Breath of Grace
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Editor M.P. Pandit

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Preface

The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo’s gospel of Divine Life is there enshrined in his vast body of literature. The Teachings of the Mother are there amply explained in her Writings and Talks which are happily growing year by year. But how have they radiated their Light in this obscure and resisting world, how have men and women received their Grace in day-to-day life? Moved by a strong need to record this practical side of their Manifestation, I approached a number of friends for their personal testimonies. Some graciously complied with my request, some declined. Of those who agreed, some wrote out their reminiscences; others were interviewed, and these reports were submitted to them for approval. This volume is a collection of these valuable papers and, as the readers would see, forms a rare and intimate history of the Ashram. The personalities of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother stand revealed in all their compassion, love and solicitude for the upliftment of erring humanity. Their advent on earth has indeed been a “Breath of Grace” that has turned a new page in the annals of mankind.

M.P. Pandit
30.11.1972
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as I saw Them
– by V. Chidanandam

About the year 1920 a good-humoured joke of Sri Aurobindo – one of his many –, used to be current in his circle. A certain person wanted to publish a magazine and sought Sri Aurobindo’s advice. Sri Aurobindo was reported to have said to him, “What is it you want to publish? your ignorance?” This I remembered when I was debating within myself whether to write this article or not. Finally, I have decided to write this knowing full well that I am publishing my ignorance. Two reasons weighed with me in coming to the decision.

First, I thought I must publish the authentic words of the Master, whom I consider to be Knowledge incarnate; I must share them with all, though they were from my private interviews with the Master. For they highlight his gracious personality as Guru, as Father, as Mother..., his unbounded compassion even for an unworthy person like myself, his sympathetic understanding, his uncanny insight and power to guide the disciples, his superhuman patience, and his manner of encouraging them. His love for his disciples was more than a mother’s love. I can find a parallel only in Ramakrishna’s love of his disciples. Sri Aurobindo was so informal, so affable, so genial, so lovable, so adorable, so willing to listen to us and answer any question, so intimate, we were never conscious of any reserve of manner in him, or any barrier between us. I never heard one hard word from him. I have preserved the notes of my conversations with the Master, some extracts from which I append below in Section II. Any comment would be superfluous for they reveal very clearly the aforesaid aspects of his personality.

Secondly, I felt I must repay my debt of gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, if that were at all possible, in this manner.

I

By the Grace of Sri Aurobindo I had my first Darshan of him in 1920 when I was a college student. I heard that he was a great patriot, quite out of the ordinary, one who renounced his all for our country, who saw our country actually as Bharat Mata, a Goddess, and who elevated patriotism to the height of Religion and Spirituality, and kindled the fire of spirit in the nation by his courage, and by his eloquent speeches and writings. I heard also that he was a poet, a scholar and a Maha Yogi. I was very eager to have Darshan of the great personality, and so I went to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo kindly granted me an interview.

Before seeing me he stood for a few minutes facing the sea and gazing into the beyond. He stood erect, motionless like a statue. Then he came near and sat in a chair. I made my pranam and sat opposite to him.

My first impression of Sri Aurobindo was that he was a true Rishi. His God-like
face radiated profound peace, and serenity. His intent and faraway look indicated to me that he was not of the earth. He was lean, but he was a picture of health and immense, dynamic calm strength. His complexion was dark, but his personality was radiant.

Sri Aurobindo made kind inquiries regarding my studies and interests. Politics inevitably came up for discussion. It was a very informal talk, but extremely stimulating and useful to me.

I had Darshan of Sri Aurobindo every evening for a week afterwards. We used to talk mainly about literature, fine arts, philosophy and politics. In English literature he advised me to begin with Thackeray’s Pendennis and other novels. He remarked: “Thackeray is more subtle and psychological than any novelist of his time or before him.” Other authors recommended by him were George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte Sisters, Stevenson.... Among poets he asked me to start with Tennyson, Matthew Arnold (especially his essay on translating Homer), Wordsworth, Shelly, Keats, and then take up the earlier poets.

Those meetings and many others afterwards were etched in my memory. While taking leave of him I requested his permission to come to see him again, and he kindly granted my request. After leaving Pondicherry I began to read the works of Sri Aurobindo with avidity. In them I found solutions of important problems concerning the nature of man, of the world and of God. The mental pleasure and spiritual satisfaction that I got from reading his works, I had never got from any other thinker or writer. It was not only admiration for the constant incandescence of his intellect; his philosophy of life and living appealed to something deeper; some inmost chord in my being, and moved me to my depths.

So in the beginning of 1926 I decided, “Sri Aurobindo is my Guru”. But I asked myself, “Will he accept me as his disciple?” With trepidation I proceeded to Pondicherry and sought an interview with the Master, which he readily granted. I wondered at the great change in his physical appearance since I had seen him last. His complexion was fair, and his body had filled out. Spiritual fire shone through his eyes. I remembered the epithet in the Mahabharata describing the eyes of the Tapaswins as ‘durniriksyā’, unseeable. (Later I saw it was not always so. Usually it was a soft and gentle light like the stars.) I told him the purpose of my visit. When he consented to accept me as his disciple, I felt myself blessed.

My brother V. Chandrasekharam and I lived in the house next door to 9 Rue de la Marine, the Master’s residence. There were about a dozen disciples then living in a few houses close by. It was like Gurukul. There used to be informal sittings in the evenings when we used to talk on all kinds of subjects. It was often like table-talk. Sometimes serious subjects also were discussed. At other times the talk was in a lighter vein on men and matters, on politics at home and abroad, etc., but it was all off the cuff.

Sri Aurobindo’s voice was soft and gentle, almost feminine. His words flowed like the cool waters of a perennial spring. Thoughts came to him incessantly. It appeared as if he was in communication with higher levels of inspiration and direct knowledge. His experience in the sphere of Sadhana as well as in other spheres was vast and profound. But he made us feel quite at ease in his august presence. I never saw him solemn or serious. The Master would talk in a relaxed and jovial mood. He had a fine and subtle sense of humour. Even light-hearted
jokes and jests used to be there in plenty. His repartee was good humoured and enjoyable. On occasions he would chuckle happily.

We therefore looked forward to the evening sittings with great pleasure. As days passed, it appeared to us, towards November 1926 that Sri Aurobindo was getting more and more indrawn. Evidently he had reached a crucial stage in his Sadhana and was on the verge of achieving a great objective. Finally towards the last week of November the evening sittings came to an end. The evening talks were an intellectual feast. I found them as scintillating and stimulating, as illuminating and edifying as the talks of Socrates and Plato, and in modern times of Goethe and Whitehead. All his original thoughts were precious to me and I used to record most of them faithfully the next day. On many days I could reproduce more than a hundred lines. This I believed then, and looking back now I believe still more, that it was all due to the Grace of Sri Aurobindo. My notes of these talks are currently being published in *Mother India*. There is no continuity in the notes, for the talks were on all kinds of subjects, and they cover different periods of time, but looming above it all in the background is Sri Aurobindo’s personality and the pervading presence of his unique vision.

II

In the mornings at about 9 a.m. we could see the Master individually whenever we wished to have his guidance. He used to help us very patiently with his advice and answer our questions.

8.5.1926 - Morning

In one of my interviews with the Master after I had been accepted, he remarked: “At present you are actively moving in the mind…. Are your nerves solid?”

**Answer:** My nerves are sensitive. Kindly tell me how to strengthen them, and also how to quieten my mind.

**Sri Aurobindo:** Solid nerves means patience, vigilance, endurance, capacity to break stones…. You must make your nerves strong by cultivating these qualities, and by bringing down quiet and peace. To get the stillness and peace you must first have silent aspiration in all the being for peace, then separate yourself from your mind, draw back and look at it from above. Actively watch the mind as it runs along. Don’t give sanction to the thoughts; if they are persistent reject them centrally, calmly, steadily, without struggle or effort or strain. Don’t involve yourself in the act of rejecting the thoughts. A vigilant will is essential lest you lose hold of self. You must be able to inwardly seize the mind and hold it… this is also necessary for active concentrated thinking. Both movements are mutually helpful…. With practice the mind comes under control, there will be quiet and stillness. After stillness is established, concentrate silently, consciously on the peace.

10.5.1926 - Morning

**Sri Aurobindo:** Emptiness of mind is something deeper than the normal void of the inert, tamasic mind, it is a preparation for a higher movement in consciousness. One must be vigilant and drive away all weakness and impurity, lest in this emptiness the force that is in the atmosphere may take advantage of
the weak spot and overturn him. I have reached a stage where there is something in the atmosphere around me, and the Sadhaks may feel the effects of its pressure on all the levels of being.... Unless one has a strong hold on the self there is every danger.

12.5.1926 – Morning

Sri Aurobindo: The external things do not much matter; it is the restlessness and the inertia of mind that are the real obstacles. The body is not so much of an obstacle as the mind with its activity and its desire for results. Don’t engage yourself in a duel with the mind. Don’t fight with the thoughts. You must stand back from the mind and like a spectator watch its activity. Even in the act of watching the mind as it runs, you are passively rejecting the thoughts.... Unless you do this, you will not get the peace and the force. Even in my own case mind was the obstacle in the path of my progress to Vijnana.... Silently command the mind to be still. There must be an inner central concentration.

14.5.1926 – Morning

Sri Aurobindo: The stillness is of the mind.... The melancholy may be due to the sentimental part of the mind. The mind raises up the melancholy to enjoy it. It is the melancholy of the poets, Tagore, for example, or it may be due, as you say, to imagination. You have to still the sentimental mind, the sensational mind by calling down the peace. When the peace descends, you feel it within you in the body descending from centre to centre, and around you. The peace is the foundation and the beginning of Yoga. Later come Ananda, vastness of Brahman, Purusha consciousness, etc. You have to look at the thoughts, cast out the false, receive the true.... The will should be silent intuitive will, a force that is not mental.... If the melancholy is corrosive, it must be rejected.... If it is soothing, as for e.g., such as is induced by certain melodies, it is psychic sadness, and this can be utilised in the Sadhana....

20.5.1926 – Morning

Sri Aurobindo: There is no harm in summarily rejecting the thoughts, only you should not involve yourself in the act of rejecting them.... In the act of watching your mind, you are passively rejecting the thoughts, but you are not involving yourself.... Though the quiet is not disturbed by the thoughts, you must not allow them to rise often lest it become a habit. Try to silence them as completely as possible. Otherwise they may be coming up like this (with a gesture of the hand) .... The quiet must not depend on any external causes e.g., music.... You must lay down the mind as freely as you do a tool.

22.5.1926 – Morning

Sri Aurobindo: You must have equality under all circumstances. If your mind gets out of control even for a moment and gets disturbed or troubled, then all troubles follow, mental unrest, suggestions, etc. Be vigilant always, more vigilant in other hours than during meditation.... You must see the One Infinite everywhere. Always you must try to see everything as the manifestation of God. Aspiration in the heart, (i.e. the psychic mind,) and will in the higher mind – prayer is only the making precise of the aspiration –, will bring down the peace. The peace you will feel as a Presence about you, within you.... Silence is a very powerful weapon and comes only after long Sadhana to those whose mental
development does not become an obstacle to the silence, generally it does.... It depends on one’s Samskara, temperament. Thought is a form of consciousness. And in the near future since there would be no silence, thoughts would arise and make their impression on the consciousness before they are dismissed.... Separate yourself from mind, and quiet the mind. Be one with the Witness. Separate yourself from Prana later.... You don’t find the obstacles in your path now. As the peace and force descend, they reveal the obstacles, and they also show you how to get over them. The will in the Higher Mind you cannot reach so soon. Till it is awakened, resort to aspiration purified and strengthened more and more.

26.5.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: The concentration of the physical mind on the Higher Power (Mother), will not do. What is required is an inner concentration and inner peace. A certain stillness there may be, due to absorption in an idea, but inner concentration alone can give you the inner stillness. Absorption in one idea without full self-control, wakefulness and power of detachment behind is dangerous. The concentration must be conscious. When there is no vigilance and detachment you unconsciously identify yourself with the mind, even in prayer.... Absorption in one movement may be helpful sometimes....

14.7.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because you are thinking much about peace you are not getting it.... There should be no difference between the hours of meditation and other hours. Only during meditation time you get the peace which you must have during the whole day. Never for once throw yourself into the play.

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You have to get back the largeness, the largeness which holds the peace. You have to change the stuff of your mind, it must be flexible and plastic. It is not enough if you have the stillness within, it must be around you... if you cannot get the peace concentrate on the force. The two mean the same thing in the end. The peace brings the force with it, and the force, when it comes, removes the obstacles and establishes peace.

Q: Are there obstacles of the subconscious?

A: There are any number of obstacles in the subconscious. They don’t matter now. Only aspire for peace. Let the thoughts only play on the surface. Look at the thoughts as you look at things outside yourself, e.g. tables, books, etc.

19.7.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: To still the mind is not to abolish mental activity altogether. You don’t throw away the habit of mental activity from your nature.... The coming down of the higher things depends on the purity and preparation of the lower nature; the purity of the lower depends on the descent of the higher. The descent of the calm and the purity of the lower nature are interdependent....

16.8.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: To try to quiet the mind by prayer is not the right thing, for it is only a precarious calm that you get and soon the mind is up again....

Never allow the mind to tyrannise over you. You must forever stop its
mechanical habits and learn to use it like a tool. Even in severe thinking you must be calm, and stand back and coolly think. Don’t be restless. Don’t desire to possess knowledge.... Make the questioning mind quiet. Don’t lose hold of your mind. Let it obey your command every moment. If once you lose control, you will allow the subconscious habit of mechanical restless thinking to rise and continue for days.

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SRI AUROBINDO: Prayer merely mental or vital, and desire to know truth in the mental form will not take you inside, on the other hand they will take you more outside your centre.

23.8.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: You felt, or you saw that the mental aspiration and the vital aspiration (the demand for knowledge in the forms of mind and the demand for peace) are something foreign to you?

I felt, and then I saw.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it is the psychic being that felt it and discrimination that saw it. Psychic aspiration first expresses itself through the mental and vital being. The aspiration of the vital being must be there, not the aspiration of the surface vital being which is overpassed soon.

Q: To what part of the being in us does Nature appeal?

SRI AUROBINDO: It appeals to the mind and vital being generally. The aesthetic being is partly mental and partly vital.... Nature appeals in some to all parts of the being. What you say is the appeal to the psychic being. To the psychic being Nature reveals the Infinite; it feels Bhakti, it enters Universal Beauty through Nature.

Q: How far does it help the Sadhaka?

SRI AUROBINDO: It first refines the vital being, frees it from desire and egoism, – not directly. It creates a certain psychic sensibility, a door through which the Sadhaka can enter the Infinite.

Q: Music?

SRI AUROBINDO: Music also appeals to the psychic being.

Q: Likewise Poetry and Art?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but with some people music appeals to the mind only. These mental movements may help to prepare the being; the soul may be touched through the aesthetic being, but they also obstruct. It is all sentiment.

Q: Their attraction is too great. Is it an obstacle?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only something within which is struggling to express itself. The Yogin has to exceed all these things. That does not mean that he must suppress them. He must over-pass them and transform them.

25.8.1926

SRI AUROBINDO: Thoughts come from outside and take form in the mind. You have to watch them as they come and reject them passively, throw them out. Holding to the calm and watching the thoughts, i.e., separation from mind and rejection of the thoughts, must be one movement till they are silenced. Then you may turn
inside and ignore the thoughts.... If you change the mechanical habit of mind
and insist on its passivity every moment, the mind will yield. You must make it
habitually passive and full of the peace within.

