

# OCCULTISM

Compiled by Vijay from the writings of  
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother



*Sri Aurobindo Society*

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AUROPUBLICATIONS

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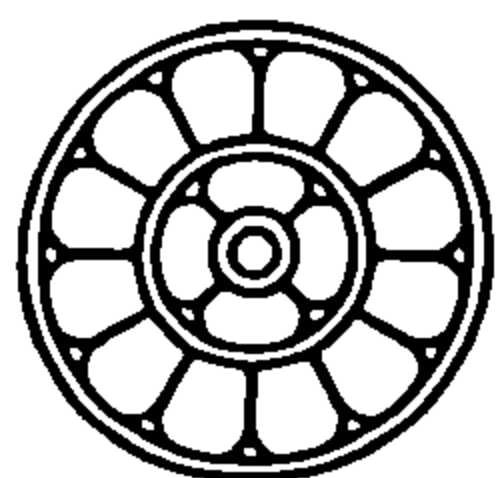
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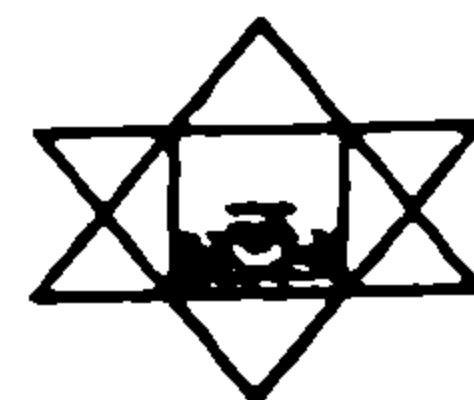
*This is one in a series of thirty booklets published by the Sri Aurobindo Society under the title "Yoga in Everyday Life." Our effort is to bring together, from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, simple passages with a practical orientation on specific subjects, so that everyone may feel free to choose a book according to his inner need. The topics cover the whole field of human activity, because true spirituality is not the rejection of life but the art of perfecting life.*

*While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, in its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to be faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*

*We hope these booklets will inspire the readers to go to the complete works and will help them to mould their lives and their environments towards an ever greater perfection. The quotations from Sri Aurobindo are prefaced by his symbol and those from the Mother by her symbol.*



The Mother's



Sri Aurobindo's

**"O TRUTH, COME, MANIFEST."**

**“आयाहि सत्य आविर्भव”**

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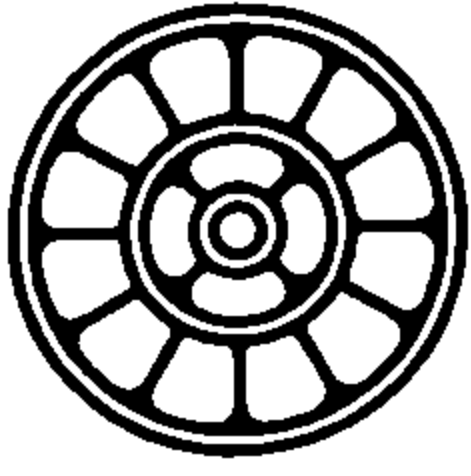
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## OCCULTISM

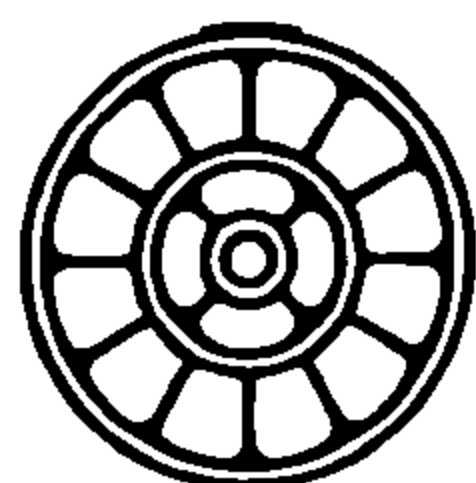


The special gift of the Chaldean line of discipline lay in another direction. It cultivated not so much the higher lines of spiritual realisation but was occupied with what may be called the mid-regions, the occult world. This material universe is not moved by the physical, vital or mental forces that are apparent and demonstrable, but by other secret and subtle forces; in fact, these are the motive forces, the real agents that work out and initiate movements in Nature, while the apparent ones are only the external forms and even masks. This occultism was also practised very largely in ancient Egypt from where the Greeks took up a few threads. The Mysteries – Orphic and Eleusinian – cultivated the tradition within a restricted circle and in a very esoteric manner. The tradition continued into the Christian Church also and an inner group formed in its heart that practised and kept alive something of this ancient science. The external tenets and dogmas of the Church did not admit or tolerate this which was considered as black magic, the Devil's Science. The evident reason was that if one pursued this line of occultism and tasted of the power it gave, one might very likely deviate from the straight and narrow path leading to the Spirit and spiritual salvation. In India too the *siddhis* or occult powers were always shunned by the truly spiritual, although sought by the many who take to the spiritual life – often with disastrous results. In Christianity, side by side with the major saints, there was always a group or a line of practicers that followed the occult system, although outwardly observing the official creed. It is curious to note that often where the original text of the Bible speaks of *gods*, in the plural, referring to the deities or occult powers, the official version translates it as God, to give the necessary theistic value and atmosphere.

But if occultism is to be feared because of its wrong use and potential danger, spirituality too should then be placed on the same footing. All good things in the world have their deformation and danger, but that is no reason why one should avoid them altogether. What is required is right attitude and discrimination, training and discipline. Viewed in the true light, occultism is dynamic spirituality; in other words, it seeks to express and execute, bring down to the material life the powers and principles of the Spirit through the agency of the subtler forces of mind and life and the subtle physical. Occultism is naturally shunned by those who worship, who seek to experience the transcendent Spirit, God in Heaven, but it is an indispensable instrument for those who endeavour to manifest the Divine in a concrete form.

(Retold by Nolini Kanta Gupta)

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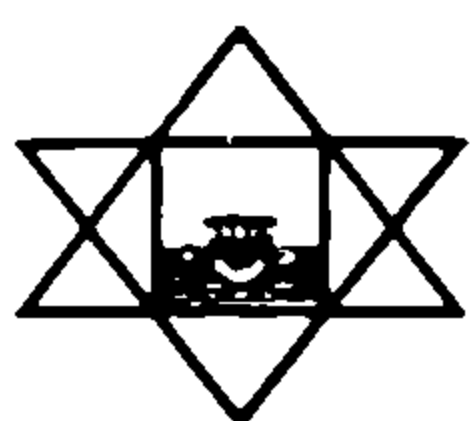
*In the supramental world one will have these powers spontaneously.*

Spontaneously!... But everybody practises occultism without knowing that he does. Everybody has this power spontaneously but doesn't know he has it. It may be a very slight one, like a pin-head; it may be as vast as the Earth or even the universe. But you cannot live without practising occultism, only you don't know it. So the only difference you can make is that when one has the supramental consciousness one will know it. That is all. So, your question automatically vanishes.

