This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo’s *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, “Calm – Peace – Equality”.

“Calm, even if it seems at first only a negative thing, is so difficult to attain, that to have it at all must be regarded as a great step in advance.

“In reality, calm is not a negative thing, it is the very nature of the Sat-Purusha and the positive foundation of the divine consciousness. Whatever else is aspired for and gained, this must be kept. Even Knowledge, Power, Ananda, if they come and do not find this foundation, are unable to remain and have to withdraw until the divine purity and peace of the Sat-Purusha are permanently there.

“Aspire for the rest of the divine consciousness, but with a calm and deep aspiration. It can be ardent as well as calm, but not impatient, restless or full of rajasic eagerness.

“Only in the quiet mind and being can the supramental Truth build its true creation.”

*Sweet Mother, what is the Sat-Purusha?*

The Purusha? What is it in the being? Knowledge. The conscious being.

*What is this true supramental creation?*

True creation means the new supramental creation, the one we want to realise here. When we speak of a new transformed world, it is the supramental creation.
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What does “rajasic eagerness” mean?

“Eagerness”? It is vehemence, it is violence. It is an excessive ardour; and “rajasic” — it is the over-active and violent element, it is the turbulent element in the being. Rajasic — that’s the nature of all transports, flarings-up and enthusiasms, and of all violences and passions, and all over-activity also, in contrast to tamas which is inert, and to sattwa which is balanced. This is the over-active and violent element.

Mother, does “keeping one’s consciousness high” mean trying to have higher thoughts?

This is rather a consequence than a fact. When one keeps one’s consciousness on a higher level, naturally it serves as a filter for thoughts and allows only thoughts of a higher nature. But it is rather a consequence than a fact. To keep one’s consciousness in a higher state is to raise it above the lower levels in the being, it is to keep it in the light, in the peace, in the higher knowledge and harmony; that is, to place one’s consciousness as high as possible in one’s being, at the level where one is liberated from all lower movements. Then naturally, if the consciousness is there, the thoughts it receives are those of a higher order. And thought is only one form of activity of the consciousness, it is not the stuff of consciousness. There is a consciousness without thought, there is a very much higher state of consciousness in which there are no thoughts. It is a consciousness that can have a very perfect knowledge of things, without it being expressed in thoughts and words. Thought is only one form of activity.

“Silence is... more easily established by a descent from above.” “From above” means what, Sweet Mother?

From the higher regions of consciousness. You see, if you open to the higher regions of consciousness and the force descends from
above, quite naturally it establishes a silence in the lower regions, for they are governed by this higher power which descends. This comes from higher regions of the mind or from beyond, even from the supermind. So when this force and consciousness come down and enter into the consciousness of a lower plane, this consciousness becomes naturally quiet, for it is as though invaded, flooded by that higher light which transforms it.

In fact, this is even the only way of establishing a constant silence in one’s mind. It is to open oneself to higher regions and let this higher consciousness, force, light descend constantly into the lower mind and take possession of it. And here, when this happens, this lower mind can remain constantly quiet and silent, because it is this one which acts and fills the whole being. One can act, write and speak without the mind being active, with this force which comes from above penetrating the mind and using it; and the mind itself becomes just a passive instrument. And in fact, this is the only way of establishing silence; for once this is established, the silence is established, the mind does not stir any longer, it acts only under the impulsion of this force when it manifests in it. It is like a very quiet, very silent field and the force when it comes puts the elements into movement and uses them, and it finds expression through the mind without the mind’s being agitated. It remains very quiet.

_Sweet Mother, how can we empty the consciousness of its mixed contents?_  

By aspiration, the rejection of the lower movements, a call to a higher force. If you do not accept certain movements, then naturally, when they find that they can't manifest, gradually they diminish in force and stop occurring. If you refuse to express

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1 “Keep the quietude and do not mind if it is for a time an empty quietude; the consciousness is often like a vessel which has to be emptied of its mixed or undesirable contents; it has to be kept vacant for a while till it can be filled with things new and true, right and pure.”
everything that is of a lower kind, little by little the very thing disappears, and the consciousness is emptied of lower things. It is by refusing to give expression — I mean not only in action but also in thought, in feeling. When impulses, thoughts, emotions come, if you refuse to express them, if you push them aside and remain in a state of inner aspiration and calm, then gradually they lose their force and stop coming. So the consciousness is emptied of its lower movements.

