This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo’s *Elements of Yoga*, Chapter 11, “Transformation”.

“Q: When a sadhak gets dreams signifying some spiritual truth, does it not indicate that his nature is getting transformed?
“A: Not necessarily. It shows that he has more consciousness than ordinary people, but dreams do not transform the nature.”

If you read a book it will help you to transform yourself. But it is not the book which will transform you. A dream is an indication, it gives you the exact picture of what is going on within you, of the state you are in, of the state of your surroundings, and with these indications you can do what is necessary to transform yourself. But it is not the dream that will transform you.

Now... One says always the same thing.... There is a difference between what is said and what is done. I could read this sentence to you a hundred times; there are some sentences here, you know... I have told you this so often, so often, so often, and he says it so clearly, doesn’t he? What are these things? (Mother turns the pages once again, searching for the sentences.) I am going to repeat them to you, I shall repeat them to you a hundred times, but unless you decide that you have... (there is a sudden noise, a cracking in the tape-recorder; Mother laughs and says:) It is we who are creating the lightnings now! (Laughter) Ah! Where is this? (To a child) Do you know? (Mother continues turning the pages and finds the sentence.) Here we are!

1 Sri Aurobindo wrote that one of the “three fundamental obstacles” which stand in the way of transformation is “Egoism—the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to a true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits.”
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“The mind clinging to its own ideas”? See, how many times I have told you this! “The vital preferring its own desires”? And then the mind becomes the accomplice of the vital and gives admirable explanations for keeping the desires by reasoning, explaining, giving justifications also, and all these things are very useful to it. I have heard people say that the best way to get rid of desires is to satisfy them. They make a theory of it. You continue to satisfy your desires and then, naturally, you have others, for desires — well, one replaces another very easily, and you continue to satisfy the new ones under the idea that you are going to get cured. That will take you at least a hundred lives!

And then, finally, habits!... There is a charming phrase here — I appreciated it fully — in which Sri Aurobindo is asked, “What is meant by ‘the physical adhering to its own habits’?” What are the habits which the physical must throw off? It is this terrible, frightful preference for the food you were used to when you were very young, the food you ate in the country where you were born and about which you feel when you no longer get it that you have not anything at all to eat, that you are miserable.

I don’t know, I believe there won’t be a dozen people here who have come to the Ashram and eaten the food of the Ashram without saying, “Oh! I am not used to this food. It is very difficult.” And how many, how many hundreds of people who prepare their own food because they cannot eat the food of the Ashram! (Mother slams the book down on the stool.) And then, they justify this! So it is here that these ideas begin to come, and they say, “My health! I can’t digest well!” All this is only in their head. There is not a word of truth in it. NOT ONE WORD OF TRUTH. It is a perpetual lie in which everybody lives, and in this matter, indeed, I may tell you what I think, you have not advanced any farther than the mass of human beings.

I make an exception for the very, very, very rare ones who are not like that. They could be counted on one’s fingers. And all, all justify this, all, all — “Oh, my poor children! They are
not used to eating this food. How shall we manage? They will
die because of this change of food!” Well, I, indeed, can give a
remedy for that. You take a boat, take a train and go round the
world several times, you are obliged to eat in each country the
food of that country, and after you have done this several times,
you will understand your stupidity... It is a stupidity. A frightful
tamas. One is tied up there like this (Mother makes a movement
with her hands) to one’s gastric habits.

Now I have said what was on my mind! You may ask
questions.

(Silence)

No questions?

Mother, you have said in Prayers and Meditations:
“What must happen will happen.” Then why should we
make personal efforts?

“What must happen will happen”? You know what I meant? —
that there have been prophecies from the beginning of the world
that there will be a new earth and a new human race and that the
Divine will be manifest upon earth: and so I tell you, what must
happen, will happen; what has been predicted, will be realised.
There we are, it is that, it is not a small little explanation, quite
down-to-earth, not at all!

(After a silence) Nobody has any questions? I have squashed
all your questions at one stroke! (Laughter)

Sweet Mother, those who have made this prophecy, are
they, are they...