3.9.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: Complete control of the mind and using it like a tool comes later.
You have to look at thoughts, see where they come from, and if they are any
worth, take them up. You have to know the mental nature. What if thoughts
come? only they must not disturb the inner calm. Don’t listen to the thoughts....
You must reject them in the sense that you must make them more and more
external to yourself; don’t attend to them, don’t dwell upon them. When there is
quiet, you can take them up. Calm is not of the mind, it descends from above....
Control of the subconscious nature, e.g. of the mechanical action of the mind in
sleep or wakefulness, comes later. Give up the fighting attitude. Meditation must
be restful. Externalise the thoughts more and more. Ignore all mental
consideration. The essential thing is an easy, effortless and natural opening to
the Divine. A certain concentration is necessary to reject the thoughts but it
must be silent concentration, it must not cause strain.... When the mind gets
calm, you can also have activity. On the basis of calmness you have to build the
active thought. First there will be scattered thought, but afterwards there will be
very clear, connected thought. When you attain perfect calm, you can look for
the Universal consciousness, Vijnana and so forth. The first step however is the
feeling of the Universal Prana, then the Universal consciousness and so on....

5.9.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not matter if your calm is disturbed, only see that it
remains in the background at least. Try to get the force. Fix these two, calm and
force, and if you get other experiences so much the better.

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Q: Is the force vital force or nervous energy?

SRI AUROBINDO: When you silence the mind you get to pure mind. Then you get
Pranic Energy, not nervous energy. First Shakti comes as Pranic Energy. Later
only come the higher forms of Energy. You must receive, hold and stabilise this
Pranic Energy. Then the vital being feels refreshed.... The light seen when the
mind is pure is the light of Chidakasha, not of the outside atmosphere.... The
delight, even if it is independent of cause, is mental, not prolonged. But it is
helpful in the way of seeing the One and Infinite everywhere.

16.9.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: There are two movements in this Yoga:
(i) The mind’s stillness – thoughts do not come from the brain or physical mind,
but come like that (with a gesture), and (ii) aspiration or will turned up, not a
will that pulls down. Don’t feel yourself in the brain, but in the heart.... There
should not be any strain on the brain ...

Q: Can we manage without the use of the brain in reading and writing?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Not that the brain does not function, but you will rise above
it, rise above the physical mind and watch from there.

Q: Can we station ourselves always there?
SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.... Will does not exhaust. It is the resistance of the mind that exhausts. I think there is no serious obstacle in your vital being or physical being. The only obstacle now is your mental activity, eagerness. Eagerness there may be, but it must be that of the heart, intense. The mind must not mix up with it....

17.10.1926

SRI AUROBINDO: Concentrate not only in the mind but in the heart. Don’t expect anything, but remain quiet. There must not be any mental insistence on the next step or any vital demand. Put some confidence into it if you can.... You see the peace, vastness above you now. You simply keep yourself open.... You quieted the thinking mind, you separated yourself from the mechanical part of the mind, - formerly you were involved in it, so you did not notice it, - now it has risen up. The dynamic mind is thrown into the mechanical mind and it goes on repeating ‘I shall do this, I shall do that’. But it will soon get tired. When the Higher will or light becomes manifest it does everything.

3.11.1926

SRI AUROBINDO: Connect the centre of the mind with the centre of the heart. The heart is at present man’s centre, the soul centre. If you concentrate in the mind, the mind begins to meditate. But meditation in the heart easily takes you to the reality.

5.11.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: The aspiration must be spontaneous, there must be vigilant will and detachment. Some energy is required to sustain the consciousness within and to keep it from going outward. Concentration or aspiration helps to open, but for that you must detach yourself completely from thoughts. When you get that detachment you feel it even physically, you feel as if you are mixed in etheric space, and so light.... You must feel the detachment, detachment from the mind and from the body....

10.11.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: Your natural movement seems to be through the heart and that part of the vital being which comes into contact with beauty.... You must get the positive quiet of opening to the Universal, not the negative silence of shutting yourself up in concentrated absorption.... The movement through the mind gives knowledge, wide consciousness..., through the heart, feeling of delight, power.... Concentrate in the heart, identify yourself with the quiet feeling of aspiration, spread out the feeling, and let the whole being become the quiet feeling....

15.11.1926 - Morning

SRI AUROBINDO: Your only obstacle is the mental activity. When you try to withdraw into yourself, you take your mind also there. That must not be. There must be real detachment and aspiration for something from above, wideness etc., not mere control of mind.... You have a lot of force in you, only you allow it to be dormant.

20.11.1926

Owing to some circumstances I had to leave Pondicherry and go home. I therefore requested the Master’s permission to leave. He was so warm and kind
and loving and gracious that he said to me “Why do you want to go? Why don’t you continue to stay here?” I was overwhelmed. I felt his Grace enveloping me and I was deeply touched. When I explained my situation to him he was all sympathy and compassion and gave me his Blessings.

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In those days the Mother kept herself in the background, – physically. When first I saw her, I was struck by her frail but super-earthly and radiant form, and her eyes that seemed to be like endless Ocean expanses, fathomless. I stood before her transfixed, and gazed and gazed far and long into those expanses, those captivating eyes, those marvellous eyes of the Infinite. I was literally lost in those eyes. Was this form of Mystery and Angel from afar an immortal spirit or a Vision? I felt I was surrounded by her Love and Grace. Then collecting myself I prayed for her Blessings. She looked into my eyes and smiled and blessed me. What an enchanting smile it was! I have not seen such eyes and such a smile in any other person so far. That vision has remained engraved in my mind all these years. I saw her again a number of times. I marvelled many a time at the changing face of the Mother, now the very form of Grace, now a form of brilliant, flowing, living gold, always clothed in Grandeur, Majesty, and Divine Dignity, and radiating waves of light, of love and of bliss.

20.11.1926 – Morning

I went to the Mother to seek her guidance and to take leave of her....

The Mother: Concentrate in the heart. Aspire for force and peace in the heart, open yourself to us here.... There is no obstacle. Don’t be anxious. Go ahead. Everything will be all right.

Thus reluctantly, I took leave of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who were so full of the nectar of Divine Love. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are inseparably associated in my mind with the Divine Gourisankar of the Himalayas high above the earth, calm and tranquil and serene and bathed in Light, and radiating Peace and Grace, and Love for all. They have been my beacon lights on my life’s journey, and I pray and trust that they may continue to extend their Grace to me through all eternity.
How did I come to Sri Aurobindo?

It is a long story. Very early in my boyhood, even before I was ten, I had a special inclination towards God and godly life. My father encouraged this tendency in me. Sometime later I was possessed with a strong feeling that it was not possible to live without God. I read whatever literature on the subject I could lay my hands upon and in the course of this study I picked up something about Pranayama. Naturally I could not practise it in front of the elders and so I started doing Pranayama secretly at night when all had gone to sleep. I must have been fifteen then. One night my father saw me doing Pranayama and he was very displeased. He told me that it was dangerous to do so without the close guidance of a Guru and asked me to stop it forthwith. But I could not stop the movement. I continued. After some days my father saw me again at it, got angry and gave me a slap. The next day I fell unconscious for about ten minutes. Fits of unconsciousness started thereafter and no doctor could diagnose the cause. One knowledgeable person, however, said that it was the result of the slap delivered when I was in the state of Pranayama. Things continued to get worse till one day I distinctly heard a voice telling me that I would die on such and such a day. That date was just three or four days away. My illness became more serious; doctors were called in without avail. Finally, on the appointed day, my condition was so bad that the doctor who felt my pulse told my father that I was going to die within a few minutes. I was not conscious. But I gathered that at that moment my father walked round my bed three times and prayed to God, “Bhagavan, I withdraw my claims on him. Hereafter he is Thy child. Save him.” Hardly had he completed his prayer, my eyes opened and within ten minutes I recovered full consciousness. There was quite a crowd around. Within a few days I got well and my father gave me full freedom to pursue the life of my choice.

After some wanderings, I left for Mathura where some of my relations lived. From Mathura I went on to Vrindavan and other centres celebrated as the earthly habitations of my chosen Deity, Sri Krishna. A great peace came over me and my love for the Lord grew intense. I met many Siddhas. I began to feel the necessity of a Guru and looked for one wherever I went. I did at least a hundred circumambulations of the Govardhan hill which is five miles round. One night when I had fallen asleep on the hill I saw in dream a lady looking like Mirabai, the famous Rajput princess devoted to Sri Krishna. She told me, “Gurus are appointed by the Divine; the Divine will tell you who is your Guru; do not be anxious.”

The next day I happened to meet a saint known as Mouni-Baba and, curiously enough, he told me very much the same: “The Guru will come to you, the Divine will send him.”
Three days after, I had again a vision of the person looking like Mirabai. She asked me to do a special sadhana for 21 days at the end of which the Guru would reveal himself to me. Among the conditions of the sadhana was one which required that I should not hear any human speech. That is not only was I precluded from talking but I was not to hear any one talking. It was difficult for me to find a place that would meet this requirement. I thought of my father and turned back home. All were surprised to see me back. My father was very kind. On hearing my need he arranged for a special room in the garden. He looked to other necessities like milk etc. and saw that I was undisturbed.

During this period of intense sadhana I had visions – more than visions, they were so concrete – of many saints, past and present, Tulsidas, Surdas etc. I distinctly remember to have seen Rishi Narada also. I have a vague impression of having seen God Brahma, but of this I cannot be too sure.

On the 17th day at about 4 a.m. there was a vivid vision in the meditation. A big river; on one bank I was standing; on the other side there was Sri Krishna. He pointed to a boat and indicated that he was sending it to fetch me; there was some figure in the boat. When I saw that person the conviction grew in me that he was my Guru sent by Sri Krishna. The boat arrived and the person stepped forth; I made Pranam to him and I knew it was Sri Aurobindo to whom I had bowed.

Indeed, I had heard of Sri Aurobindo before but only as a political revolutionary, never as a Guru. Thereafter, within half an hour of the experience he began to guide me. There was no more need for the special sadhana and I came out of solitude. My father was surprised. I opened my mouth to tell him, but I found that I could not speak. To spare him anxiety I wrote on a piece of paper that I was observing mounam (physical silence) and proceeded to a nearby jungle. I tried to speak there but could not. But I got an assurance that things would be all right after three days. I returned home and when my father asked when I would start speaking, I confidently replied: “Three days.” And I did speak after three days.

I moved in this condition here and there, no more agitated but full of faith in the guidance of the Guru.

Information was received that one Nirmalchandra from Punjab – my own Province – had just returned from Pondicherry Ashram. We wrote to him whether we could come and meet him for information about the Ashram. At that time we did not know that he had returned a disappointed man. He wrote back saying we could see him. And of course he was polite and answered all our questions. Only he observed with a certain bitterness that there was a foreign lady in the Ashram who first tasted the food and then distributed it amongst the sadhaks who took it as Prasad! He was somewhat indignant and obviously expected me to share in his reactions. But I felt spontaneously: “Then she must be Divine for no human being could do this.” And there was a strong conviction in me that it was so.

Wherever I could find literature on Sri Aurobindo or translations of his books I read them avidly. At this time I came to know that one disciple of Sri Aurobindo called Purani had translated all the books of Sri Aurobindo in Gujarati. Mangatrai who was with me knew Gujarati and he ordered for a full set from Anand where the books were said to be available. The books arrived soon and we helped ourselves. For this purpose I also learnt Gujarati.
All these days I had the faith that the Guru would call me when things were ready. So I had not made any attempt to go to Pondicherry. But somehow Mangatrai had – it turned out – written to Purani (without my knowledge) asking whether our party could come for Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan. It appears the letter arrived rather late but permission had been accorded and a telegram and letter from Purani were received by Mangatrai.

Accordingly we arrived in Pondicherry in time for the Darshan of August 15, 1934.

On arrival we were met at the station by Krishnalal and Vishnu on behalf of Purani. We were a group of five or six. And though all of us had not got the necessary permission, we were permitted here for the Darshan.

We stayed for a week. The Darshan itself was a great event. When I stood before the Mother I saw her looking at me, an embodiment of Love. I was lost in her. I was often seeing a Light in the Ashram compound. Twice or thrice I even wondered if I was imagining things and satisfied myself that it was not so. I was told later on by one or two inmates that the Mother said: Among this group Ganapatram has got yogic possibilities. Someone even came to ask me if I was Ganapatram.

While here I developed the conviction that my place was here and that I could not live elsewhere. When I sent word to the Mother to this effect the Mother replied that I could do so.

But I had to go back for a while to fulfil some of our political commitments.

Back in Punjab I was there for hardly four months and left the place in January 1935 without informing my colleagues.

I sent a telegram from Madras informing of my arrival. But when I came here the next morning I found that the wire had not yet reached. Understandably Purani was annoyed at my unscheduled arrival. But within a few minutes of his report to the Mother early in the morning word was sent to me that the Mother had graciously arranged for my stay in Dupleix House. A little later I was given work in the Library – of cleaning things – a work which I did for full fourteen years. My day used to start at 4 a.m. and I am happy to record that some of the best spiritual experiences I have had were during these early hours.

We used to meet the Mother a number of times during those days. Shortly after my joining here, it so happened that the Mother suspended meeting people due to some eye trouble. Myself and Mangatrai (who joined me shortly after I came) felt this absence of physical sight of the Mother very acutely. And when we couldn’t bear it any further after two or three days we went to Nolini and requested him to inform the Mother of our condition. The moment she came to know of this she called us both – even in that state. I said something, I do not remember it exactly. But I certainly remember and still hear her words ringing in my ears. She said: The Divine does not show itself in an imperfect condition. That is why I do not meet.

P. was one of the departmental heads at that time with whom I had to have some dealings in the course of my work. For I used to do a bit of gardening too. Now this P. was somehow consistently hostile to me. I bore his hurt without
complaining to anybody. I used to see him spending considerable time with the Mother who was specially kind to him. I could not understand the reason of his antipathy to me. One night he called at my room and said that certain rose plants which I had secured from friends were required by him elsewhere and he peremptorily told me to reach them there the next day.

I was stunned. I wept bitterly. Then I wrote to the Mother about this and prayed to her: “Give me your eyes to see him.” I sent the letter at night and went to sleep. Imagine my surprise to see P. coming to my door the next morning at 4.30! He took my hand, embraced me and asked me to forget. He was so nice. I was moved and love flowed from my heart towards him.

The Mother had heard my prayer.
Grace Comes to the Seeker

- as narrated by “K”

Man proud of his intelligence, a thinker who is able, so he imagines, to fashion and mould his life even before it unfolds, can hardly recognise the hidden Hand that infallibly guides his life from behind the veil to fulfil the destiny he is born into. Only a rare few are chosen to whom the secret of human destiny is revealed and, perhaps a small number gather around the few, urged by an inner yet vague prompting within them to discover, if they can, why they are on earth and to what purpose. The former are the Gurus and the latter the disciple-seekers. The destiny of man, as the seers from ages past have told humanity, is to fulfil the mandate it has been charged with. Over the millennia gone by, from epoch to epoch, have come the chosen of the Supreme Master to blaze the trail for mankind to choose to tread, or else, to disappear from the earthly stage.