But for instance, when undesirable thoughts come, if you look at them, observe them, if you take pleasure in following them in their movements, they will never stop coming. It is the same thing when you have undesirable feelings or sensations: if you pay attention to them, concentrate on them or even look at them with a certain indulgence, they will never stop. But if you absolutely refuse to receive and express them, after some time they stop. You must be patient and very persistent.

In a great aspiration, if you can put yourself into contact with something higher, some influence of your psychic being or some light from above, and if you can manage to put this in touch with these lower movements, naturally they stop more quickly. But before even being able to draw these things by aspiration, you can already stop those movements from finding expression in you by a very persistent and patient refusal. When thoughts which you do not like come, if you just brush them away and do not pay them any attention at all, after some time they won’t come any longer. But you must do this very persistently and regularly.

You have said that one must know that without the divine Grace one is nothing. Then why make such a great effort to know that one is nothing?

Why make such a great effort? In what sense? You want to make this effort for a personal reason? Is it for your personal satisfaction that you want to make this effort? It is like those
people who say, “But if it is not I who work and if it is not my work, how can I work?” It is the same thing, and yet it is like that. If you feel like that, it means that you still need, need very much, your ego and that if your ego were suddenly taken away from you, you could no longer do anything. If you need a personal motive in order to do something, it means that you are still entirely in your ego, you understand. So long as it is necessary, one has to remain in it. Only, you must not then think that you can go fast. It takes a very long time, sometimes several lives, sometimes a great number of lives. If you need personal reasons for doing things, you have only to wait till you grow out of it and understand that it is not for a personal reason that you must do things.

For example, it is not for a personal reason that you must want perfection, it is not for a personal reason that you must want union with the Divine, it is not for a personal reason that you must want the supramental transformation. If it is for your own good and for a personal reason, well, follow your path; I tell you, you will get there — after a certain number of lives. You see, there is a state in which one can’t even understand how one can exist without a personal reason. So long as it is like that... If perchance I were suddenly to take away from you your personal consciousness and reason, you would exist no longer. So you must wait quietly till you can realise within yourself that this is not the true cause of things.

Is there nothing to be done but to wait?

Eh? Nothing to be done but wait? For me!... It is I who mark time waiting for you to be ready! (Mother laughs.)

It is a very delicate problem, because for a very long time if someone does not feel, does not have this personal aspiration to perfect himself, the personal aspiration to enter into contact with the Divine, the personal aspiration to realise the supramental consciousness, well, he says as you were just saying,
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“Then what’s the use of doing anything? The only thing is to remain quiet.” Well, as long as it is like that, and as long as you have not developed in yourself enough consciousness for it to be otherwise, there is nothing to say and nothing to do. I have only to wait.

“Wait” means some lives?

Yes.

For some it can go faster; if suddenly something is reversed within them and they have an experience — even if it be only the experience of identification with the psychic — then all of a sudden they understand. Identification with the psychic means an identification with the divine Consciousness. So, immediately they understand; they understand and this even makes them laugh. One feels how foolish one was! (Mother laughs.)

This sense of one’s own person becomes a kind of cage, a prison which shuts you in, prevents you from being true, from knowing truly, acting truly, understanding truly. It is as though someone had put you in a very hard shell and you were compelled to stay there.

This is the first sensation you have. Afterwards you begin to tap against the shell in order to break it. Sometimes it resists very long. But still, when you begin to feel this, that what you believed to be yourself, the person doing things and for whom they are done, the person who exists and makes you what you are, yes, when you pass from this to the consciousness that this is a prison preventing you from being truly yourself, then you have made great progress, and there is hope. You feel yourself stifled, crushed, absolutely shut up in a prison without air, without light, without an opening, and then you begin pushing from inside, pushing, pushing, pushing so that it may break.