When you think – I have explained this to you I don't know how many times – when you think, you are practising occultism. Only, you don't know it. When you are thinking of someone, some part of you is automatically in contact with this person, and if to your thought is added a will that this person may be like this

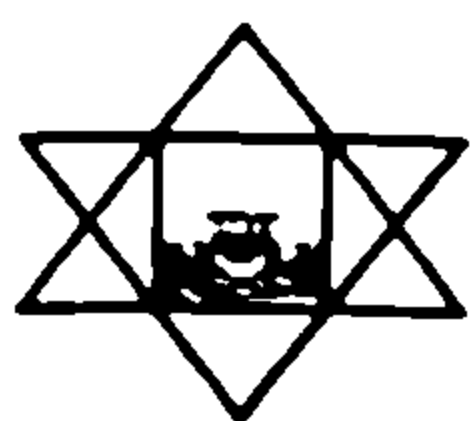
or like that or do this or that or understand this or that – whatever it may be – well, you are practising occultism, only you don't know it.... There are people who do this with power, and when they have a strong thought it manifests and is realised. There are people in whom it is very feeble and they do not obtain many results. It depends on the power of your thought and also on your power of concentration. But this kind of occultism everybody practises without even knowing it. So the difference from someone who really practises occultism is that he knows he is doing it and perhaps how he does it.

## **OCCULTISM AND SCIENCE**



Science itself is in its own way an occultism; for it brings to light the formulas which Nature has hidden and it uses its knowledge to set free operations of her energies which she has not included in her ordinary operations and to organise and place at the service of man her occult powers and processes, a vast system of physical magic, – for there is and can be no other magic than the utilisation of secret truths of being, secret powers and processes of Nature.

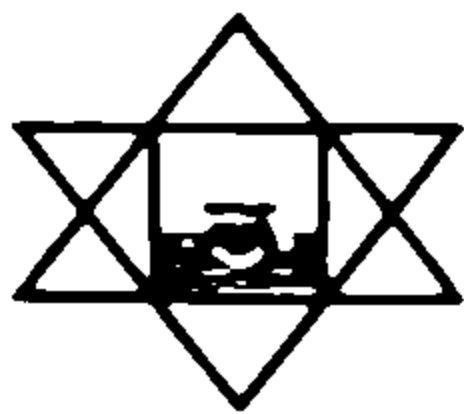
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Occultism is associated in popular idea with magic and magical formulae and a supposed mechanism of the supernatural. But this is only one side, nor is it altogether a superstition as is vainly imagined by those who have not looked deeply or at all at this covert side of secret Nature-Force or experimented with its possibilities. Formulas and their application, a mechanisation of latent forces, can be astonishingly effective in the occult use of mind-power and life-power just as it is in physical Science, but this is only a subordinate method and a limited direction. For mind and life

forces are plastic, subtle and variable in their action and have not the material rigidity; they need a subtle and plastic intuition in the knowledge of them, in the interpretation of their action and process and in their application, – even in the interpretation and action of their established formulas. An overstress on mechanisation and rigid formulation is likely to result in sterilisation or a formalised limitation of knowledge and, on the pragmatic side, to much error, ignorant convention, misuse and failure.

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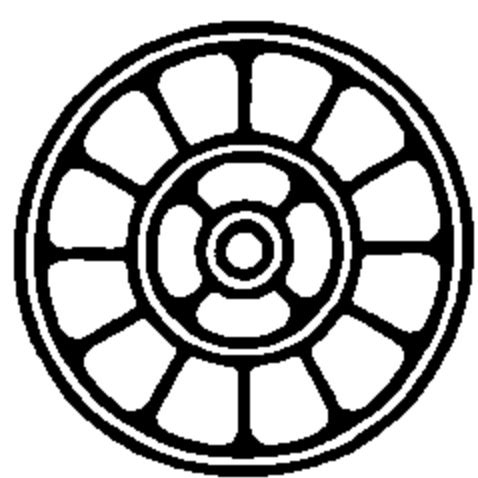


The occultist sought to know the secret of physical things also and in this effort he furthered astronomy, created chemistry, gave an impulse to other sciences, for he utilised geometry also and the science of numbers; but still more he sought to know the secrets of supernature. In this sense occultism might be described as the science of the supernatural; but it is in fact only the discovery of the supraphysical, the surpassing of the material limit, – the heart of occultism is not the impossible chimera which hopes to go beyond or outside all force of Nature and make pure phantasy and arbitrary miracle omnipotently effective. What seems to us supernatural is in fact either a spontaneous irruption of the phenomena of other-Nature into physical Nature or, in the work of the occultist, a possession of the knowledge and power of the higher orders or grades of cosmic Being and Energy and the direction of their forces and processes towards the production of effects in the physical world by seizing on possibilities of interconnection and means for a material effectuality. There are powers of the mind and the life-force which have not been included in Nature's present systematisation of mind and life in matter, but are potential and can be brought to bear upon material things and happenings or even brought in and added to the present systematisation so as to enlarge the control of mind over our own life and body or to act on the minds,



lives, bodies of others or on the movements of cosmic Forces. The modern admission of hypnotism is an example of such a discovery and systematised application, – though still narrow and limited, limited by its method and formula, – of occult powers which otherwise touch us only by a casual or a hidden action whose process is unknown to us or imperfectly caught by a few; for we are all the time undergoing a battery of suggestions, thought suggestions, impulse suggestions, will suggestions, emotional and sensational suggestions, thought waves, life waves that come on us or into us from others or from the universal Energy, but act and produce their effects without our knowledge. A systematised endeavour to know these movements and their law and possibilities, to master and use the power or Nature-force behind them or to protect ourselves from them would fall within one province of occultism: but it would only be a small part even of that province; for wide and multiple are the possible fields, uses, processes of this vast range of little-explored Knowledge.

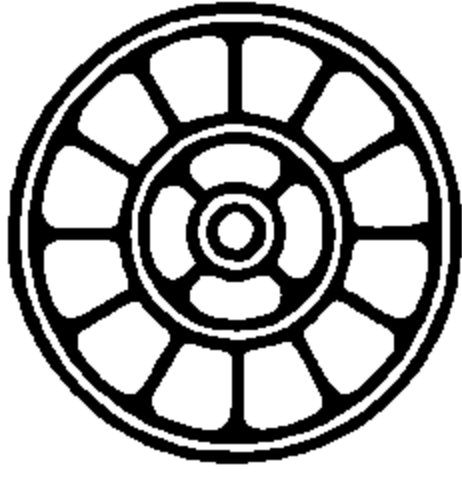
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Occultism is exactly what he has said: it is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science. It is altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry, for it is the same kind of knowledge as the knowledge of chemistry for material things. It is a knowledge of invisible forces, their different vibrations, their interrelations, the combinations which can be made by bringing them together and the power one can exercise over them. It is absolutely scientific; and it ought to be learnt like a science; that is, one cannot practise occultism as something emotional or something vague and imprecise. You must work at it as you would do at chemistry, and learn all the rules or find them if there is nobody to teach you. But it is at some risk to yourself that you can find them.

There are combinations here as explosive as certain chemical combinations.

★



*Mother, can physical science by its progress open to occultism?*

It is only a question of words.... They are making sensational discoveries which people with occult knowledge already knew thousands of years ago! They have made a long circuit and come to the same thing.