Thus mental man preoccupied with something that lies behind the appearances, which must be discovered, forges forward or upward to find the Reality, penetrating and pervading all. This preoccupation may come to one at an early age or much later in life. The signal for the seeking, when it comes, is the sure indication of the all-compassionate Grace from Above selecting an instrument.

To a young lad of nine, the Hand hidden behind the veil touched him one evening, while listening to a song sung by Rabindranath himself, in their house. The song meant something else, but a chord in the young heart throbbed awakening him to something inside. The song he mistranslated into this: “Who has robbed sleep from my eyes during the entire night? - is it the blue Hari, the Lord of the universe?” There was, however, in truth no mention of the Lord in the song, but he cherished within his heart for many years the meaning he had stumbled upon that never to be forgotten evening. That was the beginning of his quest.

The sign that the touch of the Supreme had come to him again was there when he wrote in his sister’s autograph book, “To realise God is the only complete happiness for man”. It was long after, when he was maturer in age and in his quest, that he was struck by his childhood remarks realising how at that early age the Master had laid his infallible finger on him.

His life progressed like any other youngster’s coming from a decent and fairly well-to-do family, a family ancient and well-known and respected in the region. It was ever dinned into his ears that to be a respected member of the family was to succeed in life, that is, to pass his examinations well so that he may come by a reputation as a worthy man in society. If he could amass a fortune through his profession, so much the better; if not, his paternal heritage would see to it that he did not starve. In spite of all such remarks that came to his ears, deep within him he knew that all that was not for him. Though he knew, still rather vaguely,
what he must do, yet he guarded his secret urge within himself and never let any one of his family even remotely guess it, for he was sure that one and all, the elders and the younger members too, would find him an easy target for their shafts of ridicule. Nevertheless, as he grew up, discerning eyes detected something in him different from the other young boys of the family and of the circle of friends. Yet no loophole was visible in his armour. He was ever one of the first three boys at school, in studies as well as in games, excelling at both. In him was born also a great love for open-air life in forest and field as his father was a renowned shikari of India, who fostered the boy’s leaning. The young boy’s proficiency at marksmanship was deservedly applauded when at the young age of fourteen he distinguished himself in shooting tigers, a bison, bears and leopards and other big game. But few realised his distaste in shooting animals, much less did any one guess that the hunting expeditions afforded him the opportunity to be, at least for short spells, far away from the noises and nuisances of city life. His dislike for killing animals was evident when he would often allow game to escape unmolested; once while tracking bison he came upon a herd of about a dozen of these animals that included a huge male, worthy to be a cherished trophy of the most discerning hunter; for nearly an hour or more he watched the herd moving all around him without their detecting him; silent and still as a statue he remained till the herd moved away, as he did too, to rejoin the other members of the party, who, when they heard of his experience, roundly scolded him for not bagging the big male. His remark, “they were too beautiful to be shot” found no favourable comment from the others. Perhaps it was since that day he shot no other big game, although he yet continued to join shikar trips; the hills and dales, forests and fields, where strange and beautiful sunsets and sunrises, the moon’s soothing rays, all contributed to his inner delectation and growth. Days and nights brought him, even from the most commonplace reactions like the play of light and shade and other ordinary external touches a perennial pleasure evoking corresponding responses in his inner experiences. His father, while they were in the jungles, contributed a great deal to his education in helping him to read and recognise the intention of animals, dangerous and others, in discerning their thoughts in their eyes and their movements. This training was of immense value and help in his later life, as it enabled him to read a fellow being’s thoughts and to get an idea of his character. In this he was very seldom at fault.

As his college days came to an end he was packed off to Europe at short notice to become an engineer, the profession chosen for him by his parents without much thought about his bent and predilections, for in those days it was not considered necessary at all.

The years of his sojourn abroad rolled on as was planned. In those four years he learnt much besides his regular studies; in fact, he gained an insight into the European mind and culture and the accomplishments of the Western peoples. Music of the West, at the beginning seemingly so harsh and loud, gradually yielded the inner spirit of cadences and refinement as his ear became accustomed to detect them hidden behind the outer profusion of mathematical intricacies. It was the same with the other forms of art - painting, sculpture, etc.

The last fifteen months of his stay he earned his living through his professional work. It was in England, where it was not difficult in those days for an Indian to
find work, at least for one willing to work. The last twelve months he worked in Lincolnshire, where he found, as was his wont, lodgings at a farm a couple of miles outside the town of Lincoln. The farm house commanded a grand view of the Lincoln Cathedral across the stretch of ‘fen’. The work was exacting but not too strenuous to prevent him from indulging on week-ends in his favourite games and he soon became known to the sporting circles there for his competence and sportsmanship. Here, too, the hidden Hand unbeknownst to him was guiding his steps to protect him from pitfalls of various kinds, ever a sharp warning came to his consciousness to step warily.

In summer, so far North in England, the sky becomes bright very early. Dawn with her argent feet appears at about three in the morning. Accustomed as he had always been from his boyhood days to wake up even before morning was advanced, he did not know what to do with the time in hand as none in the farm house stirred before seven o’clock. Thus, to while away, as it were, the time, he found a copy of the Gita while rummaging among his books, and began reading it in those early hours, hours so conducive to concentrated reading; days passed in this pursuit of reading at his window and watching the Cathedral, till one day a clear command came from somewhere he knew nothing about, a gentle but firm voice told him, “Why linger here any longer, go home.” The more he turned it in his mind, the command he had received, the more insistent it became, so that in the end he wrote to the firm he worked with to release him as he was urgently in need of going home on pressing matters. The release was soon granted and within a week he turned his steps homeward.

Back home he directed his steps towards his boyhood love – the forests. Once again the solitude he missed for so many years was his. One day while waiting to go out, sitting close to the fringe of a dense jungle, all of a sudden he found the entire forest of trees, shrubs and the few persons moving about, including himself were all merged in a vibrating dance of life, everything was a-throb with an inner pulsation that filled his heart with a joy he had never tasted before. Outwardly all was calm and serene but within was this exquisite dance of the Spirit of Life in all, it seemed to him. Within a few days another striking experience came to him: as he was walking alone, by and by he came to a small hill, a sudden impulse made him climb to the top. It was just before sunset and as he sat on the top and looked at the sun, the surroundings seemed to be blotted out and he saw only the setting sun. As he kept gazing on it there came out of the sun millions of suns and they all rushed towards him entering into his heart in an unending stream. Gradually the sun did set and the stream of suns too stopped flowing into his heart. He was surprised, never realising if the experience meant anything. Later, however, when he recounted the experience to Sri Aurobindo, his Guru, it was explained to him thus: “The Sun represents the Divine Truth, the same Truth in infinite form resides in the heart of man. Man in his heart has to find the infinite Truth hidden there. It is a clear indication to the seeker of the Truth.”

These two striking experiences and quite a number of minor ones gave rise in him the resolve to follow the life of an inner quest.

_Pater familias_ were all very anxious about his taking a berth in a reputable firm and that as soon as possible. He, however, was determined to tread another avenue - the spiritual path. Once again the Supreme Master took a hand,
although it may sound somewhat heartless to mention, in removing the only
person who could have checked his heart’s bent – his father died suddenly in an
accident. This happened within five months after his coming home from abroad.

Then as soon as the family affairs were settled, he began journeying from one
religious centre to another – Dakshineshwar, Benaras and others. The urge
became stronger and stronger but nowhere would his heart consent to stay, for
he felt the chosen haven still eluding him. This went on for about three years, till
one day he learnt that his cousin D. was coming on a visit to his home town. D.
had left his home nine years ago, and was residing at Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry, having taken up a life of Yoga. Even from his childhood he was
greatly attached to D. admiring him very much for all his remarkable gifts.

That visit of D.’s lasted for five months and nearly every day from early
morning to late at night he was constantly with D. gleaning out of him all about
the life in the Ashram. A study of books by Sri Aurobindo began, heaping wonder
upon wonder as he read, not only flooding his mind but his heart too, which
began to stir and respond to the light of discovery rendering him very happy
indeed. It seemed to him at that time a wonder why he had missed reading Sri
Aurobindo’s books so far. Probably the hour had not yet struck, the striking
being as ever in the hands of Him who decides all.

Since that meeting with D. it took him a year to settle his affairs, professional
and familial as well. Leaving everything in his mother’s care and with her
sanction, he started on his journey southwards for Sri Aurobindo Ashram. As the
train was rushing forward even then he did not know if at last the haven his
heart was so eagerly looking for, was at last found.

All that has been said till now is only to show the hidden Hand behind the
puppet play. The puppet play was understood much later in retrospect. That the
Grace was hovering over someone of the Infinite’s choice was not yet quite plain.
Still, has it not been said, “One who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the
Infinite.” The choice may startle the world, no less startlingly may it come to the
recipient.

On the 14th of August 1938, he reached Pondicherry, that is Sri Aurobindo
Ashram. As the car coming through the market area entered the north-eastern
part of the town, where the Ashram main building and other houses belonging to
the Ashram were located, it strangely struck him that he had known this locality
all his life – everything seemed so familiar, even the inmates he met seemed old
friends. There was a cosy feeling as if one had come home at last after many,
many years of absence.

The same evening he was led by D. to a first floor hall in the portion of the
building where Sri Aurobindo lived, to the Mother’s presence. She was
distributing leafy garlands to all, including those who had come for Darshan. The
leaf, he was told, signified, “New Birth”. The very sight of the Mother and her
wonderfully superb smile made him forget everything around him – a feeling of
returning to his infancy, as a child to its mother, spread over him. Leaving the
Mother’s presence he returned to where he was lodged, clutching the garland.
There were a few sadhaks and sadhikas assembled speaking to him, as he knew
some of them from before, but he was too indrawn to answer them adequately.
As it was the eve of the Darshan of 15th August, Sri Aurobindo’s birthday, an
atmosphere of expectancy of an event of paramount importance was poignantly felt by all and as such his somewhat inattentive condition passed unnoticed.

The morning of the 15th August came and the Ashram was steeped in a wakeful silence, the atmosphere prevailing there was solemn yet joyful. Along with D. he came to the Darshan. In the hall below he found his name in the list after D. timed at 8 a.m. He shared the expectancy and eagerness of all there and it seemed to him that all his roving, in search of the haven of his choice, was at an end. As he mounted the stairs and turned into the hall of the previous evening he saw at the end a small room and there seated on a couch he had the first glimpse of Sri Aurobindo, dressed in a silken dhoti with a chadar of the same material draped over his left shoulder leaving the right shoulder and much of the massive chest bare, as if one had tried in vain to hide the golden hue of his body with a flimsy veil. A supremely benignant smile was hovering over his lips and his eyes too were smiling, the smile trying in vain to hide the depth in them. As he came further forward he saw the Mother at Sri Aurobindo’s right, a superb smile of welcome was on her face, as if in a moment she would be too glad to gather up in her arms her children come to worship her and the Master as well. Soon his turn to approach them came – it had been dinned into his ears that his first obeisance should be to the Mother and then to Sri Aurobindo. Gladly and joyfully his head lowered at the beautiful feet of the Mother, - feet like white lotuses, sans pareil, were they, - and he felt a gentle touch as if reassuring him that to bow down next to the Master would not be much of an ordeal. Then he turned to look straight into the eyes of the Master, with a mixed feeling of joy and reverence he placed his head on the feet of the Lord, beautiful and soft they were and his whole face sank into the very softness. Then a hand of great weight pressed his head deeper still into that softness. Lingering there for a while, a short while, he raised his head and once more looked into his eyes. What he saw there words cannot describe, even an infinitesimal part of it - the entire universe was there, his universe.

Arrived at his lodgings he locked himself up in a small cubicle used as a dressing room, for several hours, in a state of total withdrawal from all external touches, although he was neither asleep nor in an all-oblivious trance. He was awake only within himself; soon on the screen of his mind words began to project themselves, curious, he took them down on a piece of paper, still more curiously a complete poem took shape in his mother tongue. The poem dealt with the dulcet singing of a lark listening to a far-off cadence, exquisitely sweet. This was the very first poem he had ever written. On being shown to D. he was all-praise and sent it to Sri Aurobindo for his comments on it, who remarked that as a first attempt it showed a turn of mind for poetry.

From that day, 15th August 1938, a new orientation of his life came into play - a swift and decisive change. His heart was aware that his haven was at last found.

After about three or four days, following the regular routine of the Ashram, he wrote a letter to the Mother offering himself to her and Sri Aurobindo, praying to be admitted as a sadhak in the Ashram to pursue the path of Yoga as laid down by her and Sri Aurobindo.

The usual practice when writing to the Mother, he was told, was, and perhaps it still is, to place the letter on a small tray kept at the top of the staircase that
led to her and Sri Aurobindo’s room, in front of the door. It was perhaps an omen that coming up the stairs, as he was on the point of placing the letter on the tray, the door suddenly opened; looking up, he saw the Mother standing on the threshold with her right hand stretched forward for the letter, which was given to her at once. Her appearance there was so unexpected that he forgot to do his customary Pranams to her. When he recalled it, the door had already closed behind her – before withdrawing, however, she was all the time flooding him with her fascinating smile.

In the profundity of his heart the certitude that he would be accepted was there. The mind, however, was not fully reassured as is its wont, frolicking between opposites. All, however, was set at rest by the Mother’s answer received the next morning. The Mother said that she had read the letter to Sri Aurobindo and they accepted him as a resident sadhak.

It was thus that the young lad who was awakened by an unexpected touch of Grace from Above, found the same Grace bestowed on him and very concretely indeed by the supremely benevolent touch and compassionate blessings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Since that day many years have gone by as he trod and is still treading the path, which is unending, resolved to go through, cost what it may, certain of reaching the goal today, tomorrow or perhaps after many lives, whenever the Master would choose to crown his efforts, if at all they were his. His days at the Ashram are wonderfully joyful, merged in the atmosphere pervading there; grateful, eternally grateful, from the very bottom of his heart for the benedictions showered on him by the all-compassionate Gurus, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo – to him the Supreme incarnated in a dual form.
As I Remember

- by Kanailal Ganguly

I came to Pondicherry on the 19th of July in 1923.

I was in contact with Sri Aurobindo through Barin. Previously on seeing a photograph of mine Sri Aurobindo had written to Barin giving, first, the Mother’s (She was called Mira then) reading and then his own comment. The Mother’s reading was: An extremely interesting head; highly psychical personality; the danger for this type is in the body which may be consumed by the intensity of the psychic flame.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment: Calmness, peace, descending into the body will make it immune from all danger. They are indispensable in this case.

He had added in the letter that he would call me as soon as it was possible. A telegram arrived and I left for Pondicherry. I was 22.

On arrival at the station, I was told by the person who had come to receive me what an unlucky man I was. For Sri Aurobindo had not been well for the previous two or three days and there were no sittings for meditation. However, on reaching the house where Sri Aurobindo was living, I met Amrita who was rushing upstairs with ten daily newspapers. I told him to carry my message to Sri Aurobindo. He nodded but told me, “It won’t be possible.” Hardly a minute had passed before he returned to say that Sri Aurobindo himself asked whether Kanai had come. Amrita had been asked to send me upstairs. As I went up I was very nervous. I saw him in the present Prosperity verandah on his throne-chair, a majestic personality with his beard. He looked and nodded. I forgot to bow down to him and sat by his side on one of the few chairs that were spread.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have you anything to tell me?

