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This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 1, "Calm—Peace—Equality".

"Absolute faith — faith that what is for the best will happen, but also that if one can make oneself a true instrument, the fruit will be that which one's will guided by the Divine Light sees as the thing to be done — kartavyam karma."

Faith that what happens is always for the best. We may for the moment not consider it as the best because we are ignorant and also blind, because we do not see the consequences of things and what will happen later. But we must keep the faith that if it is like that, if we rely on the Divine, if we give Him the full charge of ourselves, if we let Him decide everything for us, well, we must know that it is always what is best for us which happens. This is an absolute fact. To the extent to which you surrender, the best happens to you. This may not be in conformity with what you would like, your preference or desire, because these things are blind: it is the best from the spiritual point of view, the best for your progress, your development, your spiritual growth, your *true* life. It is always that. And you must keep this faith, because faith is the expression of a trust in the Divine and the full self-giving you make to the Divine. And when you make it, it is something absolutely marvellous. That's a fact, these are not just words, you understand, it is a fact. When you look back, all kinds of things which you did not understand when they happened to you, you realise as *just* the thing which was necessary in order to compel you to make the needed progress. *Always*, without exception. It is our blindness which prevents us from seeing it.

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Is blaming oneself a good method of progressing?

Blaming oneself? No, not necessarily. It may be useful, it is indeed useful from time to time in order to get out of the illusion of one's own perfection. But one wastes much energy in self-criticism. It is much better to use this same energy in making progress, a concrete progress, something more useful. For example, if you have thoughts which are unpleasant, ugly, vulgar and disturbing, and you say, "Ah, ah, how intolerable I am, I still have such thoughts, what a nuisance it is!", it would be much better to use this very energy simply to do this (*gesture*) and drive away the thoughts.

And this is only the first step. The second is to try to have other thoughts, to take interest in something else: either read or reflect, but in any case try to fill your mind with something more interesting, to use your energy in constructing rather than in destroying.

It is of course necessary from time to time to recognise one's faults; it is altogether indispensable. But to dwell too much upon them is not necessary. What is necessary is to use all one's energy in order to build up the qualities one wants to have and do what one wants to do. This is much more important.

"At present your experiences are on the mental plane...."

This is in reply to someone, I don't know to whom. Someone who wrote a letter and to whom Sri Aurobindo has replied: "At present your experiences are on the mental plane." I don't know what letter it was nor this person.

But what does "only on the mental plane" mean?

What does it mean? Well, these are experiences concerning thought, mental activity, the understanding of things, the observation of things, thought, deduction, reasoning, the contact

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with teaching, knowledge, the result of this knowledge on your understanding — all these things which are purely mental. And in fact one should always begin with that.

If one has vital experiences — for example, visions — certain vital experiences without having a sufficient mental preparation, this may result in destroying one's balance and, in any case, one understands nothing of what is happening and it is practically useless, if not harmful. On the other hand, if to begin with, one has developed his understanding, has studied, has understood and knows the reasons for things, and the goal of yoga, for instance, and if one has studied the methods of attaining it — indeed, the whole mental approach to the subject — then, when an experience comes one has a chance of being able to understand what it is; otherwise one understands nothing. A sufficient mental preparation is needed — if not a complete one at least a sufficient one — to be able to understand a little the experiences which come.

On what do experiences depend, Mother?

Ah, it depends on many things.... Some people have experiences quite spontaneously and it is understood that this depends on their former lives or the way in which they were formed, the forces which presided over the construction of their present physical being, and the influence they came under even before their birth. These people have experiences spontaneously. There are not many of these, but there are some. There are others for whom it is the result of a very sustained effort. They aspire to have experiences and impose a discipline upon themselves or adopt a discipline so as to be able to have them. Sometimes it takes very long to obtain something. It depends altogether upon the way one is built. I knew people who were ignorant, yes, and who had quite remarkable experiences of clairvoyance, of inner perception. They understood nothing of what was happening to them or of what they saw. But they had the gift.

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But then this has no effect on their outer life, has it?

No.

Then what's the use of having experiences?

It is not a question of “use”. Not everything in the world is utilitarian. It's like that because it's like that. Yes, you can say “what's the use” to someone who is exclusively preoccupied with having experiences, who has no inner intellectual and spiritual preparation, and who through some sort of fantasy would like to have experiences. You could say to him, “Yes, what's the use? It is not this that will lead you to the spiritual life. It can help you if you have taken up the path. And if you have taken up the path in all sincerity, well, they will come to the extent that they are useful. But to seek experience for experience's sake is altogether useless.” And you can tell people, “What's the good? It is a fantasy, a fantasy on another plane; it is another kind of desire, but it is a desire.”

However, in the normal course, to the degree that you progress inwardly, every step that you take towards the true consciousness is accompanied by a certain number of experiences corresponding to it which allow you to understand the situation you are in: this of course is normal. It ought to be like that.