And the day it breaks, the day it opens, suddenly, you enter the psychic consciousness. And then you understand. And then,
truly, if you have a sense of humour, you laugh; you realise your stupidity.

*Mother, you said one day that before being able to identify oneself with the Divine, one must first become an individual.*

Yes, well, that’s it, exactly. You are in the period of becoming an individual. And so long as one is in this period of becoming an individual, well, one must wait until this period passes, that is, till you have become a conscious individual. Perfectly. It is that.

*Mother, you said there are very few, one in a million perhaps, who are really conscious.*

Oh, if you take humanity at large, certainly! And the great mass of mankind will never become individuals, it will always be an amorphous mass, all intermingled, like that (gesture). To become an individual is what Sri Aurobindo calls becoming truly a mental man. Well, if you have read *The Human Cycle*, you will see that already it is not so easy to become a truly mental man who thinks by himself, is free from all outer influences, who has an individuality, who exists, has his reality; even that is not so easy.

But, by a kind of Grace, it can happen that before becoming an individual, if someone has within himself an aspiration, if he feels the need to awaken to something which would want more, want something better, which feels how very small it is to be an individual, something which really seeks beyond the ordinary limits, well, even before becoming an individual, he may suddenly have the experience of a contact with his psychic which opens all the doors for him. They close again later, but once they have opened you never forget it. The remembrance remains very vividly; and this helps. It should happen to you here.
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_Sweet Mother, is identification with the psychic the same thing as the psychic coming in front?

That is, the first step is the identification, and then, once you can keep this identification, the psychic governs the rest of the nature and life. It becomes the master of existence. So this is what we mean by the psychic coming in front. It is that which governs, directs, even organises the life, organises the consciousness, the different parts of the being. When this happens, the work goes very fast. Very fast, well... relatively very fast.

In the human consciousness everything is _very slow_. When we compare the time that is necessary to realise something with the average length of human existence, it seems interminable. But happily there comes a time when one escapes from this notion, when one begins to feel no longer according to human measures. As soon as one is truly in touch with the psychic, one loses this kind of narrowness and of anxiety also, this anxiety which is _so_ bad: “I must be quick, I must be quick, there is not much time, I must hurry, there is not much time.” One does things very badly or doesn’t do them at all any more. But as soon as there is a contact with the psychic, then indeed this disappears; one begins to be a little more vast and calm and peaceful, and to live in eternity.

_Sweet Mother, why are we so attached to our ego?

As I said just now, probably because you still need it very much, isn’t that so? In order to become a conscious, individualised being, one needs his ego; that is why it is there. It is only when one has realised his own individuality sufficiently, has become a conscious, independent being with its own reality, that he no longer needs the ego. And at that time one can make an effort to get rid of it. Unfortunately most people, as soon as they become real individuals, have such a sense of their importance and their ability that they no longer even think at
all of getting rid of their ego. But that of course is something else.

Here I don’t let you go to sleep. I remind you from time to time of the true thing. But you are all very young, you see, and a certain number of years are needed, years of intensive inner formation, to become a being who thinks for himself, is conscious of his own will, and conscious of his own nature, his purpose of existence, independent of the human mass. A certain time is necessary. Some children begin when very small.

If one begins very early, when one is twenty one can be quite formed. But you must begin when very small, and consciously, very consciously; you must begin with a sense of observation of all the movements in yourself, of their relation with others, of — precisely, of your degree of independence, real individuality, of knowing where impulses come from, where other movements come from: whether it is contagion from outside or something that arises from within yourself. A very profound study of all the movements in oneself is necessary in order to succeed simply in crystallising a being who is a little conscious, a little conscious.

But when you live fluidly, so to say, when you don’t even know what goes on inside you, have some sort of vague impressions, if you question yourself, at least ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if you ask yourself, “Why did I think like that? Why did I feel like that? Why did I do that?”, even “Why did I do that?”, then the reply is almost always the same: “I don’t know. It came like that, that’s all.” That is to say, you are not at all conscious.