They are the ones who will realise it, my child. It is those who
have made it who will realise it and who have been working for
that through centuries. And so?
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But, I wanted to say, did they have the same vision as Sri Aurobindo? The Supermind?

If you had understood what I told you, you would not have put this question!

Is that all? We are sheltered, it is not raining, it is quite comfortable. It does not awaken your desire to know something, does it? Or are you afraid of another rebuff? (Laughter)

What is the work of the psychic being?

What is the work of the psychic being? You want it to have some work? What do you want to say exactly? What is its function? Ah! Very well. One could put it this way, that it is like an electric wire that connects the generator with the lamp. Now, if someone has understood, let him explain what I said!

What is the generator and what the lamp? (Laughter)

Ah, there we are! So, what is the generator and what the lamp? That is exactly it. What is the generator and what the lamp? Or rather, who is the generator and who is the lamp?

The generator is the Divine and the lamp is the body.

It is the body, it is the visible being.

So, that is its function. This means that if there were no psychic in Matter, it would not be able to have any direct contact with the Divine. And it is happily due to this psychic presence in Matter that the contact between Matter and the Divine can be direct and all human beings can be told, “You carry the Divine within you, and you have only to enter within yourself and you will find Him.” It is something very particular to the human being or rather to the inhabitants of the earth. In the human being the psychic becomes more conscious,
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more formed, more conscious and more independent also. It is individualised in human beings. But it is a speciality of the earth. It is a direct infusion, special and redeeming, in the most inconscient and obscure Matter, so that it might once again awake through stages to the divine Consciousness, the divine Presence and finally to the Divine Himself. It is the presence of the psychic which makes man an exceptional being—I don’t like to tell him this very much, because already he thinks too much of himself; he has such a high opinion of himself that it is not necessary to encourage him! But still, this is a fact—so much so that there are beings of other domains of the universe, those called by some people demigods and even gods, beings, for instance, of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, who are very eager to take a physical body on earth to have the experience of the psychic, for they don’t have it. These beings certainly have many qualities that men don’t, but they lack this divine presence which is altogether exceptional and exists only on the earth and nowhere else. All these inhabitants of the higher worlds, the Higher Mind, Overmind and other regions have no psychic being. Of course, the beings of the vital worlds don’t have it either. But these latter don’t regret it, they don’t want it. There are only those very rare ones, quite exceptional, who want to be converted, and for this they act without delay, they immediately take a physical body. The others don’t want it; it is something which binds them and constrains them to a rule they do not want.

But it is a fact, so I am obliged to state that this is how it is, that it is an exceptional quality of the human being to carry within himself the psychic and, truly speaking, he does not take full advantage from it. He does not seem to consider this quality as something very, very desirable, from the way he treats this presence—exactly that! He prefers to it the ideas of his mind, prefers the desires of his vital being and the habits of his physical.

I don’t know how many of you have read the Bible; it is not very entertaining to read it, and besides, it is very long, but still,
in the Bible there is a story I have always liked very much. There were two brothers, if I am not mistaken, Esau and Jacob. Well, Esau was very hungry, that's the story, isn't it? I believe he was a hunter or something; anyway, the story goes like this. He came back home very hungry, and told Jacob he was very hungry, and he was so hungry that he said to him, “Listen, if you give me your mess of pottage” (Jacob had prepared some stew), “if you give me your mess of pottage I will give you my birthright.” You know, one can understand the story quite superficially, but it has a very profound meaning: the birthright is the right of being the son of God. And so he was quite ready to give up his divine right because he was hungry, for a concrete, material thing, for food. This is a very old story, but it is eternally true.

Ask something else.

Mother, the Ashram has been here for a long time; and you say the people who have done something could be counted on your fingers...