I: Yes. (I answered and kept silent for a minute.)

He repeated the question very sweetly. Still I couldn’t talk. Then he looked at the time-piece and said that he had to go by eleven o’clock. Then I asked:

I: Can I practise this Yoga?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Your being has come from a very high plane.

I: My nervous being is very weak.

SRI AUROBINDO: That doesn’t matter. My nervous being also was weak, and Mira’s nervous being too was weak; but we have become strong now. I think after some time you too will be all right.

I turned to go.

He cleared his throat and I looked back.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have come for a few days. Come at 4.30 for meditation.

I turned to go. Again he cleared his throat and as I turned, he said to me to
come in the morning after Amrita brought him the papers and sit by his side.

I came back at 4.30 in the evening. It was the first time that I saw the Mother. She looked at me for a second. She was very beautiful, looked much younger than her age. There were two cats on her shoulders; I looked round and saw there were two or three more about her. One of the cats from her shoulder jumped on Sri Aurobindo’s throne-chair. Mother called it back.

The Mother had come with a plate containing incense sticks, match box etc. After the Mother left Sri Aurobindo opened the conversation asking me:

SRI AUROBINDO: How is Motilal Roy?

I: I have not heard anything about him for a long time.

The meditation started at 5 and continued till 5.30. I observed that Sri Aurobindo had kept his eyes open. The others around meditated with eyes closed. There were hardly 13 or 14 of them.

Thereafter Sri Aurobindo went in for fifteen minutes for coffee.

The next morning I went up after Amrita came down and sat by the side of Sri Aurobindo who remarked that one or two persons might come but that should not disturb me. I was told to remain till 10.30. During the meditation I had a very good experience.

SRI AUROBINDO: Anything to say?

I told him that I had a grand experience of peace etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is your higher mind getting supramentalised.

After two or three days I told him that I was feeling a being, a mighty being behind me. If that being looked at me all difficulties vanished. Sri Aurobindo heard and nodded.

*

Some days thereafter, I told him that I had to leave as I had come prepared only for a few days.

SRI AUROBINDO: Once you have taken up my yoga, I won’t leave you so easily.

I understood that he did not wish me to go. I had with me fifty rupees intended for the return fare. I asked whether I could give it to him. He nodded and asked: “But you require some pocket money.”

I replied that my friends would give.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you sure?

He repeated this question twice. On my replying in the affirmative he said it was all right.

*

Some months later, one day I “pulled down” that being which I felt behind me. He came. Above my head something white, dazzling, cloud-like, came down.

Earlier Sri Aurobindo had remarked:

Kanai is pulling and pulling. I do not know what will happen to him. But Mira has wonderful power and he will be saved.

Now when this happened to me, I told Sri Aurobindo at the evening meditation that I wanted to see the Mother. He looked steadfastly into my eyes and then said: “You sit with Mira, (it was then 8 o’clock) but do not be nervous, agitated; speak quietly, as quietly as you can.”

At the due time I went to the Mother. She brought her chair near me so that
she could place her hand on me. And I started speaking to the Mother about my experiences.

“Since what age have you been feeling this being behind you?” Mother asked.

_I: Ever since I was thirteen or fourteen._

_MOTHER:_ Oh, I see!

_I gave further details._

_MOTHER:_ Oh, I see!

The Mother kept quiet and after fifteen minutes exclaimed:

My God, My God, I think you are saved now.

_I: What happened?_

She did not answer. She queried:

Have you taken anything?

I told her that for the last two or three days I had no food proper nor sleep. Then she sent for Dutta and asked her to bring soup from Sri Aurobindo's place. She placed it on my hand and asked me to take it whole.

There was drizzling outside. Mother got her Japanese umbrella and gave it to me saying:

Bring it tomorrow morning at five, don't forget.

_Sri Aurobindo came in and stood by the Mother's side._

_SRI AUROBINDO:_ How are you?

He asked and looked at me. The Mother came with me up to the door. While leaving I looked at Mother and said:

_Mother, I am afraid - some danger?_

_Mother:_ Danger, no danger, absolutely. (Mother gestured with her hand emphatically.) I have put something in your room, you will feel it.

I reached home. But there was great restlessness. Was I going mad? Shall I jump into the sea? I was furiously thinking. Just then the ceiling split into two and two Feet came down – there was white light – and pressed upon my forehead. I felt ice-cold water on my body.

I fell asleep.

* Next morning I woke up before five, came to Mother and asked her: What will be my relation with you?

_MOTHER:_ Yes, I will tell you. My dear child, it will be a relationship of a child with its mother. It will be a very sweet relation, constant.

_I: That is all?_

_MOTHER:_ In your present consciousness, it will be very sweet. Later you will realise who I am.

That day at about 9.30 I went up to see the Mother. There I just fell down and when at the Mother's instance I was made to lie down I was weeping and asking what had happened to me. At about 10 a.m. Barin came and took me to Sri Aurobindo, saying he wanted to see me. I was sinking into something dark. “Kanai”, Sri Aurobindo called. I tried to come up but could not. He called me out again and when I came he said:

_I told you do not pull. You pulled. The hostile being is trying to enter but it
could not enter. Aspire quietly and calmly. Control yourself.
From that day I became all right.

*I: You had said that my psychic was very developed. Why did it not save me?*

SRI AUROBINDO: You did not call it. Anyway Mother acted on you and saved you.

*I: Perhaps I will die. What will happen after death?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Kanai, we have thrown away the thing from you. You will not die.
I know, Mother also knows that you will realise the Divine in this life.
He repeated it again.

*One day I told Sri Aurobindo that I wished to meditate with Mother once a week. He said that he would ask her and tell me the next day.
Accordingly when I met him the next day he said:
I have asked her. It will be from 11.30 to 12 in the mornings on every Friday in her room.
On that day I was taken inside her room by Champakkal. I sat on the floor near Mother’s sofa and began to meditate. I went very deep inside for about three-fourths of an hour or so. I opened my eyes, I saw the Mother smiling. I smiled.
Next day, Sri Aurobindo asked me what I got from the Mother the previous day.
I replied: “I felt peace, light and tremendous power in me.”

SRI AUROBINDO: It is all right; but you do not know what really happened in you. What you felt was only the result of it. Your true being came; Mother called it. It had a column of light on both sides. You will realise that being in this life.
After some months I said to Sri Aurobindo:

*I: My body is now very well.*

SRI AUROBINDO: If you can realise your true vital you will feel the welfare of the body.

*I: How to realise it?*

SRI AUROBINDO: If you open to the Mother it will be done.

*I: Can I open?*

He shrugged his shoulders and left.
Next day I reported:
*I have realised something – calm, peace, power.*

SRI AUROBINDO: It is that true vital and it will help you all along. Your divine nature is dynamic power and dynamic Ananda.

*One day I went to the Mother’s room. I saw her sitting on Sri Aurobindo’s sofa. I spoke.*

*I: Mother, I have got a name.*

She looked at me and asked:
What is the name?

*I: Shukdev. But is it true, Mother?*

Mother: I call you by that name in the higher world, but I will ask Sri Aurobindo and tell you tomorrow.
The next day the Mother said:
You are right.

* 

I often used to tell Sri Aurobindo that I had a number of difficulties and was asking him to do something for me. Sri Aurobindo used to reply that he would do it “through Mira”.

What is your next meditation day with her? He asked.

I: Friday.

I forget what he said.

However, on Friday I went to the Mother. She was already in meditation. Silently I sat down beside her and went into meditation.

After an hour or so the Mother spoke.

MOTHER: Have you felt what has come down? Sri Aurobindo came into the room, looked at you and went away.
Then I remembered what I had said to Sri Aurobindo.

MOTHER: It is a great thing; it is something like a great operation. You have to keep it. And don’t say, ‘O, Mother, I have nothing, I have nothing, help me.’

* 

One day I asked the Mother:

Shall I get the Supermind in this life?

MOTHER: I told you a hundred times, do you want to hear again?

I: Yes, Mother.

MOTHER: When the Supermind will be established on earth you will have it.

* 

One day I asked the Mother:

What is the best way of doing yoga?

MOTHER: You have to aspire, you have to reject; but the best is if you can keep me in your heart, if you love me, then you will have to do nothing. I shall do all for you.

I was going to tell her: ‘Mother, you are so great, so vast. How can I love you or keep you in my heart?’ But something else dictated to me at once: ‘NO, I will do it myself.’ And without saying anything I left.

The Mother then sent Barin to see me. When he came to my room I was sobbing. I said to Barin: Tell Mother to excuse me; it was very wrong of me to have thought that way.

The Mother had told him that when I (Kanai) was thinking that she was so vast, so great, she saw a golden hand of Sri Aurobindo coming from his room and resting on my head. As soon as I uttered to myself that I would do the yoga myself, the hand slapped my head. The Mother went on to say that it was a kindergarten lesson to a child. It was to throw away the hostile force from him. He does not understand that I am his all.

That morning, at 10, I went to see Sri Aurobindo and began to sob telling him that while the Mother was blessing me saying that she would do the whole sadhana for me, something in me had dictated that I would do the whole thing.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, no, not you, not you, a hostile force said that.
But I would not be consoled. Then he placed the newspaper on the table and looked at me.

I saw a golden sun rising from his head and dropping on mine. This happened three times.

Peace, power and calmness flowed into my body throughout the day.

Sri Aurobindo's younger brother.
“Difficulties come not single, but come in battalions”, came true in my case, even at the age of fourteen. But they were a blessing in disguise; for they turned me Godward. I was seized with the spirit of renunciation, and more so after I came into contact with the works of Shankara, Vivekananda, Ramathirtha and the Vairagya school of philosophy. Ascetic life is only a preparation for something higher, which I did not envisage clearly. There was a deep yearning and aspiration to know the Divine. But there was no guide to lead me towards the goal. Mantra and Japa helped me to a great extent. Pranayama I practised without anybody’s guidance. Shyness to approach others was a drawback in me. And having approached some who could not give me the necessary help, I became desperate and depressed. At last I resigned myself to fate.

It is said that an earnest seeker after Truth will be taken to the Divine Guide or the latter himself will go to the seeker and help the aspiring soul. The former happened in my case. On one Christmas evening, in 1920, I suddenly started for Pondicherry to see the Great Master Sri Aurobindo. A friend of mine also followed me, though for a different purpose. Though there was an initial disappointment in not having the Darshan of the mighty Master, I had his Darshan the second day. I was also fortunate enough to meet the gracious Mother before I saw the Master.

How to describe these divine personalities? This is possible only to those who have dived deep and gone very high up and become wide and luminous. The serene, sweet and beautiful divine personality of the Mother touched me even at the first sight of her. I did not know then that she was destined to lead thousands of persons to Purity, Light, Strength, Peace and Perfection in future.

Sri Aurobindo appeared to me like the great Shiva whom I had been worshipping for a very long time. He was all golden, not figuratively but actually. In the ancient Hindu spiritual works, gods and goddesses and great Rishis are described as golden (hiranya varnam, hiranmayam), the supramental colour. With a smooth golden body emitting light and flowing locks over his shoulders glowing bright, and shining eyes penetrating deep into everything, Sri Aurobindo was majestic in his appearance. His gait was royal and when he was pacing to and fro in the verandah, he appeared to be drawing force and using it according to his divine will. Sri Aurobindo’s touch was magnetic and awakened the slumbering cells into life and activity.

About four months after I had the first Darshan of the Master, I went to him again for a few days’ stay. Afterwards, from July 1921, I stayed with the Master for three years. It is not possible to record here all the innumerable experiences I had due to the grace of the Master. As a matter of fact, everybody got experiences according to his nature, opening and aspiration and surrender. In an
integral yoga, multiple ways are opened to multiple personalities to know the Integral Truth. I shall describe here some aspects of the Master’s personality as it appeared to external man. For to know him or judge him fully is impossible for any one, unless one is able to reach his level which was supramental and far above it. The common man is interested to know how a spiritual person acts, talks and how he deals with others. Even here we cannot judge him according to our standards, for the ways of the divine person are mysterious.

Sri Aurobindo lived a secluded life, confined to his room. But this did not mean that he did not speak to anyone or was always silent and grave. On the other hand, he used to meet persons, sadhakas and outsiders both in the morning and evening for about an hour. In the mornings, between 9 and 10 a.m. he used to see visitors and sadhakas also. I was going to him now and then in the morning to narrate my experiences and clear some doubts. At that time, I used to feel the aroma of lotuses in his presence. In those days there were no flowers kept on his table and much less the lotuses. When I told some friends about this, they said that it was my psychic sense and nothing more. They could not explain the phenomenon. But I read in some books on Rajayoga later on that great yogis emitted this lotus fragrance from their divine bodies.

When explaining things Sri Aurobindo used to raise his palm and the lines in his palm which were prominent could be seen well. I was curious to know about the significance of these lines according to Western palmistry, I could see well separated the life line and the head line and the heart line which were all deep and well-marked in a royal palm as it were. Apart from these, the line of fate was well marked and could be seen rising from the wrist and going straight up the centre of the palm to the mount of Saturn. This line indicated success, fame and brilliance in the path chosen by the Master. The heart line was deep, clear and well coloured. The line of head not too widely separated and one end of it commencing on the mount of Jupiter or with its main branch from the mount of Jupiter is one of the most brilliant marks of all according to Cheiro. A deep cut and fine head line could be seen which indicates a brilliant mind. Sri Aurobindo had artistic fine philosophic fingers with a firm thumb and bright shining nails. An elementary study of the lines mentioned above characterises the person possessing these as having a balanced head and heart and great will power, noble affection for others and being a man of destiny. If a great palmist had taken the palm impression of this mighty person he might have given more interesting details. I have mentioned what everybody could see easily when Sri Aurobindo raised his palm when talking to people.

Sri Aurobindo was pacing to and fro very fast in his room and verandah for six to eight hours a day, meditating on persons, things and events and on himself. When doing so it appeared as if he was in a high state of consciousness and gave the impression of a Shiva or Mahakali with dishevelled hair moving about willing great things.

When the Master sat on his chair for conversation he was sometimes very silent and serene and at other times quite jovial and laughing and cutting jokes and mixing with one and all. Often his gaze was upward as if he was stationed high above and came down to the level of ordinary persons when talking to them. He was always alert and never in the so-called Samadhi state with closed eyes at the meditation time. Clad in a dhoti in all seasons of the year, he was
equal to heat and cold. With regard to food, he was never punctilious about the
taste or richness or delicacies of food. Whatever was given he tasted with equal
rasa and often the cooks employed gave unwholesome and tasteless dishes, but
the Master enjoyed all kinds of food without murmur.

In 1921, in the Guest House where the Master and we – about ten disciples –
were living, there was only a common lavatory and a common bare bathroom.
The Master along with others made use of these. It was wonderful to see how he
finished these ablutions in less than five minutes time.

I have given some details regarding the external habits and personality of the
Master to show how he was very simple and equanimous to the touches of
Nature. This does not mean that he decried or criticised those who led a
luxurious life. A person may lead a rich or a poor life, but it must be done with
the consciousness that all is Divine and one must not be attached to either.

