Sweet Mother, what kind of forces can be called up by using the planchette, and how is it done?

Oh! Oh!... Do you mean automatic writing?

Yes, Mother.

That depends on the people who do it. Sometimes there are no forces at all! It is the mental and vital vibrations of the people who use the planchette, and it is their own subconscious ideas which they bring up, ninety-eight times out of a hundred.¹ If they are in contact with invisible entities, it may be all sorts of things but nothing very advisable!

Almost with certainty it could be said that it is not what people think it is, in the sense that most often they try to evoke what they call the “spirit” of a dead person, a relative or a friend or someone they loved and with whom they wish to remain in touch; and besides, they ask them the most foolish questions. Fortunately they don’t succeed in disturbing them....

From this point of view one can say that if you had a relation of deep and sincere love with someone who has passed away, left his body, and if you are calm and strong enough yourself, this person may choose to take shelter vitally in your atmosphere — the atmosphere of the one he loves — for a more or less long period. In this case it means that the relation was very close, very intimate, and if you are not altogether materialistic to the point of not having any direct mental perception, you can remain in mental contact with this person, in communication with him.

¹ Later Mother added the following remark: “I say ninety times out of a hundred, for there are exceptions — I know of some — but they are so rare that it is better not to speak about them.”
It is a rather exceptional case, for usually if your atmosphere is calm and strong enough to be able to truly serve as a protection, the person who has left his body enters into a deep rest there, and it is not at all good to disturb it; and the best thing you can do is to enfold this person with your love and leave him in peace.

Therefore, even if it were possible to enter into communication with him by this means, which I would call very crude, it would be improper to do so. But usually, people who have the capacity, the faculties required to serve as a shelter for some time, a transitional shelter for those who have gone, do not have this ridiculous idea of disturbing the rest of the one they love by tapping on a planchette... fortunately!

But those who indulge in this exercise, an exercise of unhealthy curiosity, get what they deserve; for the atmosphere we live in is filled with a great number of small vital entities which are born of unsatisfied desires, vital movements of a very low type, also the decomposition of larger beings of the vital world; indeed, it is swarming with them, you see. It is surely a protection that most people do not see what is going on in this vital atmosphere, for it is not especially pleasant; but if they have the presumption to want to come into contact with it and set about trying automatic writing or table-turning or... indeed, anything of this kind, out of an unhealthy curiosity, well, what happens is that one of these small entities or several of them have fun at their expense and collect all the necessary indications from their subconscious mind and then furnish these things to them as clear proofs that they are the person who has been called!

I could write a book for you with all the examples I have known of these stories, for people are very proud of doing things like this and immediately write them down, giving “proofs” of the truth of the experience which are so ridiculous that they should be enough to show them that someone was making fun of them! I had another instance, very recently, of somebody who fancied that he had entered into contact with Sri Aurobindo
and was receiving sensational revelations from him — that was comical in the extreme.

But anyway, as a rule, it is — oh! most often — it is your own forces, your subconscious mental and vital forces which you put into the planchette — and you make sensational revelations to yourself! One can do many things in this way.... Once I wanted to prove to people that what they were evoking was nothing but themselves; so I had a little fun, simply with a concentration of the will, tapping the furniture, making tables walk and, well!... As for automatic writing, you only have to withdraw your conscious will into yourself, to let your hand go — just like this (gesture) — and leave it free, and then the hand will begin to make movements; but there is a little part in you which is interested and would like these movements to make sense and this little part appeals to the subconscious mind which begins to make sensational revelations. Indeed, it is a booby-trap, all this business, unless one does it scientifically — but then, scientifically, one realises that it leads to nothing, nothing at all except just passing your time in what you consider an interesting way.

In some cases vital entities really get hold of you, and there it is dangerous. But fortunately these cases are not very frequent. Then it becomes very dangerous.

A very long time ago when I was in France, I knew the case of a man who, through practices of this kind, had put himself into contact with a vital entity. This man happened to be a gambler and he spent his time speculating and playing roulette. He spent part of the year at Monte Carlo playing roulette and the rest of the time he lived in the south of France and speculated on the Stock Exchange. And now, some being was really using him — it was through automatic writing — using him, and for years it gave him absolutely precise, exact indications. When he played roulette it used to tell him, “Bid on this number or this place”, and he would win. Naturally he just worshipped this “spirit” which gave him such sensational revelations. And at the Exchange it also told him, “Speculate on this or on that” and
gave him all the indications. This man became colossally rich. He used to boast to all his friends about the method by which he had grown rich.