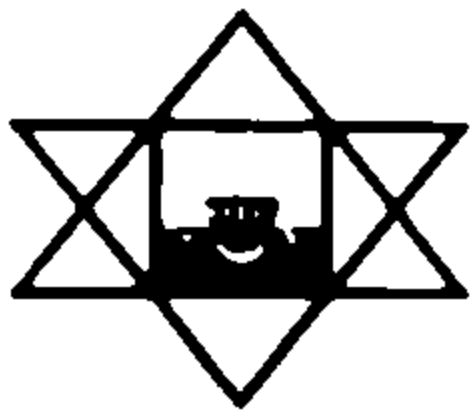
With the most recent discoveries in medicine, in the applied sciences, for instance, they are contacting in this way, with a wonder-struck interest, things which were known to certain sages a very, very long time ago. And then they present all this before you as new marvels – but indeed they are rather old, their marvels!

They will end up by practising occultism without knowing that they are doing so! For, in fact, as soon as one draws close, however slightly, to the truth of things and when one is sincere in one's search, not satisfied by mere appearances, when one really wants to find something and goes deep, penetrates behind appearances, then one begins to advance towards the truth of things; and as one comes closer to it, well, one finds again the same knowledge that others who began by going within have brought back from their inner discoveries.

Only the method and the path are different but the thing discovered will be the same, because there are not two things to be found, there is only one. It will necessarily be the same. It all depends on the path one follows; some go fast, others slowly, some go straight, others, as I said, go a long way round – and

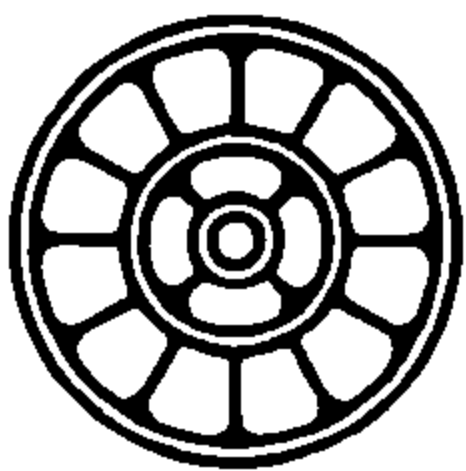
what labour! How they have laboured!... Besides, it is very respectable.

## THE AIM AND PROCESS OF OCCULTISM



But if it is to fulfil itself, the true foundation, the true aim and direction, the necessary restrictions and precautions of this line of inquiry have to be re-discovered; its most important aim must be the discovery of the hidden truths and powers of the mind-force and the life-power and the greater forces of the concealed spirit. Occult science is, essentially, the science of the subliminal, the subliminal in ourselves and the subliminal in world-nature, and of all that is in connection with the subliminal, including the subconscious and the superconscious, and the use of it as part of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and for the right dynamisation of that knowledge.

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Even now, the experiences of Western occultists and those of Eastern occultists offer great similarities. All who set out on the discovery of these invisible worlds and make a report of what they saw, give a very similar description, whether they be from here or there; they use different words, but the experience is very similar and the handling of forces is the same.

This knowledge of the occult worlds is based on the existence of subtle bodies and of subtle worlds corresponding to those bodies. They are what the psychological method calls "states of consciousness", but these states of consciousness really correspond to worlds. The occult procedure consists then in being aware of these various inner states of being or subtle bodies and in becoming sufficiently a master of them so as to be able to

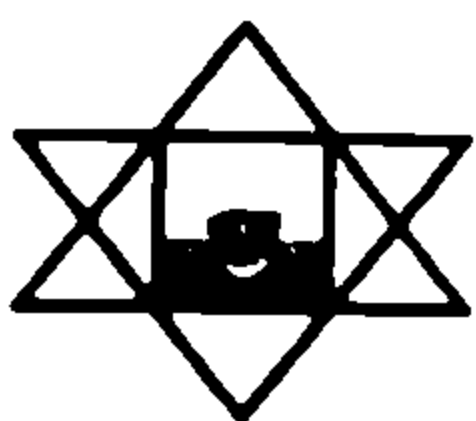
go out of them successively, one after another. There is indeed a whole scale of subtleties, increasing or decreasing according to the direction in which you go, and the occult procedure consists in going out of a denser body into a subtler body and so on again, up to the most ethereal regions. You go, by successive exteriorisations, into bodies or worlds more and more subtle. It is somewhat as if every time you passed into another dimension. The fourth dimension of the physicists is nothing but the scientific transcription of an occult knowledge. To give another image, one can say that the physical body is at the centre – it is the most material, the densest and also the smallest – and the inner bodies, more subtle, overflow more and more the central physical body; they pass through it, extending themselves farther and farther, like water evaporating from a porous vase and forming a kind of steam all around. And the greater the subtlety, the more the extension tends to unite with that of the universe: one ends by universalising oneself. And it is altogether a concrete process which gives an objective experience of invisible worlds and even enables one to act in these worlds....

All these regions, all these domains are filled with beings who exist, each in its own domain, and if you are awake and conscious on a particular plane – for instance, if on going out of a more material body you awake on some higher plane, you have the same relation with the things and people of that plane as you had with the things and people of the material world. That is to say, there exists an entirely objective relation that has nothing to do with the idea you may have of these things. Naturally, the resemblance is greater and greater as you approach the physical world, the material world, and there even comes a time when the one region has a direct action upon the other. In any case, in what Sri Aurobindo calls the overmental worlds, you will find a concrete reality absolutely independent of

your personal experience; you go back there and again find the same things, with the differences that have occurred during your absence. And you have relations with those beings that are identical with the relations you have with physical beings, with this difference that the relation is more plastic, supple and direct – for example, there is the capacity to change the external form, the visible form, according to the inner state you are in. But you can make an appointment with someone and be at the appointed place and find the same being again, with certain differences that have come about during your absence; it is entirely concrete with results entirely concrete....

But for this, you must *live* these experiences yourself, you must see them yourself, live them with sufficient sincerity and spontaneity in order to see that they are independent of any mental formation. For you can do the opposite also, and deepen the study of the action of mental formation upon events. This is very interesting, but it is another domain. And this study makes you very careful, very prudent, because you become aware of how far you can delude yourself. So you must study both, the dream and the occult reality, in order to see what is the *essential* difference between the two. The one depends upon us; the other exists in itself; entirely independent of the thought that we have of it.

## OCCULTISM AND SPIRITUALITY

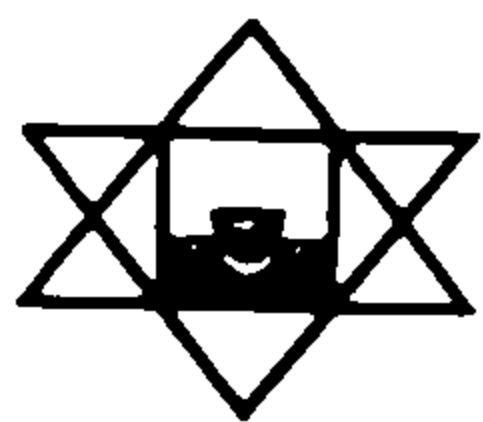


The spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable. I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions. Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed – others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life. Some no doubt can carry

on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other; but the process I suggest is the safer.