No, no, I didn’t say that. (Laughter) I was speaking only of food. I was speaking of those who came here and who did not begin, you understand, who did not... The story is very interesting. There are people who come, full of goodwill, moreover — I think I have written this somewhere in the Bulletin — their goodwill is so overflowing that when they arrive everything is perfect, including the food. They find it very good as long as they are in their psychic consciousness. When that begins to go down, the old habits begin to rise up; you understand, when the psychic consciousness comes down, the old habits climb back into their place. And then they begin saying: “It is strange! I used to like this, but I don’t like it any more; it has become bad, this food!” This is an intermediary period, and later, after some time, more or less shyly according to their nature they say (Mother begins whispering), “Couldn’t I have my personal food? For... I don’t know, my stomach does not digest this!” (Laughter) Well, I say
that among the people in the Ashram, I am not sure... but there are very, very few who haven’t done that. And those who have told themselves, “Oh, as for me, it is all the same to me, I eat what I am given, and I don’t bother about it” — these, indeed, can truly be counted on your fingers.

One must look at the thing very clearly, you understand, for there are some who do not dare to speak, many do not dare to say anything, except when they are a little indisposed or really have a stomach-ache or they think they have a stomach-ache and go to see a doctor. The doctor tells them, “Oh, try this or try that and see” — just the things they were accustomed to eating. The doctor begins by asking them, “What were you used to eating formerly?” (Laughter) “Weren’t you used to taking this?” (Laughter) In this way. Then naturally, immediately they say, “Yes, yes, yes, I think that will do me good!” (Laughter)

So, now! (Mother looks at the child who had put the question.)

I meant, are all the efforts then in vain?

My child, I hope not! The question of food is just one question — I can’t say it’s secondary, for it is very symptomatic — it is altogether... it is related to the most physical consciousness, and from that point of view it expresses very well the physical condition. But indeed, this poor body! One must be a little patient with it. It is not that which discourages me — if I could be discouraged — it is the vital. Oh! Really, with its accomplice, the mind, these two rascals together, taking each other’s support, making excuses and presenting to you such a marvellous picture of your own difficulties in order to justify them — that, indeed, is terrible. From this point of view Sri Aurobindo wrote a little rule which for some time we had put up everywhere. But, I believe, it must have disappeared now or else people are so used to it that they no longer even look at it. It said: “Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you,” and Sri Aurobindo added,
“because she is, indeed, always present.” Still these physical eyes... “No, no, no, she is not there”, and so the first instinct is to hide things. Not only does one do everything that one wouldn’t do before me, but as one doesn’t at all believe the last part of Sri Aurobindo’s sentence, that even though I am not there physically, perhaps still I know how things are, so the first instinct is to hide things, and the moment one enters that path, it is like stepping into quicksand. One goes down, down, down; it seizes you, swallows you up, it draws you down in such a way that it is very difficult to come out of it. Of all things this is the worst: “Ah, provided that Mother does not know!” And so it begins like that and that’s the end. Well, I hope not many among you tell lies, but still, usually the end of the curve is that! And so, you understand, this is one of those stupidities without equal; for — I am going to tell you something — and I can tell you this with impunity: even if you don’t want that to happen, it will happen all the same!

People come for blessings in the morning, you know, or else during the night I go on inspection, everywhere I move around, going to everyone. In both cases, even in the morning when they come to receive a flower, I have only to look at them. There is something around their heads, and at times it is as clear as though they said, “This indeed is something I shall never tell.” They tell me this, “Never will I tell you this and this and that”; you understand, they tell me this by telling me that they will not say it. By telling me, “I shall not tell you this”, they tell me.

Mother, when we have done something and want to hide it from you, when we come to you, you look as if you knew nothing. Why? (Laughter)

(Laughingly) I look as if... I listen, yes? I listen as though I knew nothing, don’t I? It is good like that, and sometimes I exclaim “Ah!” and “Oh!” as though I did not know, don’t I? Well, my
child, all that is for another reason. I have explained that already several times.

When I see people and am busy with them, I want to — I don’t say it is always possible, but still — I want to see in them their psychic being, their ideal, what they want to do, what they want to be, in order to keep it, pull it to the surface; all my work consists of this: what I see I pull out always. And so, when I am doing that, apart from those cases in which I am aware that people are a little conscious of themselves, I am not always sure of the degree of their outer consciousness; and when I ask questions it is to know the difference between what they are conscious of and what I see; and this I am doing all the time. It looks as though I did not know, doesn’t it? I ask a question to find out: “What do you feel? What do you think? What have you experienced? What...” You know, it is to have a clear picture of the degree of your consciousness.