The Mother was and is a personification of “Grace”. I felt and got force
whenever I approached the Master. And when I approached the Mother, I felt
purity, peace and sublimity. She was so kind and gracious to all. After the
evening meditation and talks she used to serve cocoa to all before they departed,
every evening. For dinner and supper, she led the Master to the dining room and
attended to the needs of others. She used to spend long hours in meditation with
the Master after the evening meditation was over, before the night meal. In 1923
my wife used to see visions about the Four Personalities of the Mother; –
Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati described by Sri
Aurobindo in his masterly work, The Mother – descending into the Mother.
Though some were sceptical at the time about this, it was confirmed later on by
the Master himself. The Mother’s occult knowledge became known at the time of
the stone-throwing incident in the Guest House. It is difficult to know her fully.

Sri Aurobindo’s way of judging persons was unique. He never asked a person
about his parentage, antecedents, etc., in order to find out his capacity to take to
yoga; his way of knowing was by identity with the person. Knowledge by identity
was a great achievement of the ancient Rishis. For integral yoga, a person must
have a balanced head and heart, a sound body and a strong vital. One may begin
this yoga without all these qualifications, but for a successful life of yoga all
these are quite essential. The Master was rejecting many persons who came to
take up his yoga as he used to say that it was a very difficult one attended with
many ups and downs and only a great hero could succeed in this yoga.
Transformation of Nature is a very arduous thing and the change of material
body takes a very long time.

Generally people are judged by their external appearance and garb. But to
enter into the soul of a person and find out his worth is a stupendous task. Sri
Aurobindo and the Mother could judge persons by entering into their heart and
soul for their way of knowing persons and things was by identity.

Approaching the Master for fulfilment of desires and cures of ailments was
looked down upon and discouraged and so people generally came to ask about
yoga. This does not mean that the Master did not exercise his powers whenever
necessary to help people in distress. Though the Master knew very well that
India was going to get independence and it was as sure as the rising of the sun
tomorrow, he did not dissuade the political leaders who approached him for
advice in politics, nor ask them to slacken their efforts to win freedom for the
country, but asked them to fight the British on all fronts. Effort is quite necessary before the Grace comes. Though he did not come out to lead the country for political freedom after 1911, he gave all his spiritual and moral help to the leaders who approached him and gave them instructions to win the victory for the country. The sadhakas knew the views of the Master and so continued to do yoga unaffected by the political turmoil in the country.

Sri Aurobindo was a great Karmayogin. Karmayogin does not mean doing physical work alone. Physical work is only the grossest form of Karmayoga. Sri Aurobindo was writing, planning and shaping the destinies of the things to come. He was trying to bring down a Force into the Earth-consciousness so that a level of consciousness appeared on earth which would change the destiny of the present world and mankind. This was a stupendous task, the magnitude of which nobody could understand and it was unprecedented in the history of the world. He directed all his energies, spiritual, mental and physical towards this end. He called the new Power “Supermind”. He had to attain to this state first and afterwards bring it down to earth. Every now and then when he was asked as to what state he had attained, he would say, not the highest Supermind. The Mother collaborated with him in this mighty work.

Sri Aurobindo helped the progressive nations during the First World War and worked for the rise of Russia with a new ideology. He also foresaw the emergence of Asia and wrote an instructive article in 1919 about the future shape of things to come.

In 1921 and afterwards, the non-cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi was in full swing. As Sri Aurobindo was a great political leader before the advent of Gandhi, thousands used to come to him for advice as to the future course of action. As the C.I.D. police were always watching the movements of the Master, he avoided seeing all these persons except a few leaders. After Tilak’s death Sri Aurobindo paid homage to him in an article “A great mind and a great will”. Thereafter Gandhiji sent his son Devdas Gandhi with a request to the Master to come out and lead the country. Sri Aurobindo said that Gandhiji would win freedom for India and that his own work was elsewhere in other fields and he predicted that India would get freedom and become the spiritual leader of the world.
The Grace of the Mother
- by Maganbhai Desai

I was simply a country lad, way back, without any hopes or future. Far removed from any city, I did not know if I would see a high school, let alone a college. But my father was ambitious and wanted to see me at least a matriculate. And luckily I got a chance.

Since the age of fourteen I have had a strange pull for religious life. I lived a spartan life, slept on a plank and ate the simplest kind of food. But a hankering for spiritual life was constantly there and hence a search for a Guru. I met a number of them - all types, all creeds and kinds but I was somehow not satisfied. Unconsciously, the idea of heaven after death had no attraction for me. ‘A life built on salvation in this very world’ was my credo.

I went to college but had no money. Mother Ashapuri (one who fulfils all hopes) - a local deity which I visited everyday - made it possible. I prayed everyday in the traditional style.

But my life there was not a bed of roses. I had to walk eight miles a day to earn Rs. 10 a month. This went on for four years till I took my B.A. I read Western philosophies, moral writers but with no satisfaction. For eight years, during this time, I followed Mahatma Gandhi’s preaching assiduously and never bothered about my own condition. But a sense of something lacking, something wanting, was always there.

This lasted for almost 14 years - since the age of fourteen. Till then I had not heard of Sri Aurobindo or of the Mother. A chance meeting with a devotee in 1944 brought a change. He took me to his place and I sat before the portraits of the Master and the Mother and for the first time in my life an ineffable peace pervaded my whole being. From that first time I was assured that he was my Guru and I was instinctively assured my search was over.

But I did not know anything about the teachings of the Mother and had absolutely no money to go to Pondicherry. For four years I read whatever I could get, and in 1948 for the first time I visited Pondicherry and had the Darshan of the Master and the Mother.

But there was no end to the travails I was undergoing. During studies I had to incur a debt and my salary was meagre. Yet there was hardly any worry! This went on for a number of years.

In 1953 I had, for the first time, an interview with the Divine Mother. It lasted for about 45 minutes and she took an intense interest in my well-being. During this talk I told her of some of my experiences and asked if they were simple imaginings. She assured me that they were real experiences. To narrate a few:

I. For some two or three years I felt the nearness of Jesus Christ. Behind him was the Mother Mary. His body would be identical with the shape of my body and a brilliant light (as powerful as a searchlight) would emanate from my heart.
(the sacred heart of Jesus). It was very powerful and lasted for a long time. (I no longer have that experience though I often feel the presence of Jesus, even as I write this!) All the following were during sleep.

II. I was standing on the battlement of a tall and very big castle. A dark river flowed below. I stood before a very beautiful lady – young and very powerful – and I was sitting at her feet. The Mother told me she was Kali. The dark river below was the river of life and it was the blessings of the Mother that I received.

III. I was standing behind a tall fence on a railway station looking at trains. A train drew up on platform number three. The Mother alighted from the train. Somehow or other the barrier (of the fence) was broken and I was at the feet of the Divine Mother. (The Mother told me that the meaning of the third platform was the breaking of the mental barrier.)

IV. I told her of my difficulties and she very kindly blessed me. As I was coming out I turned back and said, “Mother, I have no money.” She was at that time intensely looking at me and laughed out. Without saying a word she waved me and filled with intense joy (I should say ananda). I stepped out.

When I went home a bookseller approached with a proposition that I should, in collaboration with two persons, write a text book. I agreed. The competition was serious and I was not quite sanguine about the outcome. Yet the book was given first preference. With a single stroke I could wipe out the debt and for the first time in my life I was at economic ease. Since then I have not experienced any ‘want’ though I have no money to speak of.

V. I was a teacher for some 14 years. In 1952, when the A.G. Teachers’ College was started I applied. The interviews were taken. And later on I was informed that all eight vacancies were filled up and I was not selected. I took it as the Mother’s wish and came to Pondicherry for Darshan.

On the same day while going for a walk I met Sundaramji on the road. He was going to Gujarat and was going for the Mother’s Blessings to the playground. He asked if I wanted to see the Mother. Of course I went with him and the Mother blessed me. Without any previous thinking about it, I told the Mother that I had applied for the post. She said, “Of course, you shall get it.” While returning I told Sundaramji that all the vacancies had been filled in. He said that because the Mother had categorically said it I should get it.

When I went home there was a letter waiting for me informing me that I was appointed.

VI. One incident in my life stands out, quite vividly. I went to Bombay for some work. I had a couple of days to spare and so thought of visiting Boys Town – a well-known school at Nasik. Nobody knew where it was. The town is about 7 miles away from the station. The bus I rode in was full and the driver was drunk (we did not know that). Half way the bus dashed against a tree and was toppled and it turned a complete somersault. It was completely wrecked and four or five persons died on the spot.

Now here is the wonderful part. I was sitting in the middle – all hale and hearty. When the bus dashed against the tree I became unconscious without any shock or impact. I felt somebody lifting me out bodily through the bars of the window of the bus. When I came to my senses, I was lying full-length on the seat of the bus and my attache was under my chest. There was not a single speck of dust on my suit. And, believe me, I was the only man completely safe and sound.
I took all the people in another bus to the hospital and escaped the police by the backdoor!

VII. I always go to bed with the Mother’s name on my lips. When my body touches the pillow I always say, “Mother Divine, I am lying in your lap”. And often I feel that a loving hand strokes my hair. Even if it is an imagination, I feel happy.

One night the Mother came. She took my hand and we started to climb a dark and very high mountain. On the way we met many Rishis and devotees at different heights. The Mother simply looked at them and went up very rapidly. Half way we met a young woman clad in white, standing with folded hands. For the first time the Mother spoke the word “Mira” – the name of the fourteenth century saint. We climbed peak after peak and approached the highest. I did not know the Mother had left me. When I looked up I saw the Mother and the Master standing high up beckoning me to come up. I do not know how I reached it but when I was there the Mother took me to Sri Aurobindo. He took me up to him and his person was merged in my being. He placed his head distinctly on my chest and it melted as if in my chest.

VIII. Whenever I touch the Samadhi I always feel it rocking to and fro. I thought it was my imagination. When I went to the Mother I told her about it and asked her if it was a mere imagination. She said, “No, it is real. You have a very sensitive physique.” I continually feel this even today. My finger tips throb continuously.

IX. Some two and a half years back I had a physical breakdown. The doctors diagnosed it as “coronary insufficiency” – a heart ailment – and I was hospitalised. I was not perturbed.

When I came home one night at about 9 o’clock I had a temperature of 104 degrees. My wife and a young lady were by my side. I was almost in a coma. I awoke suddenly and saw the Mother actually standing near me. I told my wife almost feverishly, “Sushila, the Mother has come. Offer water to her.” She was surprised but immediately went and brought a glass of water and offered it to the photo of the Mother. The Mother was all the while there, looking intently at me and I was looking at her. After a time the vision disappeared. I asked my wife to take my temperature. It was exactly 98 degrees. All this happened within five minutes. Since then I started recovering and have had no trouble.

(The lady who was there was really surprised. My wife afterwards told me that I appeared as if I was in a trance. She did not know that I was looking at the Mother.)

X. Only recently, I experience this. Whenever I think of the Mother I see a being going out of me. It first goes to the Samadhi. It is exactly a replica of myself. Identical in every small detail. It does exactly as I do at the Samadhi, and then I see it going up to the Mother. It sits down at the Mother’s feet (exactly as I do on the Darshan day) and I clearly see the Mother blessing. After this, it comes back. It is now permanently there! I see it moving in the Ashram.

XI. When I close my eyes I see a beautiful blue colour – sometimes very deep blue and sometimes light blue but always blue. Only sometimes it is interspersed with beautiful flowers.

XII. I also feel a beautiful brilliant white light (like that of a sun) behind my head, so brilliant that I cannot see it but do feel it.
XIII. Nowadays, often a prayer wells up in my being. “Sri Aurobindo, Mother, open my mind, my heart, my life to your Divine light, your love, your power. In all things may I see the Divine.” This casually said prayer surges up at the most unexpected time. I implore the Mother to come and reside permanently in the Adhar.

XIV. Last year I was at Pondicherry. I had seen Madhav and came to my room. At noon while I was sleeping the Mother came. Something very dark came out of lower vital. It was a dark fluid. The Mother put it in a bottle and corked it tightly. Then she said, “There, it is taken care of”. I soon awoke.
A Look Behind
(Some Early Recollections of the Ashram)
- by Mrityunjoy

When I reached Pondicherry, the Ashram was already two and a half years old, and a new disciplined life had come into being under the Mother’s direct control and guidance. I heard about it before coming, from friends who had been temporary visitors at the Ashram, and also from a few old associates of Sri Aurobindo who could not adjust themselves to the new conditions in the Ashram. They found it too difficult to change their old ways all at once and turn a new leaf by surrendering themselves to the Mother in a strictly disciplined external life. It would have proved easy enough for them if it had been an accustomed formal surrender, leaving the old ego-self as it was. But to surrender each and every movement of the mind and life, especially of the vital being in its daily activity, was not only very difficult but was felt as suppression of their free development. So these few returned one by one, some confessing their weakness, some critical of the new order. However, when I sought the Mother’s permission to come and join the Ashram permanently, I received a reply written by Srijut Nolini Kanta Gupta, the secretary, on behalf of the Mother, that for the present a temporary stay was permitted, as the time for consideration of a permanent stay had not yet come. When I arrived, it was at a very critical moment in my life. A long, difficult and adventurous journey was ahead – to be completed only by the Grace of the Mother.

As a rule, in those days, the Mother saw people the very day they arrived. So at ten in the morning I followed Nolini-da, who led me up to the small Darshan-room in the Meditation House, where the Mother was waiting. Her first question to me, after a short meditation at Her feet, was: “When did you take up the yoga?” She seemed pleased with my answer, and after a few more minutes She graciously blessed me and by nodding Her head indicated that I could go. Later on I came to know the Mother’s remark about me, “He has good receptivity but the vital is weak.”

I returned to my room, naturally full of happiness. In the afternoon, quite unexpectedly a young sadhak, who had joined the Ashram two years earlier and who was staying in the room next to mine, came to me. He looked at me somewhat inquisitively and asked which province I hailed from. Upon hearing my reply, a spontaneous but mild remark slipped off his tongue: “You see, the people of your province are good for nothing. Their sadhana is to read the Arya and other big books, to do painting, to sing, to compose music, to go for regular walks on the beach and to meditate. Whereas we do work in the Ashram. So they call us ‘Das’ (labour class). But I tell you, if you really want to know what the Mother is, you must work. Only then will you physically feel Her shakti. Otherwise you will miss the chance however much you read and meditate.”
Evidently, refinement was not his strong point, but his words left a strong impression on me. Maybe I wanted to verify the truth behind his unasked-for observation, which was undoubtedly for me a big grace from the Mother, and all that on the very day of my arrival!

I at once decided to work. I approached another neighbour whom I had known before, and proposed to meet Nolinida so that I could ask for some work. He agreed to take me the next morning. But, to my surprise, he told me that very night, on his return from the “Soup”, that Nolinida had spoken to the Mother after the soup ceremony and that She had been rather amused and surprised at my request. She instructed him to give some light work in the Library, because I was sickly at that time. Thus on the second day of my stay I joined work in the Ashram. Later still, I began to realise what was behind the first caution of my friend, behind the surprise of the Mother at my having asked for work, the attitude of some of the old associates of Sri Aurobindo who had left the place, and of the new batch of devoted workers who had recently joined the Ashram, most of whom were not intellectuals.

It was not until the third day that the Mother permitted me to attend the morning Pranam, which in those days took place in the present room of Bula, and the evening Soup, which was then being distributed by Her from the Soup Hall, now the Reception Room of the Ashram. Many, I heard, had to wait quite a long time for permission for these two opportunities. Some have already described this Soup ceremony, so I need not go into the details except for some personal experiences. It was in the evening that this function was held and there was a dim light burning near the place where the Mother sat with Her feet resting upon a low stool. She would first meditate and as she opened her eyes, Champaklal would bring the soup vessel, a big cylindrical container with handles, and place it before Her. After putting it on a stool he removed the lid; then over the steaming vapour the Mother stretched forth and brought down Her hands and held them there for half a minute or so. Then each one went to Her with his cup in which she would pour the soup. During this time they made pranam at Her feet, then got up to receive the cup from Her hand.