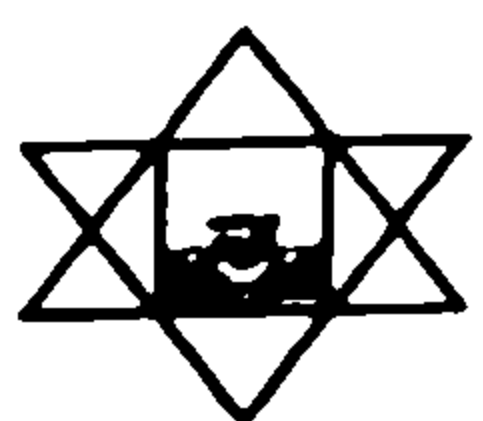
The governing factors for us must be the spirit and the psychic being united with the Divine – the occult laws and phenomena have to be known but only as an instrumentation, not as the governing principles. The occult is a vast field and complicated and not without its dangers. It need not be abandoned but it should not be given the first place.

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...the true occult spiritual forces and mysteries can be called down or can come down without calling, but this must be made secondary to the one true thing, the seeking for the Divine, and if it is part of the Divine plan in you. Occult powers can only be for the spiritual man an instrumentation of the Divine Power that uses him: they cannot be the aim or an aim of his sadhana.

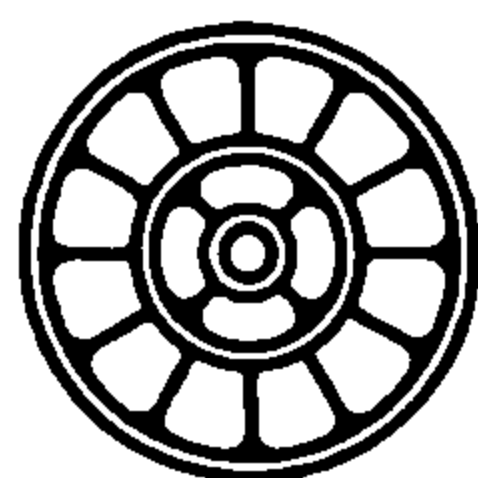
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One comes inevitably into contact with the vital plane and enters into it in the expansion of consciousness which results from an inner opening, but one ought never to put oneself into the hands of these beings and forces or allow oneself to be led by their suggestions and impulsions. This is one of the chief dangers of the spiritual life and to be on one's guard against it is a necessity for the seeker if he wishes to arrive at his goal. It is true that many supraphysical or supernormal powers come with the expansion of the consciousness in yoga; to rise out of the body consciousness, to act by subtle means on the supraphysical planes, etc. are natural activities for the yogi. But these powers are not sought after, they come naturally, and they have not the astral character. Also, they have to be used on purely spiritual

lines, that is by the Divine Will and the Divine Force, as an instrument, but never as an instrumentation of the forces and beings of the vital plane. To seek aid for such powers is a great error.

## **MAGIC – PROTECTION AGAINST MAGIC**



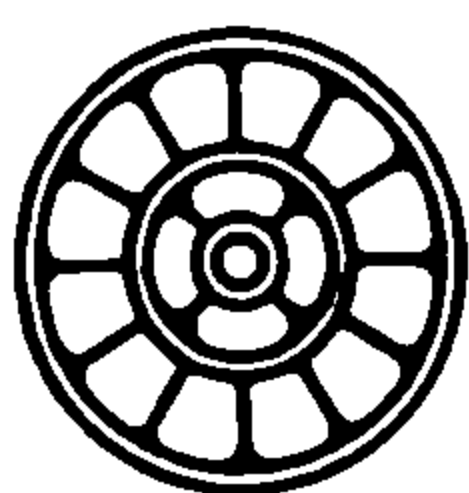
... as soon as one draws near the Truth, one is safe from all charlatanism, all pretension and falsehood. Of this I have had numerous and extremely conclusive proofs. And so someone who has the true occult power possesses at the same time, by the strength of this inner truth, the power to undo any magic, white or black or whatever colour it may be, simply by applying a drop of that truth, one might say. There is nothing that can resist that power. And this is very well known to those who practise magic, for they always take very great care, in all countries but especially in India, never to try out any of their formulas against yogis and saints, because they know that these formulas which they send out with their little mechanical, very superficial power, will go and strike, like a ball on a wall, the true power that protects one who leads a spiritual life, and quite naturally their formula will rebound and fall back on them.

The yogi or saint doesn't need to do anything, he doesn't even have to want to protect himself: it is something automatic. He is in a state of consciousness and inner power which automatically protects him from everything that is inferior. Naturally, he can also use his power deliberately to protect others. This rebounding of the bad formation from his atmosphere automatically protects him, but if this bad formation is made against someone he is protecting or simply someone who asks for his help, then he can, by a movement of his own atmosphere, his own aura, surround the person who is exposed to the evil magic spells,

and the rebounding process acts in the same way and causes the bad formation to fall back quite naturally on the one who made it. But in this case the conscious will of the yogi or saint or sage is needed. He has to be informed about what has happened and he must decide to intervene.

That is the difference between true knowledge and magic.

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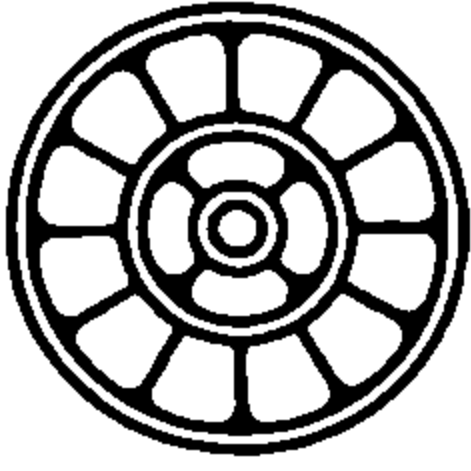


What we call “white magic” is a beneficial magic and “black magic” is a harmful magic. But in fact these are mere words, they have no meaning.

Magic?... It is a knowledge that has been reduced to purely material formulas. They are some kind of words or numbers or combinations of words and numbers, which, if they are simply pronounced or written, even by someone who has no inner power, must act. In occultism, this is what corresponds to chemical formulas in science. You see, in science you have chemical formulas for combining certain elements and producing others from them; even if you do not have any mental or vital or even physical power, if you just follow to the letter the formula you have, you obtain the required result – it is enough simply to have a memory. Well, the same thing has been tried in occultism, making combinations of sounds, letters, numbers, words, which, by their inherent qualities, have the power to obtain a certain result. In this way, any fool, if he learns this and does exactly what he is told, obtains – or believes he will obtain – the result he wants.