Someone put him on his guard, told him, “Be careful, this doesn’t look very honest, you should not trust this spirit.” He fell out with this person. A few days later he was in Monte Carlo and... He always played for high stakes, you see; since, naturally, he always won and would break the bank, he was much feared. Then the spirit told him, “Stake everything, everything you have on this....” He did, and at a single stroke lost everything! And yet, he still had some money left from his Stock Exchange speculations. He said to himself, “It is bad luck.” Again he received a very precise indication, “Do this”, as usual. And he did it — he was completely cleaned out! And to finish the job, the spirit told him, just for the fun of it, “Now, you are going to commit suicide. Put a bullet through your head”. And he was so much under its influence, he did so.... That’s the end of the story. And this is an authentic story. So, the least one can say is that it is dangerous, it is much better not to indulge in occupations of this kind.

No! Either they are rather senseless amusements or else they are unwholesome occupations.

Mother, Sri Aurobindo wrote the book Yogic Sadhan in this way...

No, no! It is not that at all. You must not confuse things. That was something different. Sri Aurobindo knew with whom he was in contact, he did it deliberately and chose the person he was in touch with, and that had nothing to do with the little entities I am speaking about, nothing at all, at all. It was something that took place in the mental world, directly; you must not confuse things. This has no connection, none at all.

(Silence)
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One can, if one has the knowledge, the control, the power, the ability to go into a certain state of passivity — one can very easily lend one’s hand to someone, deliberately, knowing who it is and acting on a higher plane, but that already demands a great consciousness and a great self-mastery, which is not within everybody’s reach. One must have quite a considerable inner development to be able to see whom one is dealing with on a particular plane and willingly lend oneself to the experiment with full knowledge of what one is doing and without losing one’s control. Not everybody can play with that. But to work the planchette, one only has to delude oneself enough for it to start working!

What you are telling us now, Mother — does it form part of the occult sciences?

It was simply to make an experiment, that’s all.

(Silence)

It is not a good way of approach, as a general rule, for in the inner field, in the domain of inner development, this corresponds to the need to read novels. People whose minds are insufficiently developed, whose minds are still in a tamasic state and half inert, need to read novels in order to wake up. It is not the sign of a very commendable state or at any rate a very high one. Well, in the field of inner development this corresponds to the same thing. When one is in a very rudimentary state, when one has no intense inner life, one needs to read novels or to create novels for oneself, and then one indulges in experiments of this kind and believes one is doing very interesting things.... This has the same interest as novels — not even literary novels but cheap romances, those published on the back of newspapers.

Sri Aurobindo told me that some people needed this because their minds were so inert that this shook them and woke them
up a little! Well, that is the same thing. Some people may need to do exercises of this kind to awaken their vital a little, which is sleepy and inert and... this gives them a little interest in life. But still, one can't say that these are very valuable occupations. They are pastimes, amusements.

And this has never served to prove anything to anybody. One could say, “Oh! It is to make you understand that there is an inner life, an invisible life, and it puts you in touch with things you don't see and proves to you that they exist”. That is not true.

Unless you have a spiritual being within you, capable of awakening and living its own life, all these things teach you nothing at all. I knew some people — one of them especially, who was a man of science, intelligent, a man of real ability; he had studied higher science, become an engineer and held an important position; this man was a member of a society known as “spiritualist”, which had found a medium who really had quite exceptional abilities. And he used to attend all the séances with the idea of learning, to convince himself and have tangible proofs of the existence of an invisible world, the concrete and real existence of an invisible world. He had seen all that could be seen, under the strictest control, in the most scientific way possible — all the tests were provided for, down to the least detail. He told me about the most extraordinary things he had seen; I held in my hand a piece of something resembling the plastic cloth they make nowadays, which is not woven, a piece of plastic — but in those days there was no plastic, it had not yet been discovered, it was a long time ago — I held it in my hand, a piece, like this, torn, with a small design which was very pretty. He told me how it had happened. When the medium had been put into trance, a person had appeared dressed in a robe of this substance — it was a materialisation; this person had passed in front of him and, like the little brute he was, he had torn off a piece to have a proof, and he kept the piece. The medium screamed — and everything, everything immediately vanished.... But the piece remained in
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his hand and he gave it to me. I gave it back to him. He had simply shown it to me, I held it in my hand.

So that was something quite concrete, you see, for he still had the piece; he could not tell himself it was a hallucination. Well, in spite of all this, in spite of the most extraordinary stories which could make a whole book, he did not believe anything! He could not explain anything. And he wondered who was mad, whether it was himself or the others or... This had not helped his knowledge progress even half a step forward.

One cannot believe these things unless one carries them within oneself.

No external proofs you can have will ever give you any knowledge. When you yourselves are inwardly developed, are capable of having a direct and inner contact with these things, then you know what they are, but no material proof — material and of this kind — can give you the knowledge if within you you do not have the being capable of having this knowledge.

Therefore, the conclusion is that this kind of experiment is absolutely useless. For those who have an inner being, one day or another, life will see to it that they awaken and will bring them into contact with what they need in order to know.

I consider these things to be an unhealthy curiosity, that’s all.