She explained to someone that when She brought down Her palms She invoked Sri Aurobindo on the soup, and when the soup, so blessed, entered the body it acted on the cells to help transform them. That was the central truth of it, but individual experiences varied. After pranam at Her feet I would raise my head up and look at Her with my hands stretched forward to receive the soup cup. Often She was in trance and Her eyes would suddenly open and with a wonderful smile on Her lips She would communicate much more than by explaining to me in mere words. Not things philosophical or some deep spiritual experience, but things we call practical, of day-to-day life, solutions to problems of the past day or of the next, what I should or should not do, all these and in the most minute detail, were received from Her in those few seconds. The whole body felt as if it was filled with something, with the sense of a purified and raised consciousness. There were days when She did not open Her eyes at all, not even to give the cup to me. I almost had to pull it out of Her hand in order to allow the next person’s turn to come. This meant to me that perhaps I was not open to Her that day. Often, on the succeeding day when I did not follow Her indication from the previous evening Soup-time, things did not go well in peace and harmony. This
was a constant factor in my life. But the Mother always gives precious things too easily, so my human nature failed to appreciate properly and to realise the purpose behind - to help me change my nature. It quickly turned them into mechanical routine. Thus when it became a habitual movement for the majority of the Ashramites, it was a foregone conclusion that in the inner world the decision was already there to stop it.

Throughout my life in the Ashram it has been a constant experience that the Mother always gives the chance to approach Her and receive from Her things divine in so many forms, but after some time we turn it into something mechanical, valuable only in the earthly way: to have the right, the privilege to approach Her and receive things that others cannot have. Then it stops after some time. She does not stop the movement by giving a notice or explanation. She has infinite patience, She allows it to continue for quite a long time, giving the utmost chance to ignorant people to be conscious and take the right attitude and receive things in the true spiritual way for the transformation of their being. But when the old way persists sometimes for years together, She falls sick, because of our lack of receptivity, and thus inevitably the movement stops. It begins after sometime in a new form, suitable to the new conditions. In the case of the Soup this was so.

One day, I heard later, some sadhak, a so-called medical man, made some critical remarks on the Soup in front of the Mother, saying it had no food value at all, being left to boil for hours. The Mother, seemingly surprised, made a soft remark, “Do you think so?” Perhaps that was enough indication that the time had come to stop the Soup, and not long after the day came.

The Mother was indisposed due to over-exertion in visiting various departments of workmen, who were celebrating the Ayudha Puja. The Soup was stopped automatically and along with it the morning Pranam. It was 19th October, 1931; one whole month She was indoors. Just a few days before the 24th November Darshan, She was able to come down for the morning Pranam, in the hall below in the Meditation House. The spiritual record of it is there in Her diary, on the last page of Her Prières et Méditations, dated the 24th November 1931.

To return to the Soup ceremony, which was so mystical and profound. One night the Mother looked smilingly at me and held my eyes while giving the soup cup in my hand. Later that night Nolinida communicated Her message to me that She had seen a star at the centre of my heart emanating four rays, which had something to do with the four powers of the Mother. The same thing was repeated the next day. Nolinida called me and told it to me again adding that the Mother had said I should be careful. “Careful about what?” I asked him. He said the Mother had meant that I should be careful in my daily movements, so as not to disturb something that was growing in me.

During those days, generally in the afternoons, I would go for a long walk with some of my elderly friends, whom I had known before and who were now for me very respectable and advanced yogis, specially since I was a novice newly arrived. However, their conduct fully justified the caustic remarks made by my friend on my first day in the Ashram. The whole walking hour was devoted to gossip about everything under the sun, and in the most ordinary way. New lamb that I was, I swallowed everything with relish and argued with myself when the
conscience pricked, saying that it was the spiritually enlightened way of seeing things. Within a week’s time I began to feel dull when I approached the Mother at Pranam time or at Soup. I felt quite empty. I then realised the meaning of the Mother’s message to me, ‘to be careful’!

After three days I was allowed by the Mother to join the group for the Morning Pranam. I found it quite different from my arrival day’s Pranam at Her feet. Now Her look penetrated my eyes as if She read through them my secret thoughts, feelings and actions, of which I had not yet become aware. I gradually began to discover, by her constant silent communications, that much of my ignorance was really a pretension. It was a great chance given by Her to all, to convey silently to Her their individual needs, questions or aspirations and to receive Her directions for what they should or should not do. She transmitted Her message through flowers, separate for each person. She had given each flower a significance, and through that we had to decipher Her spiritual message.

Amal was my senior by one year in the Ashram. I lived for some time in the Guest House with him, so I used to visit him, as he was ever generous to allow it, and I saw him painting some of the flowers for the Mother with the messages, that those flowers carried, written below. I got the impulse to do the same with the flowers that I was getting from Her every day. So I began, and sent some of the drawings with Nolinida to the Mother, along with Her messages as I had received them through the flowers of the day. She remarked about my paintings, “He has the capacity but needs practice.” As for the messages, I heard from Nolinida that on some days, ‘they were exact’. On some occasions the remark was, ‘almost correct’, on others ‘he is now writing with the mind.’ A puzzle to me! What is writing with the mind? Man always writes with the mind! Nolinida was kind enough to explain to me that, instead of quietly receiving the Mother’s hints spontaneously from within, I was trying by the external mind to construct a sentence by combining meanings of the flowers; this defeated Her purpose. A new revelation to me. But gradually this opportunity was also lost, like many others. Instead of trying to concentrate on one’s self-discovery, we began to look at each other’s flowers and complained that some got better flowers than others. Thus along with the stopping of the Soup the morning Pranam was also stopped, in October 1931. A month later, just before the 24th November Darshan, when hardly recovered from serious illness, She was gracious enough to come down again to accept the Pranam in the morning, so as to prepare the disciples for the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. But this time the form of the Pranam was completely changed. It was no longer in the room where one could approach Her in privacy, but in the open verandah in the Meditation House, downstairs in front of Amrita’s room, where we all sat together and looked at each person approaching the Mother, instead of concentrating on how to stand in Her Presence. No longer different flowers to every person this time; She gave the same flower and only one to each.

The dining room in those days was inside the Ashram compound, not even a room but a small tiled shed only, where not more than fifteen people could sit together and eat. No visitor was allowed there, only the sadhaks went there for food, and that also in two batches, due to shortage of space. Servants carried food to the guests in their rooms. There were only enamelled pots, not even tiffin carriers. After sometime I was given the opportunity to go there for some light
work, evidently with the approval of the Mother, to spread the carpets (actually narrow mats) and arrange the Japanese-style small tables on the floor, but not to take my own food there. After three months someone left and there was a vacant seat, so I was given permission to take my food there. This was the first time since I came to the Ashram that I had a chance to eat in the dining room. The experience was no less solemn than going for meditation. We would all go in and take our seats as the bell was rung; the same bell perhaps that is rung today in the palatial building that is now our Dining Room. An incense stick was lit to add to the sacred atmosphere, and each one would turn to his dish prayerfully, in an attitude of offering the food to the Divine within. I do not say that this atmosphere was maintained at all the three meals of the day. I was told that it had been far more intense before, when the Mother used to come to the dining room Herself every day and tasted each item which was then taken by all as prasad. But after some time that opportunity was also lost, apparently due to the Mother’s lack of time, but actually because of a general failure in maintaining the attitude pure enough. Later Sri Aurobindo wrote that people’s attitude towards food was responsible.

Gradually I became accustomed to the work in the dining room, but unfortunately also to the old egoistic attitude towards my fellow workers, I fell a prey to the lower vital’s impure reactions that seemed to spring spontaneously from within me. I also copied others thinking that to be the real way of progress in sadhana. The process of opening myself to the influence of the Mother and obeying Her will, always looking at my own defects and drawbacks, was replaced by reports and complaints to Her against the others, always presenting myself to be guiltless or less guilty. It was this that later on was surely responsible for my change of work, although the Mother was extremely patient and compassionate and allowed me to grow in that wild way for a long time.

An incident comes to mind that happened during my first days of stay in the Ashram. Dara in those days became interested in taking photographs of many of the Ashram inmates. I took a fancy to collect some of them and seek autographs of the sadhaks on the pictures, just for my own collection. It certainly was a newcomer’s enthusiasm to come in contact with some of the veteran sadhaks. Some readily agreed and autographed also. I approached Nolinida, but he declined. To him it appeared a wrong movement, because in the Ashram only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave autographs. This naturally hurt me but did not fail to make an impression on me. Then, after some others with whom I had succeeded, I approached Pavitra, about whom I had heard very interesting stories even before I came to the Ashram, and who since then has been to me a true child of the Mother. So as soon as I came here I took the earliest opportunity to meet him, even though people told me that he was one of the three persons in those days, with whom nobody was to talk without the Mother’s permission. He kept the photo with him and told me to see him the next day. What a shock and surprise was in store for me, when he told me the day after that he had asked the Mother about it and that She had not approved. Embarrassed and sorry, I asked him whether the Mother was displeased. He assured me very sweetly that She was not displeased. What She meant was that to give autographs was to communicate some power and She did not see any necessity for that in this case. After Nolinida, this was again a lesson to me;
more so, because the attitude of Pavitra to refer everything to the Mother, even things which appeared small to the common point of view, was an unforgettable pointer to me, even though I often forgot it.

December 25, 1929 is a date I particularly remember for two reasons. It was perhaps the first Christmas day celebration of that period. In the evening after returning from the Soup Hall and before going up to Her room the Mother distributed some small green leaves from the stairs, in the Meditation House. Just before She began the distribution, She said, “These leaves are called New Birth; not a new birth in the body but a birth in the new consciousness. These will be given to all, and according to each one’s receptivity will be the realisation.” Then She started giving a bunch of those leaves to each one in turn. The appearance of Her face was remarkable, the embodied Divine was present before all.

As the distribution was coming to a close, Nolinida discovered that Barinda had not yet arrived and asked me to fetch him immediately. What a strange situation to find that Barinda was not in his room. By the time I returned to inform about it the Mother had gone up. Next morning both Nolinida and Amrita visited Barinda’s room and found a letter addressed to Sri Aurobindo on a table. Later I learned that he had written to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saying that he was leaving the Ashram. Later still there were some communications of Sri Aurobindo, which were published, explaining the difficulty of a strong self-centred egoistic man to surrender to the Mother.

I felt sorry for Barinda having left the Ashram. As one of the pioneers of Sri Aurobindo’s historic Bengal Revolutionary movement, and later, after his return from the Andamans life-imprisonment cell, he became a staunch follower and organiser of Sri Aurobindo’s new line of spiritual development. It was unthinkable that he had left. But by then I had come to realise that many of the old-timers could not bring themselves to surrender their outer life to the Mother. In fact complete surrender even today is never an easy thing. Yet today’s Ashram has an advantage, as people with a slight opening can fit in as workers in any of the hundreds of activities, provided they accept the Mother’s decision as final. Question of surrender, even incomplete, does not come up, unless the person behaves in a hostile way. This opportunity which the Mother is giving now was unthinkable then, and unthinkable anywhere in the world today where a spiritual discipline for the development of the consciousness is the first object. But in the case of people like Barinda, and specially in those days of intense sadhana, as the Mother was bringing down the higher Truth and Light in a sweeping succession, the slightest delay in accepting Her ways and directions was a positive hindrance. And the more advanced the sadhak the more difficult it was for him to accept the principle of complete surrender, because it meant the complete rejection of all he had done and achieved in the past and to become a perfect zero and begin anew. This was possible for none except the Mother when She came to Sri Aurobindo the first time in 1914. In Her diary She has kept that history for posterity, the experiences of Her first few days’ contact with Sri Aurobindo.

And a still more interesting thing is what Sri Aurobindo once said to Barinda in answer to his question regarding his first impressions of the Mother, vis-à-vis Hers of Him. Sri Aurobindo told Barinda that even before coming to Pondicherry
he had realised that the descent of the Supermind was inevitable and for that the one indispensable condition on the part of the human being was a complete surrender to the Divine, down to the physical. There had been attempts of this before, but none had succeeded. He had never seen an example of complete surrender until he had seen the Mother. In Her he saw the complete surrender down to the very cells of the body, and thus he was convinced that now the time had come for the Supramental to manifest.

I could clearly see that one of the rare old inmates was Nolinida, who found no difficulty in adjusting himself to the situation. Once a newcomer, a person of importance and at the same time admirer of Nolinida, asked him point blank, “Didn’t you have any difficulty, like many others, in accepting the Mother?” His spontaneous reply was, “No, I had no difficulty whatsoever; when Sri Aurobindo accepted Her there was no question of my not doing so.”

A year later circumstances led me to volunteer work in another department with the Mother’s approval. There was a paid workman also to help along with a small boy. The man was a technician, but an indifferent fellow, and I a novice just learning the work. Once it happened that the small boy, who carried the ladder from place to place, did not turn up for several days and the paid man would not touch the ladder. He was too proud of his dignity for such a petty job! So I prayed to the Mother to appoint another boy to carry the ladder. The Mother exclaimed with surprise, “What! two people cannot carry a ladder? I do not understand!” I felt shocked at first that She wanted me to do a coolie’s job for this paid man who refused to touch the ladder! But I realised that in any case I had to obey Her and pass through the ordeal. First my own superiority complex had to be thrown aside if I wanted to work for the Divine. So I did the job the next day. Seeing me lifting the ladder the workman grumbled and after a while very unwillingly lent his hand. Later the Mother obliged me to do all such work myself, and pointed out to me that it was the only way to be a successful leader of co-workers, otherwise they would have no true feeling and respect for me and would find every opportunity to cheat me and sink into a demoralised condition.

I had been in the Ashram about two years when an elderly friend of mine came for a visit. I was indebted to him very much because in my earlier days he had helped make it possible for me to come here. So naturally it was a great pleasure for me to meet him again. But during the two months he remained here, I could not visit him as often as both of us would have liked, because by then I was fully engrossed in quite a number of different works; and the greatest attraction of it was that I had more opportunities than many others to see the Mother and talk to Her and get Her instructions.

One day he remarked, “Why do you busy yourself all the time with so much work? Did the Mother give you so many jobs or do you do them of your own accord?” I explained to him, “The Mother does not impose work on anybody; I feel pleasure in working so I ask Her and She approves of my doing all these jobs.” He said, “You had literary talent in you and there is a good library here, why not take advantage of that and try to be a literary man, doing a half day’s work and a half day’s study?” His advice appealed to me, it sounded reasonable; yet I was not quite convinced inwardly. So I talked about it to Pavitra. The next day he surprised me by saying that he had spoken to the Mother about my conversation with my friend, and very spontaneously She had said, “Yes, yes,
otherwise how to become useless?” The next day, on our first meeting, the Mother said jokingly, “So, you are going to be a literary genius?” I felt very much ashamed and said, “No, Mother.” It was indeed funny that I should have forgotten the warning given to me on my first day by my friend!

What the Mother said does not mean that She discourages literary activity. Here was a purely individual case in a certain set of circumstances where the spiritual development depended on following a certain line of discipline.