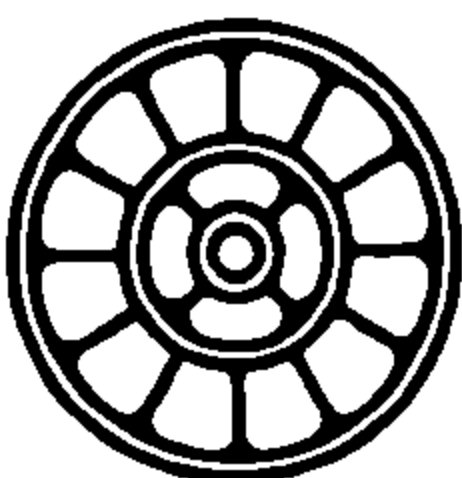


## HYPNOTISM



Now they are finding out that they can replace anaesthetics by hypnotism with infinitely better results. Well, hypnotism is a form – a form modernised in its expression – of occultism; a very limited, very small form of a very tiny power compared with occult power, but still it is a form of occultism which has been put in modern terms to make the thing modern. And I don't know if you have heard about these things, but they are very interesting from a certain point of view: for instance, this process of hypnotism has been tried on someone who had to have a skin-graft on a wound. I don't remember all the details now, but the arm had to remain attached to the leg for a fortnight.... If the person were immobilised by plaster and bandages and all sorts of things, at the end of the fortnight he wouldn't be able to move – everything would become stiff and he would need weeks of treatment to recover the free use of his arm. In this case, nothing was tied up, nothing was physically immobilised – no plaster, no bandages, nothing – the person was just hypnotised and told to keep his arm in that position. He kept it for a fortnight, without any effort, any difficulty, without any intervention from his will: it was the will of the hypnotiser which intervened. It was perfectly successful, the arm remained in the required position, and when the fortnight was over and the hypnotism removed, and the person was told "now you may move", he began to move! Well, that's a step forward.

## REQUISITES FOR PRACTISING OCCULTISM

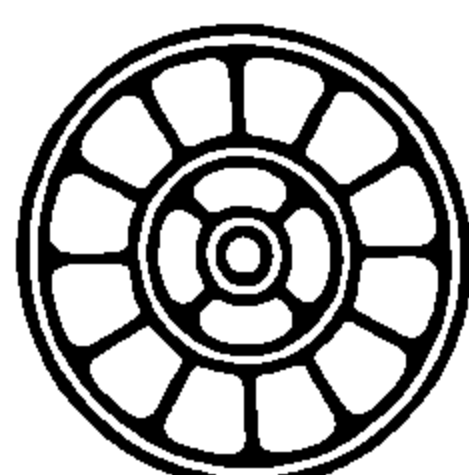


*To be able to enter the "earth-memory" consciously, a discipline is needed. What discipline?*

A discipline much more difficult than the discipline of yoga! It is an occult discipline.

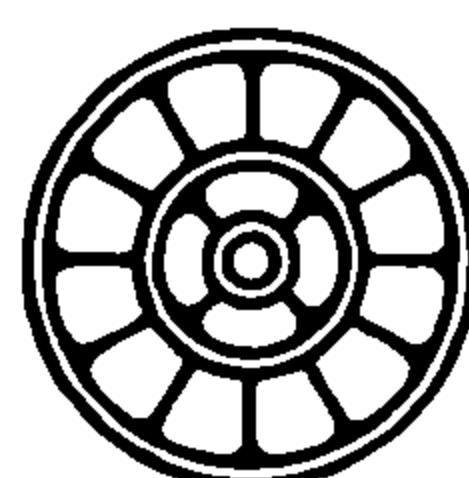
First of all, one must learn to go out of one's body consciously and to enter into another more subtle body; to use one's will to go where one wants to go, never to fear and sometimes to face unexpected and even terrible things; to remain calm, to develop the mind's visual sense, to accustom one's mind to be altogether peaceful and quiet.... You know, the list is long and I could continue like this for hours!

★



Generally, when you want to study occultism, the first thing that the Master does is never to speak to you about it, never to explain it to you, precisely because of this ridiculous phenomenon of the mind which begins to "think" about it and brings you "experiences" which have no value: they are mental formations which make a plaything of you, that is all. They have no reality.

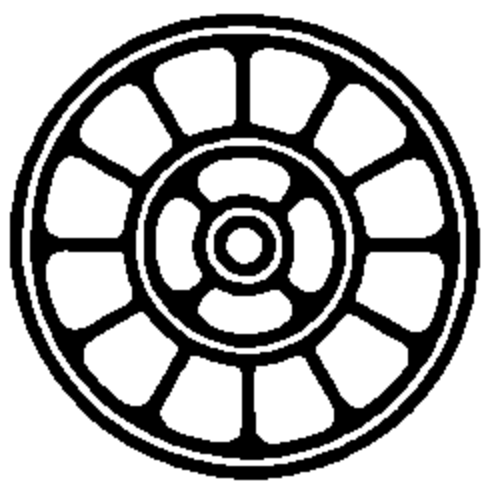
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... you think one learns occultism as one learns to play the piano! But it is not quite like that, anyway, that things happen. In fact, those who have no special aptitude could read all the books on occultism in the world and never know how to practise it. It needs a special capacity.

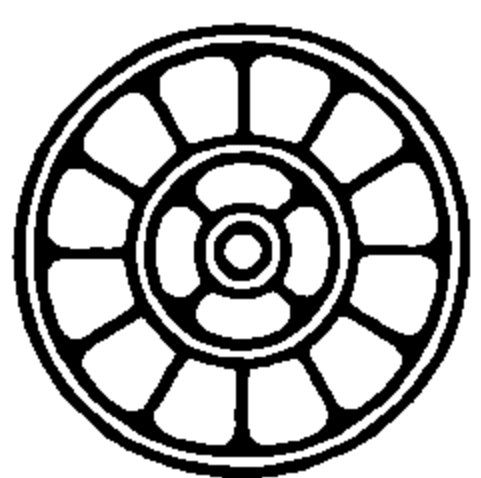
It is true that you may also read all the books in the world on how to play the piano – if you do not play, you will never know how to play. But there are born musicians, born artists, and there are people who may work at it all their lives and never come to anything at all. It is the same thing with occultism.

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In any case, before entering upon this study, one must have, as I told you at the beginning, a very great self-mastery, must have attained a kind of abnegation, a self-forgetfulness, an egolessness, a disinterestedness and sense of sacrifice which enables one to practise this without any danger. For, if you keep all egoistic or passionate movements, full of desires, you are sure, in the practice of this science, to meet with accidents which may have fatal consequences. As I said at the beginning, the *absolutely* indispensable condition is to have an intrepidity which does not allow any fear to enter into you. For this has been very often said, and it is quite true, that when you enter the invisible realm, the first things you meet are literally terrifying. If you have no fear, there is no danger, but the least fear puts you into danger. So, before anybody at all was allowed to practise this science, for a very long time, sometimes for years, the novice was submitted to a discipline which gave him the assurance that he could practise it without experiencing the least fear and without any danger.

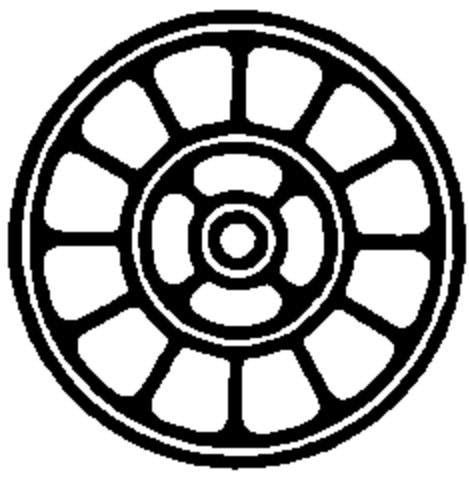
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...let us take the mantra, for instance, which is a form of occultism; unless the mantra is given by a guru and the guru transmits his occult or spiritual power to you with the mantra, you may repeat your mantra thousands of times, it will have no effect.