But these usually are not such sensational experiences as to be made much of. People often have all of a sudden an illumination of consciousness, an inner indication, an unusual perception. But when they are not turned exclusively towards the desire to have experiences, they don't attach much importance to it. Sometimes they don't even attach enough importance. The indication came, showed them something, but they were not even aware of it. Yet it is not these things which give you the impression that you are living in a wonderful world. These things are quite normal. Suddenly an opening in the mind, a

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light that comes, one understands something which he did not before. You take that for a very natural phenomenon. But it is a spiritual experience — or the clear seeing of a situation, the understanding of what is happening in oneself, of the state one is in, the indication of the exact progress one ought to make, of the thing that's to be corrected. This too is an experience and an experience that comes from within; it is an indication given to you by the psychic. People take this also as quite a natural fact. They do not attach any importance to it.

Usually people mean by “experience” either altogether extravagant phenomena, levitation and things like that, or else sensational visions: being able to see the future or seeing at a distance or maybe ordinary things like being able to tell where a lost object can be found or all kinds of little tricks like that. This is what people call “experiences”.

Well, usually people who have these faculties are not well educated, but for some reason they are born with a gift, as some are born musicians, others painters, and others scientists. These are born clairvoyants, and so it may be, when they are in need they use this faculty to earn their living, and they spoil it completely. If they happen to be in comfortable circumstances and do not need to earn their living, then they become famous among their friends. In any case, this is always an opportunity for a certain kind of commercialism. There are very few who can have these gifts without using them either to make a name for themselves or to earn money. But these gifts are not of a very high level. One can have them without having a very spiritual life. They do not depend at all on an inner spiritual height. One should not mistake them for signs of progress.

Besides, one thing is certain: those who do not have these faculties and want to acquire them, for instance the capacity of foresight, foreseeing what is going to come, which is analogous to prophecy, the capacity to know events before they happen — as I said, there are people who have this spontaneously because of some peculiarity from birth — and if one wants to acquire

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them himself, that is to say, enter into contact with regions where these things can be seen — and not by chance or accidentally or without having any control over the thing, but on the contrary to see them at will — then this indeed means a *formidable* work. And that is why some people attach a very great value to these things. But they have some value only when they are under one's control, done at will and the result of an inner discipline. In this case, yes, because this proves that you have entered into contact with a certain region where it is difficult to enter consciously, at will, and permanently. It is very difficult, it requires much development. And then, for you to be sure of what you have seen... because I haven't told you that with these people who make a profession of their clairvoyance, it becomes... I said "commercialism", but it is worse than that, you know, it is a fraud! When they do not see anything, they invent. When they make a profession of it, and people come to ask them something about the future, and they can see nothing at all, they are obliged to invent something, otherwise they would lose their reputation and their clientele. So this becomes a deception, you see, a falsehood, fraud or falsification.

But when one wants to have a pure, correct information, to be in contact with the truth of things, and see in advance — not according to one's petty mental construction, but how things are decreed, in the place where they are decreed and the time when they are decreed — then that requires a *very great* mental purity, a *very great* vital equilibrium, an absence of desire, of preference. One must never want anything to be of one kind or another, for this falsifies your vision immediately.

All who have visions usually deform them, *all*, almost *without exception*. I don't think there is one in a million who doesn't deform his vision, because the minute it touches the brain it touches the domain of preferences, desires, attachments, and this indeed is enough to give a colouring, a special look to what you have seen. Even if you have seen correctly, you translate it wrongly in your consciousness. This truly asks for a great

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perfection. But you can have perfection without the gift of vision. And the perfection can be as great without the gift as with it. If it interests you specially, you can make an effort to obtain it. But only if it interests you specially. If you lay great store by knowing certain things, you can undertake a discipline; you may undertake a discipline also in order to change the functioning of your senses. I think I have already explained to you how one can hear at a distance, see at a distance, even physically; but this means considerable effort, which perhaps is not always in proportion to the result, because these are side issues, not the central, the most important thing. These are side issues which may be interesting, but in itself this is not the spiritual life; one may have a spiritual life without this. Now, the two together can give you perhaps a greater capacity. But for this too you must tell yourself, "If I ought to have it — if I take the true attitude of surrender to the Divine and of complete consecration — if I ought to have it I shall have it. As, if I ought to have the gift of speech, I shall have it." And in fact, if one is truly surrendered, in the true way and totally, at every minute one is what one ought to be and does what one ought to do and knows what one ought to know. This... but naturally, for this one should have overcome the petty limitations of the ego, and this does not happen overnight. But it can happen.

Another question?

Sweet Mother, what is the "vital desire-soul"?

My child, the vital soul is what animates the body, the life which animates the body. You see, in ordinary language it is said, "You die when your soul leaves your body" or "Your soul leaves your body when you die", in one way or the other; but it is not the soul, it is not only this soul — what we call soul, I mean the psychic being — it is the vital being. When the vital being leaves the body for whatever reason, the body dies or death cuts off the

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vital being from the body... So it is in the sense of animating, that is, giving life.

Is this the “vital desire-soul”, Sweet Mother?