I used to meet some reputed sadhaks on the sly and indulge in taking tea with them, joining in their gossips which included reading fresh letters from Sri Aurobindo and finding faults with other sadhaks. I did not inform the Mother about it, as I knew She would not approve. However, the mental justification to stop the prick of conscience was never lacking: “After all, what’s wrong in it? Where else would I have the opportunity to read such wonderful letters of Sri Aurobindo?” Gradually I sensed a certain reserve in the Mother’s dealing with me. Unable to bear the tension, I asked Her a few days after, what was wrong expressing my sorrow for displeasing Her and bringing about Her indifference to me. Very kindly but jokingly the Mother asked me why I hid things from Her. Thus things got settled down in a way, but for a short time only. The vital attraction to gossip was too strong to be thrown off at once. I had no difficulty in walking away from my family to enter the Ashram, but these apparently innocent movements would not leave me. I continued my old ways but justified them with similar arguments: “Now that the Mother knows about it, there is nothing so very serious in it, and didn’t She tell me, ‘Do whatever you like, but do not hide it from me’? Moreover, when I told Her that I would never go anywhere again, She told me it would be good if I could do so, but She did not think I could. Didn’t it mean that She did not believe me?” After full three years of struggle, the topic came up again in one of my interviews with the Mother. She said, “You are playing about in this matter (visiting people at tea parties, etc.). But if you do not throw it away completely now that it has taken a more complex turn, this greed in what appears to you a very minor form will later be a major obstacle in your sadhana.” I asked Her quite impertinently why She did not remove this desire from me, if it was something so serious. The Mother replied with all her tenderness, “But you are not allowing me to do it. You are not opening this part at all to my influence. Each time that I put a strong pressure on you to help you out of this disease, you very cleverly avoid it. If you had very simply come to me and frankly told me about your difficulty, your desire for this or that thing, I would have seen what really was needed, and how much to allow and for how long. By now you would have been completely out of it and gone a step further. But instead of that you go on hiding it from me, and satisfy your greed by frequenting other people’s places. Naturally you miss the direct help.”

It was the first time in my life that I had heard such a thing, and that from the Mother! Is it believable that such silly bits could be put before Her, asking for their satisfaction? All I had learned from childhood had taught me the contrary, not to ask anything from the Divine. Sri Ramakrishna had sent Vivekananda to Mother Kali to ask her redress of his family difficulties so that he could devote himself entirely to his guru; but Vivekananda tried three times and yet could not ask. Instead, he prayed for desirelessness and renunciation. In one of
Rabindranath Tagore’s lines we read, “He who could give you a crown for the head, you just ask for a shoelace from him!”

It took me years to recognise my false logic in it. If not to bother the Mother for insignificant things of human desire is to be my abiding virtue, I must be capable of removing desires completely from myself. But with many like me, this is not easy. It is only the highly developed souls that can do it all at one stroke. Sri Aurobindo did it; from the moment he decided not to allow the mind to think but to remain vacant and act according to the inner voice, from then on his whole life was guided by that principle. But for a common man who has taken up the line of spiritual development the guidance of the guru is necessary. Opening oneself to the Mother, not only for things higher and nobler, but for things small and ordinary, and to wait for Her decision and guidance - this not only helps one to progress without stumbling, but is essential for the development of the inner consciousness which eventually leads to the discovery of the Mother inside who guides unmistakably. I wish I had understood this before; then I would not have wasted so much of the Mother’s outer grace and compassion. I should have understood that even when the Mother made some concessions for my desire to have its own way, it was just to help cure it and not go on exploiting it. When She did not sanction, in certain cases, strict discipline should have been maintained at any cost, and as I had experienced in some cases where I succeeded, the feeling of the Grace helping to cure the malady was physically palpable, and the difficulty was over earlier than imagined. But the question was of holding on.

When my parents came to know that I had settled in the Ashram permanently, my mother began to write frantic letters asking me to return. I stopped replying to her after some time, being tired and disgusted. Months later, while I was feeling at spiritual ease without being disturbed by my people at home, and for that matter was pondering whether I should not express my gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for this little piece of miracle, Nolinida brought to me a postcard from Sri Aurobindo, with the marginal comments written in his own hand, the first communication from him in my life! Overjoyed I began to read, then with a sudden shock from what I had read, I went back to the beginning and started reading again: “What is the meaning of all this I do not understand. I hope you have not given her any understanding that it is I who have kept you here. Your temporary stay was changed into a permanent one by your prayer. And once you have decided, you should have the courage to make your people understand that clearly. Otherwise, one is free to remain here or to go as he chooses.”

It was not difficult to guess the contents of the postcard. It was a letter addressed directly to Sri Aurobindo by my mother, throwing blame on him. I felt very sorry; but I felt quite uneasy as I had never given any such impression to my mother; and how was it that Sri Aurobindo did not understand that? I at once wrote a strong letter to my mother, and sent it up to Sri Aurobindo for approval, with an inner feeling of satisfaction that he would be convinced that I had enough courage to deal with my parents! Next day I got the letter back through Nolinida, the same spiritual postman; I opened the fresh envelope with my name written on it by Sri Aurobindo, and found his comments on the body of my letter to my mother: “This letter won’t do. There is no use threatening your mother with all that will happen to her which has no meaning. After Darshan I shall give
you the hints of what to write. For the present you can simply write to her that you are in good health and she need not worry.” Another surprise indeed, but one of unthinkable joy to me. This time I really expressed my gratitude to Them!

In those days the departments of service were few. There was the Building Service under the devoted engineer Chandulal, the Garden Service and Pavitra’s Atelier (Workshop) for mechanical and technical activities. Of course there were the domestic service to deal with the servants, the Prosperity for the requirements of the Ashramites, the Bakery and the Dining Room, the same as today but now increased many times over. Every detail of all the services was presented to the Mother for Her scrutiny and approval, especially Pavitra’s department. The heads of the other departments were responsible to the Mother, of course, but to some extent they had the freedom to deal with the workmen and organise the works as they felt justified. But in Pavitra’s case it was the Mother who was the One and the All. She conducted everything, Pavitra only carried out Her orders. At the same time all technical details or engineering matters were worked out by him, but even for the most insignificant item it was She who would say “Yes or No” and only then did he carry it out.

In the workshop repairs to the Mother’s car and its maintenance were the main job; but along with that all other electrical works, including house installations and repair jobs, water works, in the form of water canalisations from the municipal supply and repairs to taps etc. on one side, and all the domestic service requirements like repairs to metal pots and tinning of cooking-vessels, as well as smithy jobs etc., on the other were all being done. In each of these Pavitra, engineer of the École Polytechnique, gave a helping hand, and all the details were presented to the Mother. It was She who decided what to do and in which order. The relation between paid workmen and the one sadhak worker, who was also Pavitra’s assistant was very sweet and friendly due to Pavitra’s being the intermediary between them. Even if there was some confusion at times with the workmen and his assistant Pavitra would never give his opinion or order, but refer to the Mother and later communicate to them what had been decided by Her. In any workshop or factory outside, this at times would appear to lower his dignity, at least from the standpoint of a high-class engineer and his fellow assistant or workmen. But for him all that was of no importance. Only what the Mother wanted was all.

Once it happened that a paid workman was permitted by the Mother to come to her for Pranam every morning, not along with the sadhaks but after She had finished with them. She would come out by Pavitra’s door upstairs and stand there, and the man would go up and offer his Pranam. He was perhaps the first workman to whom She gave this grace. Amrita said the man had originally been a mason, working in the Building Service with Chandulal. But he was a devotee and a poet. He had written some poems in Tamil on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which Amrita had translated into English and shown to Her. The Mother was evidently pleased and instructed Chandulal to send the man from his building department to Pavitra’s department, where he would work as a mechanical helper. Thus he got the promotion from mason to mechanic; but unfortunately within a short time he proved himself hopelessly unfit for the work, a lazy fellow. Pavitra realised this from the facts of daily work, but he did not react in the way I did, because he knew the Mother was kind to the man and
was giving him an opportunity and he accepted him for that. When the fellow came late for work, and gradually turned it into a regular habit, the Mother would say, “His house is very far, so one should be a little kind.” I said he was good for nothing, but She would defend him by saying, “You people are really lacking in sympathy!” In this way every possible concession was being given to him, which was unthinkable for any other paid workman in any other department in the Ashram. At first he brought a few flowers; but gradually the more his inefficiency in the departmental work was being overlooked by the Mother, he began to bring quite a few packets of flowers for Her, and untied them one by one and offered them at the Mother’s feet, thus taking a lot of time. This delayed his joining the work still more, and also it was late for the Mother. So once, when it was later than usual and he was even slower to open the packets, I felt impatient and told him to finish his Pranam first, as the Mother was standing, and the rest of the packets would be untied for him by me. The man did so, and the Mother went in comparatively early. I felt flattered at having done a good service to Her.

Later in the evening Pavitra told me that the Mother had been very displeased because of my interrupting the man. She said that when the man was before Her and making Pranam, he was not a workman at that time, and moreover She came at that hour for him only, so I did not need to come with him again: did I not already have my Pranam earlier? A good lesson for me! Naturally I did not accompany the man after that to the Mother.

Another small incident gave me an unforgettable lesson from the Mother. One day I reported to Her about a workman, a very good and honest mechanic, who was always concentrated in his work, but on that day somehow he did not follow my words and got irritated. I tried several times to explain to him but he would not listen and became insolent in front of a dozen workmen. So I shouted at him, with the result that he at once wanted to leave the job and go away. The Mother was quite distressed with my behaviour. In part what She told me was: “What are you here for? You are here for Yoga, aren’t you? And what is that man here for, to earn his livelihood, isn’t he? You say the man is honest and an expert mechanic and very gentle by nature, and that it was the first time he behaved with you like that. So if you had used a little ordinary common sense, I don’t speak of the yogic sense here, you would have understood that something unusually upsetting must have happened to him either in his family or out somewhere, which made him lose his balance of mind. Thus he did not understand you properly.

“Now, you who are doing yoga should not have gone down in consciousness, and at last you even went below the person with whom you lost your temper. It will help in no way to argue and explain and counter-argue, always posing yourself to be right and the other wrong, and moreover you said that the man speaks very little English, and the most deplorable of all things was that your vanity of being the superior boss took the lead.”

When I told Her that I had not actually lost myself in anger, but the man’s insolent behaviour in front of so many workmen had set a bad example and so..., She stopped me in the middle of my sentence and said, “All that justification belongs to a lower level of consciousness; so long as you remain there, there is
no hope. If you want to serve the Divine you must always be at the top of your consciousness.”

“What should I have done in that embarrassing situation?” I asked. The Mother said, “Instead of making the drama of a superior person dealing with a paid workman, you should have behaved like a loving friend and comrade, you should have done this” – here the Mother patted my shoulder – “and laughed and told him with a kind and affectionate gesture, ‘What has happened to you today? You must not be well; go and take some rest. Surely you are very tired today.’ You would have seen that it would have eased the situation and brought back harmony. Whatever be the situation and whosoever the person, lack of harmony means lack of consciousness, and the one who is stronger yields. I do not mean stronger physically, but stronger in consciousness. And by one’s affection and love, not by the dictionary meaning of the word, one yields to get back peace and harmony. Instead of that, you went down below the person and rubbed the animal in him in the wrong way. You are doing yoga, so this much he can expect from you?”

“Now, what shall I do, shall I go back and do as you said?” I asked. The Mother laughed and said, “No, it is too late now, it would be a rehearsed artificial drama and won’t serve the purpose. It must be spontaneous, and that means from a different consciousness. Now the only thing that you can do is to concentrate on the best part of the man and pray for him, that he may get peace and balance, and when you meet him tomorrow behave as if nothing had happened. Be as natural and affectionate as can be expected of a really strong man.”

I did not have to wait for the next morning. Towards the end of the day he came himself to me, and with eyes full of tears asked pardon of me. I was struck dumb. I felt that I had lost the game and he had won it. The same night when I told this to the Mother, she said in a tone of good humour “So you see, he is more receptive than you. Remember and offer.”

One of my stumbling-blocks was that I reacted violently when people blamed me without proper grounds. At times I would even ask the Mother why she paid heed to such and such false rumours, why I should be the victim of such charges, even though I had done nothing of the kind! Her answer to me was that it did not matter whether I did or did not do some such things in that particular instance; what mattered was that previously I had proved myself capable of them, and there were reports about that. My past conduct and the present complaints were enough to show that I was still living in the same old consciousness of reactions and repeated lower movements. It was not enough to have stopped indulging in some of the movements. So long as I had not raised myself to a higher level of consciousness and lived there constantly, such occasions would continue to be there. Only by a complete change of consciousness, and thus living above ordinary human reactions, could the atmosphere around me vibrate differently, and people would then be convinced and not try to find fault with me. And that is a task of long, long years of arduous tapasya. Until then people would be justified to complain and my business was not to react but to be indifferent outwardly, while trying to find inwardly how certain apparently refined movements in me were really out of tune with my changed consciousness. And thus people’s complaints would be more a help than a hindrance.

However, one who makes a complaint has to be very careful about what he
says. Thus I may quote a comparatively recent message of the Mother to me when impulsively I hurled a strong criticism at somebody, whose conduct, according to me, had caused an irreparable loss to us:

“When, in ignorance, one speaks ill of others, he debases his consciousness and degrades his soul.

“A respectful and modest Silence is the only attitude befitting a disciple. Blessings.”

Another point about which the Mother was particular in my case was unnecessary contact with women. It was something the Mother would never tolerate. In fact there was not to be any contact with men either, which was not precisely in connection with some work for the Mother. And it was one of my diseases to be friendly with all, inwardly justifying myself that it was the sign of purity and strength. There were innumerable cases when the Mother was severe with me. At times I asked her whether she believed I would enter into some immoral contact. Her reply was revealing, though I was too arrogant in the beginning to be convinced. The gist of what she told me on a number of occasions was like this: “Your idea of morality and immorality is ridiculous. You are here for yoga, to be in union with the Divine, to be all the time above all human so-called natural contacts, however high and refined you may imagine them to be. Any contact with women in your case, will bring you down to subtle vital exchanges to which you are always open. Your consciousness will begin to get dulled, forces of the vital world will take advantage, and quite unawares you will be carried far into wrong tracks, even when you are quite sure of your morality remaining sound!” At times she told me, “Don’t be boastful of your strength. None has been able to keep his promise to me as yet!”

There are many who lament remembering the past days of the Ashram life, that were so calm and intense with the spirit of sadhana. When I look back on my past days, I realise how very unprepared I was, and how little of the Mother’s expectations I fulfilled. Certainly there were more opportunities, but in another form they are not lacking now. Sincere prayer to Her and constant aspiration for Her help to change the consciousness is miraculously responded to, as quickly as it was before. Only, I must be unceasingly vigilant that my acts do not take the form of some show or self-satisfaction even in doing service to the Divine.

My first day’s advice from the friend, when I reached the Ashram, ‘that it is only through work that you shall realise what the Mother really is,’ remains ever true for me. Although the Ashram has expanded a hundredfold, and all works are being done for the Mother, yet Her true workers, sincere and reliable, are not many. Without trying to appear humble I may record that I am only one of the many.
A Few Reminiscences
- by Pujalal

It was either 1925 or 1926.
From 1924 I had started coming to Pondicherry for the Master’s Darshan every year as soon as I could collect some money for my long journey and stay for two to three months. This continued till I became permanent after November 1926.