That is to say, in *true* occultism, one must have the quality, the ability, the inner gift in order to use it, and that is the safeguard. True occultism cannot be practised by any fool. And this is no longer magic – neither white magic nor black nor golden – it is not magic at all, it is a spiritual power which must be acquired by long discipline; and finally, it is given to you only by a divine grace.

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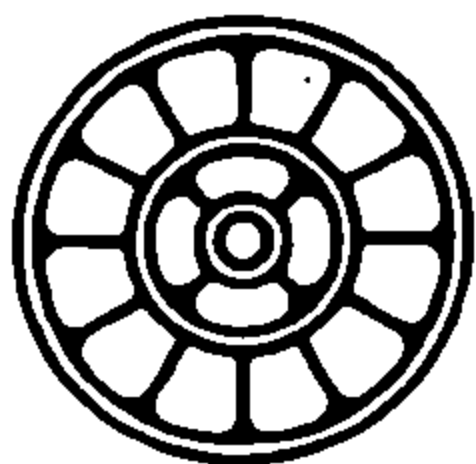


Thus, for example, when one goes out of the body – I have often spoken to you of this phenomenon – even if it be just to a little extent, even if only mentally – then what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body, what remains is the portion that is automatic, producing the spontaneous involuntary movements such as blood circulation or secretion, etc. also other nervous or automatic thought movements; this region is no longer under the control of the conscious thinking part. Now, there is always in the atmosphere around you a good number of small entities, quite small often, that are generally formed out of the disintegrated remains of a dead human being: they are like microbes, the microbes of the vital. They have forms and can be visible and they have a will of their own. You cannot say they are always wicked, but they are full of mischief, that is to say, they like amusing themselves at the cost of human beings. As soon as they see that someone is not sufficiently protected, they rush in and take possession of the mechanical mind and bring about all kinds of disagreeable happenings – nightmares, various physical disturbances – you feel choked, bite or swallow your tongue and even more serious things. When you wish to go into trance, to have the experience of being outside the body, you must have someone by your side, not only to keep watch on your physical body, but also to prevent the vital entities from getting possession of the nerve centres which, as I said, are no longer under the control and protection of the conscious intelligence. There is a still greater danger. When one goes out of the body in a more or less concrete or material way, retaining only a thin and fragile contact – a thread of light, as it were – with the body, this thread of contact must be protected, for the attack of the hostiles may come upon it and cut it; if it is cut one can no longer return into the body, and that means death.

All that signifies that occultism is not a joke or a mere play; you cannot take to it simply to amuse yourself. It must be done as it ought to be done, under proper conditions and with great care. The one thing absolutely essential is, I repeat once more, to be totally fearless. If you happen to meet in your dreams terrible scenes and are frightened, then you must not approach occultism. If, on the contrary, you can remain perfectly tranquil in the face of the most frightful menaces, they simply amuse you, if you can handle such situations safely and successfully, that would show that you have some capacity and then you can try seriously. There are people who are real fighters in their sleep; if they meet an enemy they can face him, they can not only defend themselves, but can attack and conquer.

(Retold by Nolini Kanta Gupta)

## STORIES OF OCCULTISM

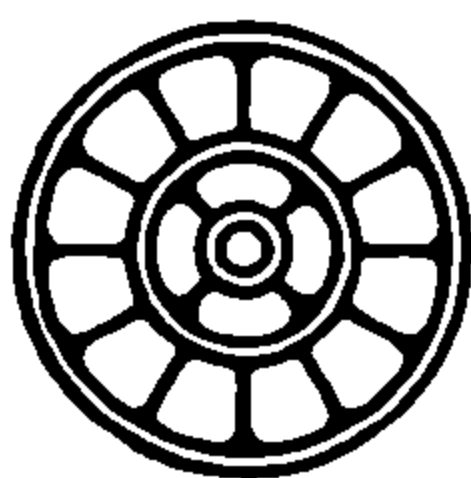


I had the experience – among innumerable instances – but precisely of two very striking cases, of two opposite things, only it was not the same beings.... There are little beings like fairies who are very sweet, very obliging, but they are not always there, they come from time to time when it pleases them. I remember the time I used to cook for Sri Aurobindo; I was also doing many other things at the same time, so I often happened to leave the milk on the fire and go for some other work or to see something with him, to discuss with somebody, and truly I was not always aware of the time, I used to forget the milk on the fire. And whenever I forgot the milk on the fire, I felt suddenly (in those days I used to wear a sari) a little hand catching a fold of my sari and pulling it, like this. Then I used to run quickly and would see that the milk was just on the point of boiling over. This did not

happen just once, but several times, and very clearly, like a little child's hand clutching and pulling.

The other story is of the days Sri Aurobindo had the habit of walking up and down in his rooms. He used to walk for several hours like that, it was his way of meditating. Only, he wanted to know the time, so a clock had been put in each room to enable him to see the time at any moment. There were three such clocks. One was in the room where I worked; it was, so to say, his starting-point. One day he came and asked, "What time is it?" He looked and the clock had stopped. He went into the next room saying, "I shall see the time there" – the clock had stopped. And it had stopped at the same minute as the other, you understand, with the difference of a few seconds. He went to the third room.... the clock had stopped. He continued walking three times like that – all the clocks had stopped! Then he returned to my room and said, "But this is impossible! This is a bad joke!" and all the clocks, one after the other, started working again. I saw it myself, you know, it was a charming incident. He was angry, he said, "This is a bad joke!" And all the clocks started going again!

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We know, for example, of extraordinary – at least, queer – things happening at what are called "spirit seances", things that cannot be explained by the normal functioning of the physical senses; they are explained as interventions from the spirit world. In reality, however, spirits or ghosts have, in general very little to do in this matter. It is action not of disembodied beings but of the normal human energies – especially the vital or life energy – freed from the body's control and exerting itself independently. An example, a true fact that happened, will best illustrate what I mean to say.

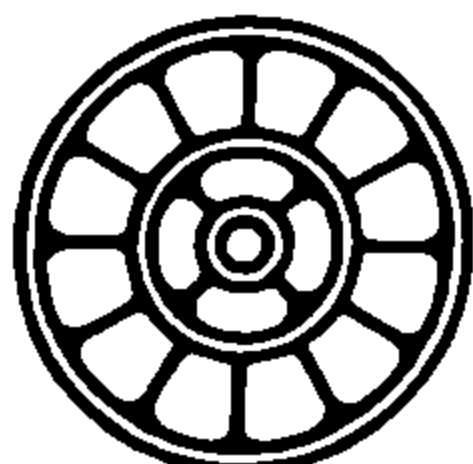
A young man, in Paris, a clerk at a railway station, used to receive there his *fiancee* and her mother from time to time. One day he was expecting them and waiting for the train time; they had to come by train. As he was busy with his work at the table, at about the appointed hour, people around saw him all on a sudden bending down his head with a loud scream and then resting it on the table; he lay unconscious. In the meantime, what happened on the other side was a terrible railway disaster: the two women were involved in it. The trains were smashed and all the passengers killed or mortally wounded. But, curious to say, the young woman, the *fiancee*, was found, living and almost unscathed, in the midst of the debris, within a sort of cover made by a fallen beam that lay across over her. She was pulled out with only a few bruises upon her body. Here is, however, the young man's version of the story. He said that as he was working at the table, suddenly he heard the voice of his *fiancee* calling loudly for help and he saw in a flash, as it were, the situation she was in, he rushed out, not physically indeed, and ran and threw himself over the body of his *fiancee* to protect her; that is the only thing he could do. As a result he did in fact protect her. True, he did not rush out in his body, for that matter, if he had done, it would have been of no use. What rushed out of him was his vital body, a formation of that life energy which is most close to the body and almost as concrete as physical energy but much more powerful and effective. This vital power concentrated and projected out of him acted as a veritable shield over the woman. The young man himself, curious to say, bore marks of bruises upon his head as if a huge load had fallen upon it. A strong impact upon the vital can and does leave scars upon the material body; it is not an uncommon phenomenon. Many of the Christian saints (Saint Francis of Assisi, for example) are reported to have borne on their body the marks – the stigmata – of crucifixion of Christ's body; Ramakrishna, too,



it is said once showed marks of scourging on his back when a boy was whipped in his presence.