Are you able to know, when you are with others, what comes from you and what from the others? To what extent their way of being, their particular vibrations act upon you? You are not aware of this at all. You live in a kind of “approximate” consciousness, half-awake, half-asleep, in something very vague, where you have to grope like this in order to catch things. But do you have a precise, clear, exact notion of what goes on in you, why it goes on in you? And then, this: the vibrations which come to you from outside and those which come from within you? And
then, again, what can come from others, changing all this, giving another orientation? You live in a kind of hazy fluidity, certain small things suddenly crystallise in your consciousness, you have just caught them for a moment; and it is just clear enough like that, as though there was a projector, just something passing on the screen and becoming clear for a second: the next minute everything has become vague, imprecise, but you are not aware of this because you have not even asked yourself the question, because you live in this way. It stops here, begins here, ends here. That’s all. You do from day to day, minute to minute, things which you do, like that... it happens to be like that.

It will come. It will come. Surely it will come. I am not going to leave you like that.... Shake you up a little — I am going to shake you up a little. I shall do what is necessary for this.

So there we are.

_Sweet Mother, what is the effect of an aspiration which comes from rajasic eagerness?_

The effect of an aspiration? Well, it takes away your quietude, that is the first effect. It makes you agitated, nervous, impatient and dissatisfied when you don’t immediately obtain what you have asked for, and usually as vehement in your despair and dissatisfaction as in the aspiration, with a strong sense of your helplessness.

_Then is it desire?_

It is not quite the same thing. It is not a matter of desire, it is a question of aspiration. But aspirations can be of this kind. Desire is altogether something else. Desire is something which acts completely horizontally.

In your ordinary consciousness you want something; you do not have the least idea of aspiring for some existing thing or some progress or a higher knowledge or greater realisation. You see
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an object in a shop and want it. That’s it. Or it crosses your mind that it would be good to eat a certain thing, and you want it. These are desires; they concern things on the same plane as you. Moreover, in desires also some people are obstinate, vehement, and some have fugitive and weak desires. There are both types.

But what Sri Aurobindo speaks about here is truly an aspiration, it is about someone who aspires for the spiritual life but with a vehement passion; and naturally this upsets everything. Besides, the result he obtains — if he does obtain a result at all — is very mixed; and it is muddy, as he says, altogether impure, ordinary. We must not confuse what he calls “rajasic eagerness” with intensity, because intensity can be very vast, very calm and very pure and give a considerable strength to the aspiration. But this has nothing to do either with a rajasic movement or with desire.

And, to take an example, you can understand it in this way: if you have an aspiration, say, suddenly you think of the possibility of progress and have an aspiration for progress; but if a desire is mixed with your aspiration, you will have the desire to progress for the powers this will give you or the importance it will give you or the improvement in your living conditions. You go and immediately mix all kinds of little very personal reasons with your aspiration. And to tell the truth, very few people have a very pure aspiration. An aspiration, a will to progress, just that; it stops there. Because one aspires for progress and then, there we are, let us not go farther. We want progress. But usually there get mixed up with it all kinds of desires for the results of this progress. And so desire comes in, you see; this brings exactly what he says, a consciousness which is impure and muddy, and inside this nothing higher can come. This must be completely eliminated to begin with. If one looks at oneself very sincerely, very straightforwardly and very severely, one very quickly perceives that very few things, very few movements of consciousness are free from being mixed with desires. Even in what you take for a higher movement, there is always... no,
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happily not always, but most often there is a desire mixed. The desire of the sense of one's importance, if only this, that kind of self-satisfaction, the satisfaction of being someone superior.

This is of course much better than those who want to become yogis in order to astound their neighbours and exercise authority over others, and so that others may be full of admiration and of respect for them. How many things are truly pure? Pure aspiration? You must have already attained a very high level, that level I spoke of, on which one can look at oneself with a smile, a slightly ironic smile, and have the feeling that one was so small, so small, so small, so petty, so insignificant and so foolish. After that things go better. But for what a long time all the movements are always turned back upon themselves! You start off in a sweep, as though you were springing forward in the face of this universe, and you turn back upon yourself, expecting a small result, a small satisfaction, a very tiny satisfaction, even if it be just your own self-appreciation: “Oh, what a fine aspiration I had!”

There you are.