Yes, the vital soul is full of desires. The vital being is full of desires. It is built of desires.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: “A spiritual atmosphere is more important than outer conditions; if one can get that and also create one’s own spiritual air to breathe in and live in it, that is the true condition of progress.” How can one get that and also create one’s true spiritual atmosphere?

Get what? This — it is by... precisely by inner discipline; you can create your atmosphere by controlling your thoughts, turning them exclusively towards the sadhana, controlling your actions, turning them exclusively towards the sadhana, abolishing all desires and all useless, external, ordinary activities, living a more intense inner life, and separating yourself from ordinary things, ordinary thoughts, ordinary reactions, ordinary actions; then you create a kind of atmosphere around you.

For example, instead of reading any odd thing and chatting and doing anything whatever, if you read only what helps you to follow the path, if you act only in conformity with what can lead you to the divine realisation, if you abolish in yourself all desires and impulses turned towards external things, if you calm your mental being, appease your vital being, if you shut yourself against suggestions coming from outside and become immune to the action of people surrounding you, you create *such* a spiritual atmosphere that nothing can touch it, and it *no longer* depends *at all* on circumstances or on whom you live with or on the conditions you live in, because you are enclosed in your own spiritual atmosphere. And that is how one obtains it: by turning

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one's attention *solely* to the spiritual life, by reading only what can help in the spiritual life, by doing only what leads you to the spiritual life, and so on. Then you create your own atmosphere. But naturally, if you open all the doors, listen to what people tell you, follow the advice of this one and the inspirations of that one, and are full of desires for outside things, you cannot create a spiritual atmosphere for yourself. You will have an ordinary atmosphere like everybody else.

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their opposition. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal." Imposed by the Divine?

He has not put it that way, has he? You must take it in the way it helps you most. This is a very difficult question.

Oh, I have already explained to you very often that when you live in an ordinary consciousness, and to the extent you remain on a certain plane which is a combination of the most material mind, vital, physical, that is, the ordinary plane of life, you are subject to the determinism of this plane and it is this subjection to the determinism of this plane which puts you exactly in these conditions, for you have deep within you something which aspires for another life but doesn't yet know how to live that other life, and which pushes from inside in order to get the conditions necessary for this other life. These are inner conditions, they are not outer conditions. But this takes its support on outside obstacles in order to strengthen itself in its will to progress; and so, if you look at it from within, you can even say that it is you yourself who create the difficulties to help you to go forward.

Now, if you enter another plane and tell yourself (but this is a thing subject to many explanations and discussions), if you say that there is nothing in the universe that is not the work of the Divine, which is essentially true, though not true here, then

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you say, “Good. It is the Divine who organises everything; consequently it is He who has organised the difficulties also.” But this is indeed a very childish way of putting things — oversimple. Only, as I said at the beginning, “If it helps you to think in this way, think in this way.” You see, thought is so approximate a thing, it is so far from *the* truth... it is only a kind of vague, incomplete, confused reflection, full of falsehood, even at its best. So, in truth, it is the moment to be practical and tell yourself, “Well, I shall adopt this thought if it helps me to progress.” But if you think that it is the absolute truth, you are sure to go wrong, for there is not a single thought which is the absolute truth.

Ah, yes, we are going to put into the books of the lending library of the University one of Sri Aurobindo’s short reflections, which is wonderful — I had it printed today — in which he says that any teaching, however great it may be, however pure, noble, true it may be, is only one aspect of the Truth and not the Truth itself (I am commenting, the text¹ is not exactly this), it is not the entire Truth. Well, that is it. Whatever your thought may be, even if it is very high, very pure, very noble, very true, it is only a very tiny microscopic aspect of the Truth, and consequently it is not entirely true. So in that field one must be practical, as I said, adopt the thought for the time being, the one which will help you to make progress when you have it. Sometimes it comes as an illumination and this helps you to progress. So long as it helps you to make progress, keep it; when it begins to crumble, not to act any longer, well, drop it, and try to get another which will lead you a little farther.

Many miseries and misfortunes in the world would disappear if people knew the relativity of knowledge, the relativity of faith, the relativity of the teachings and also the relativity of circumstances... to what extent a thing is so relatively important! For the moment it may be capital, it may lead you to life or to death — I am not speaking of physical life and death, I am

¹ “But thought nor word can seize eternal truth.” — Sri Aurobindo

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speaking of the life and death of the spirit — but this is for the moment; and when you have made a certain progress, when you have grown a few years older from the spiritual point of view, and you look back on this thing, this circumstance or idea which perhaps has decided your life, it will seem so relative, so insignificant to you... and you will need something much higher to make new progress.

If one could always remember this, well, one would avoid much sectarianism, much intolerance, and annul all quarrels immediately, because a quarrel means just this, that one thinks in one way and the other in another, that one has taken one attitude and the other another, and that instead of trying to bring them together and find out how they could be harmonised, one puts them over against each other as one fights with one's fists. It is nothing else.

But if you become aware of the complete relativity of your point of view, your thought, your conviction of what is good, to what an extent it is relative in the march of the universe, then you will be less violent in your reactions and more tolerant. Here we are.