

Experiences in Alipur Jail 1908 – 1909

Pain and Ananda

As for divine rapture, a knock on head or foot or elsewhere *can* be received with the physical Ananda of pain or pain + Ananda or pure physical Ananda — for I have often, quite involuntarily, made the experiment myself and passed with honours. It began, by the way, as far back as in Alipur jail when I got bitten in my cell by some very red and ferocious looking warrior ants and found to my surprise that pain and pleasure are conventions of our senses. But I do not expect that unusual reaction from others. And I suppose there are limits, e.g. the case of a picketer in Madras or Dr. Noel Paton. In any case, this way of having rapture is better off the list and the Lilliputian doorway [*against which the correspondent bumped himself*] was not a happy contrivance.

13 February 1932

The Principle of Levitation

You told me [*in a private interview*]: “I haven’t had the experience of levitation itself but an experience I had could not have been true if there was no levitation.” Could you kindly tell me what the experience was if, that is, it is tellable. I remember X once told me that it was at Alipur you found your body in equilibrium in a lifted angle. Is that it?

There were other things but not at present tellable! You can put it like this. “I take levitation as an acceptable idea, because I have had myself experience of the natural energies which if developed would bring it about and also physical experiences which would not have been possible if the principle of levitation were untrue.”

11 March 1943

Opening to Painting

I can quite understand that the inner knowledge comes with the growth and heightening of consciousness. But what about the outer knowledge — what we ordinarily call knowledge?

The capacity for it can come with the inner knowledge. E.g. I understood nothing about painting before I did Yoga. A moment's illumination in Alipur jail opened my vision and since then I have understood with the intuitive perception and vision. I do not know the technique of course but I can catch it at once if anybody with knowledge speaks of it. That would have been impossible to me before.

29 December 1934

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Don't be desperate about your incapacity as a connoisseur of painting. I was worse in this respect, knew something about sculpture, but blind to painting. Suddenly one day in the Alipur jail, while meditating saw some "pictures" on the wall of the cell and lo and behold, the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of the technique. I don't always know how to express though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper expressions, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation. So, there you are. All things are possible.

25 July 1936

Contact with Vivekananda

I was wondering if you had seen or met Vivekananda somewhere.

No, not in the body. My contact with him was in the jail when he was speaking with me for about 15 days, giving me the first insight into the Intuition plane (not the intuitive mind which is mental and not supramental) as the first opening to Supermind.

21 October 1934

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If it is not indiscreet would you ask Sri Aurobindo if it is true that in 1909 — in Alipore jail — seven years after his death — Swami Vivekananda came to him, not in vision, but in actual fact, to ask him to continue the work, that he had not yet finished?

Sri Aurobindo says that Vivekananda came to him not in a visible form but as a presence which was with him for a fortnight during which V. spoke certain things about the processes of the higher Truth-Consciousness.¹

21 December 1938

¹ *This reply was written by the Mother at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or under his instructions. — Ed.*