(Retold by Nolini Kanta Gupta)

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I shall tell you a story to illustrate my point. I knew a Dane who was a painter, a painter of some talent. He was interested in occultism. Some of you might have heard of him. He had come here and met Sri Aurobindo. He did a portrait too of Sri Aurobindo. It was the first Great War. He returned to France and saw me. He asked me to teach him this science. I taught him how to come out of the body, how to maintain control, etc., etc. I told him especially what I tell you now, not to have fear. Now he came to me one day and narrated his experience of a night. He had a dream; but of course it was not a dream: he knew how to come out of the body and was out consciously. Once out he was trying to find where he was. Suddenly he saw moving towards him a tiger, huge and formidable, evidently with dire intentions. He remembered, however, my advice. So he kept calm and quiet and said to himself: "There is no danger, I am protected, nothing can happen to me. I am surrounded by the power of protection". And he looked straight at the animal calmly and fearlessly. As he kept on gazing, strange to say, he saw the tiger diminishing in size, shrinking and shrinking, till at last it turned into a small harmless cat!

What did the tiger represent? I told the painter that perhaps in the course of the day or at some time he was angry with some one and indulged in violent thoughts, wishing him harm, etc.

Now, as in the physical world, so too in the occult world there is a law of action and reaction or return movement. You cherish a bad thought; it returns upon you as an attack from outside. So



the tiger might have represented some bad thought or impulse in him which came back upon him, like, as it is said, a boomerang. It is exactly one of the reasons why one should have control over one's thoughts and feelings and sensations. For if you think ill of a person, wish unpleasant things for him, then in your dream you are likely to see the person coming to attack you, more violently perhaps than you thought of doing. In your ignorance and impulse of self-justification you say, "Just see, was I not right in my feeling towards this man, he wanted to kill me!" In point of fact, however, the contrary is the truth. It is a common law in occultism that if you make a formation – a mental formation, for example, to the effect that an accident or some unpleasant thing should happen to a person and you send out the formation to do its work, then, if it so happens that the person concerned is on a higher level of consciousness, that is to say, if he wishes harm to none, is quite disinterested and indifferent in the matter, then the formation approaches him but does not enter into his atmosphere or touch him, it rebounds upon the sender. In that case a serious accident may happen to the sender of the formation: if one wishes death to another, death may come to himself. That is often the result of *black magic* which is a deformation of occultism.

Formations are of many kinds. A formation is made for a particular work. When the work is done, the formation too dissolves. But it is a huge and complex subject. You cannot learn the whole of chemistry in one hour.

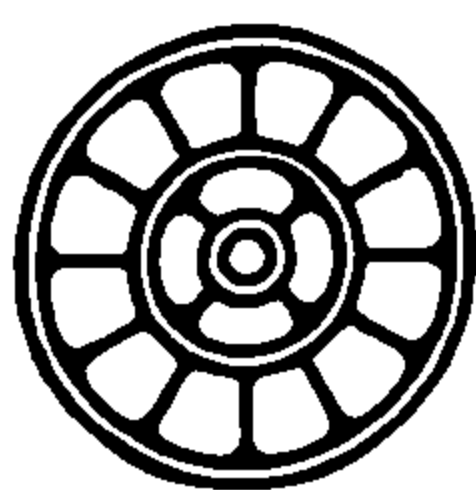
I shall tell you another story in this connection, for it has an occult bearing. There was a very well-known scientist in Paris. He has written the story in a book of his. He wanted to know to what extent man's reason can affect or influence his reflex movements, how far one can control one's instinctive or sub-conscious impulses by the force of conscious intelligence. So

one day he went to the Zoo. Among the animals there were huge snakes, one was particularly notorious for its vicious character, that is to say, it could be easily excited and enraged. It was a very big animal, black but beautiful. The serpents were of course kept within glass cases, the glass being sufficiently thick to prevent any possibility of accident. He came before meal-time, when it was hungry; for after food they go to sleep. He stood before the glass-pane, quite near and began teasing and exciting the animal. I do not remember exactly what he did to rouse the animal, but there it was wild with anger; it shot out like a spring and darted at the face of the gentleman who was just on the other side of the glass almost touching it. He knew very well that nothing could happen to him, the barrier was sound and secure and yet each time the snake darted at him, he leaped back to avoid the blow as it were. The thing repeated itself continually and however much he repeated to himself all the reasons of his safety and security, the reflex gesture could not be controlled.

Only the scientist did not know one thing – an element of occult knowledge escaped him. The physical movement of the serpent was accompanied by a considerable amount of a vital projection of its nervous energy. It was that which struck him with an irresistible force. It was almost like a violent physical shock and mere reason has no power to control it. To check and control, you must learn the occult way.

(Retold by Nolini Kanta Gupta)

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I am going to tell you about Madame X. Madame X was born on the Isle of Wight and she lived in Tlemcen with her husband who was a great occultist. Madame X herself was an occultist of great powers, a remarkable clairvoyant, and she had mediumistic

qualities. Her powers were quite exceptional; she had received an extremely complete and rigorous training and she could exteriorise herself, that is, bring out of her material body a subtle body, in full consciousness, and do it twelve times in succession. That is, she could pass consciously from one state of being to another, live there as consciously as in her physical body, and then again put that subtler body into trance, exteriorise herself from it, and so on twelve times successively, to the extreme limit of the world of forms.... I shall speak to you about that later, when you can understand better what I am talking about. But I am going to tell you about some small incidents I saw when I was in Tlemcen<sup>1</sup> myself, and a story she told me I shall also tell you.

The incidents are of a more external kind, but very funny. She was almost always in trance and she had trained her body so well that even when she was in trance, that is, when one or more parts of her being were exteriorised, the body had a life of its own and she could walk about and even attend to some small material occupations.... She did a great deal of work, for in her trances she could talk freely and she used to narrate what she saw, which was noted down and later formed a teaching – which has even been published. And because of all that and the occult work she was doing, she was often tired, in the sense that her body was tired and needed to recuperate its vitality in a very concrete way.

