way possible out of all your difficulties and towards the goal... if you can keep that strong in you, well, your path will become tremendously easier.

You will tell me that it is very difficult to keep it, but children keep it very well. They must have truly come upon particularly detestable parents to lose it; but if their parents are simply good enough, they keep this very well. Well, it is this attitude; if you can tell yourself, “Good, perhaps the divine Grace deserves our confidence”, simply this, nothing else, you will avoid many difficulties, many. In fact this avoids many difficulties even in ordinary life, and many worries. And particularly here, if you can do that, well, you will see things which seemed formidably difficult dissolving suddenly like clouds.

There we are, that’s all.

Au revoir, my children.