There is a tremendous difference between what you know about yourself and what I know about you. What I know about you is obviously what you ought to be. So, outwardly one sees clearly what people are like, but that is just an outer phenomenon, you know. Between the two there is the vital and mental domain which is the most important from the human point of view, and it is there that in everyone the consciousness of what he ought to be should be reflected, so that he may realise it. But there is a vast distance between what each one knows about himself, what is actively conscious in him and what he is in the truth of his being. It is more difficult for me; this intermediate domain is a very cloudy one, for me it is a domain of falsehood, what I call falsehood. There are two words in English, “falsehood” and “lie”; well, it is the sense of falsehood. It is not a lie in the sense that one tells a lie, but it is a domain of what is not true, what is not at all the experience of the truth of a being, and yet it is of this that he is almost solely conscious. Only a very few have the inner perception of what they want to be, what they want to do, of what the truth of their being is.
There are not many such. Or else it comes and then gets veiled; suddenly one has a flash and then it gets clouded over. And so the questions I put are always in order to know the state of this surface consciousness, which for me is something quite unreal, something that is not true.

There is such a contradiction between the brutal fact of your daily way of life and the picture I have before myself of what each one of you ought to be, a picture I keep there with all the power of my consciousness so that you may realise it — and that is yourself, that, yes, is yourself! It is not this ignorant being, stupid and insincere — sometimes dishonest — who is the... whom you call yourself.

Listen, I am not quite young according to ordinary human notions. I am fairly old. From my earliest childhood I have not stopped observing things. When I was very young I was chided for never speaking. It was because I spent my time observing. I passed my time observing, I registered everything, I learnt all I could, I did not stop learning. Well, I can still feel surprised. Suddenly I find myself looking at such twisted, insincere and obscure movements that I tell myself, “It is not possible. Can such a thing exist?” Indeed, things which still come to me, day after day, “It is not possible! In the world things happen in this way?” And yet I have seen a great number of people, I began being interested in people when very young, I have seen many countries, done what I recommend to others; in every country I lived the life of that country in order to understand it well, and there is nothing which interested me in my outer being as much as learning.

Well, now I still feel that I know nothing. There may occur in this world and in the human consciousness things which are beyond me! I don’t understand how it can be possible. For me, when someone is so twisted up, to the point of being unrecognisable, I get the feeling — I always get the feeling that this consciousness of truth which is trying to manifest is seized and completely deformed. And how one can come to such a pass,
that — that I have not yet understood — how one can come to 
this point.

Here we are! This is not to discourage you; it is only to 
tell you why I sometimes ask questions. Even to a little baby I 
may ask questions. I always feel that one can learn something, 
always. There is something else still. There are all the things I see 
and I have told you, haven’t I, that at night I go for inspection 
while others sleep. It is very convenient for me, because in sleep 
one is just what one is. Well, I go around, I inspect and I see all 
kinds of things! You can’t imagine what! But each time that it 
is possible for me I ask questions, many questions, in order to 
check what I have seen. I have done this work for years and years 
and years; I began working at night in this way, consciously, in 
1904 perhaps, that is, fifty years ago, and I have not stopped. 
Well, even now, in order to be sure of what I see, I always ask 
practical questions, so as to verify, and never do I know (the 
tape-recorder starts making a loud noise which draws Mother’s 
attention; she asks, “Finished? It does not want to go on!”; then 
continues), never do I have that kind of assurance people usually 
have of believing that they know, that they can’t be mistaken, 
and that the thing is understood.

The world is in perpetual transformation. Even were I to live 
a thousand years and more upon earth, I should continue to learn 
without stopping, and I am sure I would always learn something 
new, because what was true yesterday is no longer so today, and 
what is true today will no longer be so tomorrow; the world is 
perpetually changing, therefore, one can learn perpetually. And 
after all, I don’t know if that is not the very reason for the world, 
an objectification of oneself in order to know oneself in all detail; 
there are many details, it can last a very long time, and they are 
unexpected ones!

There, then. Is the tape finished? For we can also stop now, 
it is late.

Good night.