Now, one day when she was particularly tired, she told me, "You will see how I am going to recover my strength." She had plucked from her garden – it was not a garden, it was a vast estate with ancient olive trees, and fig trees such as I have never seen anywhere else, it was a real marvel, on a mountain-side, from the plain to almost half way up – and in this garden

<sup>1</sup> In 1907.

there were many lemon trees and orange trees... and grapefruit. Grapefruit has flowers which have an even better fragrance than orange blossoms – they are large flowers and she knew how to make an essence from them herself, she had given me a bottle – well, she had plucked a huge grapefruit like this, very large and ripe, and she lay down on her bed and put the grapefruit on her solar plexus, here, like this, holding it with both hands. She lay down and rested. She did not sleep, she rested. She told me, “Come back in an hour.” An hour later I returned... and the grapefruit was as flat as a pancake. That meant that she had such a power to absorb vitality that she had absorbed all the life from the fruit and it had become soft and completely flat. And I saw that myself! You may try, you won’t succeed!

Another time – and this is even more amusing... But first I shall tell you a little about Tlemcen, which you probably don’t know. Tlemcen is a small town in southern Algeria, almost on the borders of the Sahara. The town itself is built in the valley which is surrounded by a circle of mountains, not very high but nevertheless higher than hills. And the valley is very fertile, verdurous, magnificent. The population there is mainly Arabs and rich merchants; indeed, the city is very prosperous – it was, for I don’t know what it is like now; I am speaking to you about things that happened at the beginning of this century – there were very prosperous merchants there and from time to time these Arabs came to pay a visit to Monsieur X. They knew nothing, understood nothing, but they were very interested.

One day, towards evening, one of these people arrived and started asking questions, ludicrous ones besides. Then Madame X said to me, “You will see, we are going to have a little fun.” In the verandah of the house there was a big dining-table, a very large table, like that, quite wide, with eight legs, four on each side. It was really massive, and heavy. Chairs had been

arranged to receive this man, at a little distance from the table. He was at one end, Madame X at the other; I was seated on one side, Monsieur X also. All four of us were there. Nobody was near the table, all of us were at a distance from it. And so, he was asking questions, as I said rather ludicrous ones, on the powers one could have and what could be done with what he called "magic".... She looked at me and said nothing but sat very still. Suddenly I heard a cry, a cry of terror. The table started moving and with an almost heroic gesture went to attack the poor man seated at the other end! It went and bumped against him.... Madame X had not touched it, nobody had touched it. She had only concentrated on the table and by her vital power had made it move. At first the table had wobbled a little, then had started moving slowly, then suddenly, as in one bound, it flung itself on that man, who went away and never came back!

She also had the power to dematerialise and rematerialise things. And she never said anything, she did not boast, she did not say, "I am going to do something", she did not speak of anything; she just did it quietly. She did not attach much importance to these things, she knew they were just a proof that there are other forces than purely material ones.

When I used to go out in the evenings – towards the end of the afternoon I used to go for a walk with Monsieur X to see the countryside, go walking in the mountains, the neighbouring villages – I used to lock my door; it was a habit with me, I always locked my door. Madame X would rarely go out, for the reasons I have already mentioned, because she was in a trance most of the time and liked to stay at home. But when I returned from the walk and opened my door – which was locked, and therefore nobody could have entered – I would always find a kind of little garland of flowers on my pillow. They were flowers which grew

in the garden, they are called *Belles de Nuit*; we have them here, they open in the evening and have a wonderful fragrance. There was a whole alley of them, with big bushes as high as this; they are remarkable flowers – I believe it's the same here – on the same bush there are different coloured flowers: yellow, red, mixed, violet. They are tiny flowers like... bluebells; no, rather like the convolvulus, but these grow on bushes – convolvulus is a creeper, these are bushes – we have some here in the garden. She always used to put some behind her ears, for they have a lovely smell, oh! delightfully beautiful. And so, she used to take a walk in the alley between these big bushes which were quite high, and she gathered flowers, and – when I came back, these flowers were in my room!... She never told me how she did it, but she certainly did not go in there. Once she said to me, “Were there no flowers in your room?” – “Ah! yes, indeed,” I said. And that was all. Then I knew it was she who had put them there.

I could tell you many stories, but I shall finish with this one she had told me, which I did not see myself.

As I was telling you, Tlemcen is very near the Sahara and it was a desert climate except that in the valley a river flows which never dries up and makes the whole country very fertile. But the mountains were absolutely arid. Only in the part occupied by farmers did something grow. Now, Monsieur X's park – a large estate – was, as I said, a marvellous place... everything grew there, everything one could imagine and to a magnificent size. Now, she told me – they had been there a very long time – that about five or six years before, I think, they had felt that these barren mountains might one day cause the river to dry up and that it would be better to plant trees there; and the administrator of Tlemcen ordered trees to be planted on all the neighbouring hills; a wide amphitheatre, you know. He said that pine trees

should be planted, for in Algeria the sea-pine grows very well. And they wanted to try it. Well, for some reason or other – forgetfulness or fantasy, heaven knows! – instead of ordering pine trees they ordered fir trees! Fir trees belong to Scandinavian countries, not at all to desert lands. And very conscientiously all these fir trees were planted. Now Madame X saw this and I believe she felt like making an experiment. So it happened that four or five years later these fir trees had not only grown but had become magnificent and when I went to Tlemcen the mountains all around were absolutely green, magnificent with trees. She said to me, “You see, these are not pine trees, they are fir trees”, and indeed they were – you know fir trees are Christmas trees, don’t you? – they were fir trees. Then she told me how after three years when the fir trees had grown, suddenly one day or rather one December night, as she had just gone to bed and put out her light, she was awakened by a tiny little noise – she was very sensitive to noise; she opened her eyes and saw something like a moonbeam – there was no moon that night – lighting up a corner of her room. And she noticed that a little gnome was there, like the ones you see in the fairytales of Norway and Sweden, Scandinavian fairy-tales. He was a tiny little fellow with a big head, a pointed cap, pointed shoes of dark green, a long white beard, and all covered with snow.

So she looked at him – her eyes were open – she looked at him and said, “But... Eh! what are you doing here?” – she was a little worried, for in the warmth of her room the snow was melting and making a little pool on the floor of her room. “But what are you doing here!”

Then he smiled at her, gave her his sweetest smile and said, “But we were called by the fir trees! Fir trees call the snow. They are trees of the snow countries. I am the Lord of the Snow, so I came to announce to you that... we are coming. We have been



called, we are coming.” “Snow?... But we are near the Sahara!”  
 “Ah! then you shouldn’t have planted fir trees.” Finally she told him, “Listen, I don’t know if what you tell me is true, but you are spoiling my floor. Go away!”

So he went away. The moonlight went with him. She lit a lamp – for there was no electricity – she lit a lamp and saw... a little pool of water in the place where he had stood. So it was not a dream, there really was a little being whose snow had melted in her room. And the next morning when the sun rose, it rose upon mountains covered with snow. It was the first time, it had never been seen before in that country.

Since then, every winter – not for long, just for a little while – all the mountains are covered with snow. So that’s my story.

## REFERENCES – OCCULTISM

### Booklet

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| 3a SABCL Vol. 19, p. 652    | b CWM Vol. 4, p. 124        |
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N.B. Abbreviations: SABCL – Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library

CWM – Collected Works of the Mother

CWNKG – Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta

The quotation in the last line of the introduction is from 'White Roses'.