Those days I was looking upon Sri Aurobindo as the greatest son of Mother India and the greatest Master of Yoga, although I had learnt through the late Sri Puraniji that he was not only a Master Yogi but also a living embodiment of Sri Krishna. But as I myself had no such experience at that time, I continued to look upon him as my Master who had graciously initiated me into his Yoga of Integral self-perfection.

Now, it so happened that Mrs. Purani, our Lilavatiben, with whom I had started visiting Sri Aurobindo, felt like preparing some dishes for the Master’s midday meal. Both she and Puraniji jointly got them ready and delivered them to one of the inmates of the Library House a little before Sri Aurobindo’s mealtime.

But fortunately for me, one day it came to my lot to carry the dish. I came with it to the Library House and after duly handing it over to Amrita or Bijoy Nag (I don’t quite remember to whom) who was standing in front of the Reception Room of today, but then of Nolinida’s room, in the company of the other inmates, unexpectedly I saw that Sri Aurobindo was coming down the stairs for his dinner.

I stood wonder-struck, for it was not the great Yogi whom I saw before my eyes, but the Lord of Yogis in his eternal glory. His sun-bright eyes cast a luminous glance of grace on me utterly overpowering my being. My heart and soul felt blessed by this mighty vision of living Ishwara, the Lord of Yoga and of Yogis.

As I stood almost stunned, he passed his way, but I got my God, my Ishwara, my fulfilment, living in the divine person of Sri Aurobindo.

* *

Soon after 1921, Sri Aurobindo changed his residence from the Guest House (at present annexe to the Dortoir) to the Library House, 9, Rue de la Marine, the house the entrance to which is now the Main Gate of the Ashram. Here, as we approach the present Reception Room, we find a staircase by which Sri Aurobindo used to come down for his meals, and crossing the Reception Room and Prithvi Singh’s office go to his dining room (our present Fruit Room). The upstairs verandah is hallowed by the Master, for he sat there daily for 2 to 3 hours in the forenoon and about an hour in the afternoon when the Evening Talks took place sometimes with the Master and sometimes among the sadhaks, the Master participating in them when he thought fit or called for.

There was arranged a simple table and an equally simple chair a little to the
east of the middle door and there the Master sat, going through the newspapers or seeing some sadhaks or an occasional visitor.

But sometimes before he came, one of the house cats found it comfortable to occupy his chair – perhaps as a matter of right – and would not leave the chair for the Master. It probably wanted to enjoy the celestial warmth emanating from the yogic body of Sri Aurobindo, as the light from the sun. And the ever-considerate Master never disturbed the confident cat in any way whatsoever; but simply, nay, precariously sat on the little border-space all the time he remained there. He was by nature a democrat – more than any democrat. His democratic susceptibility extended not only towards human beings but towards animal life also.

*  

Sri Aurobindo’s Compassion

It was about 5 in the morning. As usual, I had gone to the holy house in which the Master and the Mother lived. I had been graciously granted the work of cleaning part of the house and the Mother herself used to open her door for me to enter and start my delightful work.

But one day, after opening the door, the Mother stood there and in Sri Aurobindo’s name asked me to be more careful and quiet that day so as not to disturb a sparrow that was resting on the top of the big middle door.

I took it as a divine command and promised to be cautious. Then I stepped in and the Mother retired. Without making a stir or a sound, I passed by the aforesaid door and to my wonder and delight saw the sparrow sitting motionless on its topmost part.

I was moved. How compassionate was our divine Master! He used to be walking at night in the hall there and had observed this tiny creature taking its night-rest in the peaceful atmosphere always prevailing there. We human beings were not the only creatures for His compassion to look after, but all beings, big and small had a place of love in His more than universal heart.

Blessed, indeed, are we all and blessed the earth for having Him, the divine Master, the living embodiment of the Lord of the universe, for ever leaning over us from His heights and housing us in the depths of His heart of love.

*  

Bushy, the Cat

Cats, too, were along with us, bright recipients of the bountiful grace of Sri Aurobindo. For long years, right from His early stay at Pondicherry, i.e. soon after 1910, some lucky cats enjoyed His divine hospitality and made His house their own.

It started like this. A cat persisted in her desire to adopt His house, and although other house-members were at pains not to allow her there, she remained resolute in her will and won.

Sri Aurobindo thought of working upon cat-consciousness also, and this catsadhika found a home for herself and her progeny.

It may need a long chapter for dealing with this cat-colony, which we cannot afford. I will, therefore, limit myself to one, Bushy by name, one who is immortalised by Sri Aurobindo, the Master-Poet in His poem “Despair on the Staircase”.
Bushy was a great devotee of the Mother and the Master. She had made it a rule of her life to follow the Mother like a faithful dog, whenever She came down either for the giving of Her soup-prasad or for general meditation. Bushy’s greatest ambition or rather aspiration was to carry her kittens to the Mother and if possible to the Master to be laid at Their feet as her offering.

It was for this reason that she kept her young ones under the corner-cupboard, half way up the stairs. From here as soon as the door opened and the Mother came out, she would carry them and lay them at Her feet. It was, indeed, a touching sight. How even a cat aspired to make her offering of her dear ones to the divine Mother!

And this was not all. She yearned to lay her offering at the Master’s feet also. But before one could reach Sri Aurobindo’s room there was first the main entrance door to be negotiated and then there was a wooden partition over 7 feet high. So at night when the Master was alone and the Mother in the meditation hall, Bushy would wait at the stairs to take her chance and at the first opportunity jump in with her kitten in her mouth and again jump over the wooden partition, and perhaps have the Master’s darshan, but I don’t know whether she laid her baby at His feet or not.

Sri Aurobindo in His stroll at night must have seen her waiting on the topmost stair at the entrance door, ardently desiring to enter, but being refused the opportunity, showing her pose of self-respect worthy of a cat belonging to the Divine.

There she was in despair, magnificently upholding her dignity. This is the subject of the poem “Despair on the Staircase”, wherein is revealed the way our Lord looked at all creatures. He writes, “Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat” and “A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman”. He naturally looked upon all beings as forms of the One Brahman, and in this particular case clearly indicated that there was in her cat-body a future woman too.
I use to read the Arya when I was living in the Victoria Hostels in Madras. I was sixteen then. I found in those pages just what I needed and I intensely wished to obtain what was there. Small booklets like the Uttarpara Speech also came into my hands and appealed to me very much. I wanted to see Sri Aurobindo very much. The opportunity arrived on the 7th of April 1921 when I came to Pondicherry and stayed for fifteen days.

I first saw Sri Aurobindo in the verandah of the Guest House upstairs. He was quite different from the figure in the familiar pictures. He had a big body; the colour was golden, particularly there was a golden light on the head and in the feet which was perceptible to my intense vision. I offered Pranam to him.

SRI AUROBINDO: What have you been doing?

I: I have read the Ideal of Karmayogin and have been practising it. I look upon the body as the chariot and Sri Krishna as the charioteer. I pray to Him.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, continue.

After I left and returned to my host’s house I had an experience in which I lost the body consciousness. I found myself moving in the air, to distant places like a bird. I felt myself a bird. It was all light and delight.

Later when I reported this experience to him, Sri Aurobindo said:

It is a symbolic vision; promise of the Light to come. Bird is the symbol of the soul.

As he was saying this I felt highly gratified that I had achieved something special. That very moment he added that it was a common experience.

While leaving he told me to be writing to him though I was not to expect replies. Accordingly I used to write to him every week. What is remarkable is that even before posting the letters I used to feel the effect.

It was in 1923 that, after passing out from the Medical College, I could come away to stay with Sri Aurobindo permanently. At that time Purani was functioning as the manager of the household. And I learnt that referring to my coming Sri Aurobindo had said to him: “Yoke him when he comes.”

And I was yoked blissfully. I was put in charge of purchases etc. Sri Aurobindo used to give me fifteen rupees per month for each of the inmates (for Mess expenses) plus Rs. 40 per month for house rent.

I used to get opportunities to meditate in Sri Aurobindo’s presence along with one or two others. At times there would be loud noise downstairs of opening wooden cases etc. When one of us complained to him that the noise was interfering with the meditation, he answered:

You must be able to meditate on the battle-field.

Naturally I used to get different experiences during these sittings. There would
be extreme delight which the body could not bear. There would be great peace.
When I asked him about this peace Sri Aurobindo said:
Mental peace is different from spiritual Peace. Spiritual Peace is unaltered by anything.
I also spoke to him of the Light that I used to feel descending into me. He remarked that what came from above was grappled by the mind and at times there was mixture. I interrupted and said that there was no mixture in my case.
SRI AUROBINDO: After thirty years of sadhana I find there is mixture. And you...!
In those days it used to be a common sight to see Sri Aurobindo sitting amidst others but he was really somewhere beyond, unreachable.

*  
24th November 1926 was indeed a glorious day. It was the day of the descent of Sri Krishna Consciousness into Sri Aurobindo. I still remember Dutta (the Irish lady attending on the Mother) exclaiming as if in trance:
He has conquered Life.
He has conquered Death.
He has conquered All.
Krishna the Lord has descended!
During all this period I used to come in contact with the Mother in connection with my work of fetching things from the French Post Office, French Treasury, etc. Her smile used to make me deeply happy. When I mentioned this to Sri Aurobindo, he told me that he had made this arrangement precisely to let me come into her atmosphere.
In one of my meetings the Mother referred to my past lives and said that in my last birth I was Barat during the French Revolution days in France.

*  
During those early years of the Ashram life the Mother used to allot numbers to those who attended the meditations. Mine was No. 9.
She used to bring down the Gods. The godhead that was brought down into me was ADORATION.

*  
Once when I needed some extra supplies and there was trouble Sri Aurobindo wrote to me:
I am taking whatever the Mother gives, so you also take whatever Mother gives.

*  
On my birthday April 30, 1928 Sri Aurobindo wrote in the book The Mother given to me:
Be always faithful to the Mother.
She will be ever with you and protect you.
It was in 1906 during my college life (when I was 20) that I attended some of the political meetings of Sri Aurobindo after the eventful Partition of Bengal. This Partition – a veritable act of God in disguise - had stirred the life and mind of Bengal, nay almost of the whole of India, after centuries of inertia and apathy. During those days there were no loudspeakers but voices of veterans like Surendranath Banerji and Bepin Chandra Pal reached the farthest ends of crowded meetings, sometimes over a lakh of people, amidst din and noise of the huge mass of humanity that had gathered. But when young Aurobindo Babu (Sri Aurobindo was known at that time as Aurobindo Babu or Aurobindo Ghosh) stood up there was a pin drop silence. He spoke but little but his lisping words carried a mantric force reaching to the core of the heart of the assembly. This was my personal experience in the few meetings that I could attend.

Laterly when I was out of Calcutta, I subscribed to the weekly Bande Mataram and afterwards – after his release from jail – to his Karmayogin and the Dharma (Bengali). Evidently I entertained some soft corner for Sri Aurobindo even at that time, though I do not know why. I even ventured to send a money order of Rs. 21 to his sister Sarojini as a small contribution towards the expenses for his defence at the Alipore trial. I had collected a rupee each from some of my friends and had added my own contribution, perhaps two rupees. At that time nobody even dared to utter Aurobindo Babu’s name for fear of police attention. One of my elderly cousin brothers, whom I respected much, took away almost forcibly all my copies of the Karmayogin and got them drowned in the river.

Sri Aurobindo left for Pondicherry in 1910. I completely lost touch and got engrossed in my mundane life for years together. It was only by the end of the 30s that I awoke again to Sri Aurobindo. That was occasioned by my younger brother visiting the Ashram and staying away there itself. I began to hear of Sri Aurobindo, the Ashram and the Mother. About the Mother I could not reconcile myself to how a European lady could establish herself as the Mother in Pondicherry Ashram and even more as the Divine Mother. I remember I once questioned a woman pilgrim on her way to Pondicherry whether Sri Aurobindo was greater or the Mother. This was my mental attitude at that time.

However, as I wished to see my brother I thought of paying a visit to the Ashram in 1943 and seeing things for myself. But that was not to be. I thought of it again the next year in 1944. I had heard that for the necessary permission one had to write direct to the Mother. I had heard also that the Mother was being addressed as the Divine Mother. I was in a fix when I took the letter pad to write for permission. I simply wrote “Mother” and added: “I want to go to Pondicherry for Darshan but I have no devotional heart, a Darshan may have a salutary effect on me having yearning to get a true knowledge of things.” Writing so far I
stopped and thought to myself what an audacity it was to write thus. Then I felt that these words had come out through the pen without my thinking and so I had better let them remain as they were, whatever the consequences. I am glad to say that I received the permission.

I came to Pondicherry on the 6th of August 1944, early morning. I saw the Mother at about 11 a.m. the same morning walking on the terrace along with Chinmayi and looking at the devotees assembled in the Ashram courtyard. I was also in the crowd. Mother had worn a silken gown and Chinmayi had held a silken umbrella over the Mother’s head. I was not happy to see the Mother at that moment.

During those days Mother used to come on the terrace of Madhav’s office at dusk every evening and stand there for a short meditation. In the courtyard below mats were spread and sadhaks used to join the meditation. When the Mother appeared on the terrace I looked at her and immediately a kind of electric current passed through my body; I saw my own mother’s face appearing on the Mother’s but immediately that face changed into the image of Goddess Jagadhatri of our conception. This set me seriously thinking. I felt that as I did not want to recognise the Mother as Mother, she had appeared before me first as my own mother and then showed her divinity.

I stayed here for full 24 days and on three occasions I saw a bluish halo over the head of the Mother when she sat for meditation in the Meditation Hall at night.

My first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo along with the Mother was on the 15th of August 1944. Since then I had 10 Darshans but the impression formed at the first Darshan is still vivid in my mind although each subsequent Darshan was fruitful for me.

I may mention here an amusing episode. After my retirement from the Calcutta Corporation service in 1942 I was made a life-member of the Officers’ Club. On my return to Calcutta I had been to the Corporation Office to look up my friends there. One of the senior officers was very inquisitive about the Darshan and asked all particulars: whether Sri Aurobindo wore a chaddar, fatua, shirt etc., during the Darshan time. I said I had not seen all these but had simply looked at his face and the toes of his feet and nothing else, I had not even looked at the Mother sitting by his side. This created much amusement and he summoned all the older colleagues to hear me. I repeated my story and there was a good deal of merriment. To extricate myself from the situation I asked them what was wrong in what I had done. Did they not remember that Arjuna also did not see the whole body of the hanging fish when he shot at the eyes of the fish from his bow?

I have mentioned about the bluish halo around the head of the Mother. Now I may mention another experience. During the last year I could see for several months continuously, a circle of white light emerging over the head of Sri Aurobindo’s photograph in the Reception Room, every morning and evening when I looked at the photo with reverence before pranam. I used to see the same light over the Darshan photo in my room at night for some time. Now we all know that the blue light is the light of Sri Aurobindo and white that of the Mother. Why then have I seen just the opposite? Some may say that it is a hallucination or due to defect in my aging eyesight. May it not be that this
experience is vouchsafed to me to show that Sri Aurobindo is in the Mother and the Mother in Sri Aurobindo?
The Grace
(Some Reminiscences)
– by Romen Palit

This is not a polemic or an abstraction on the reality of the Divine Grace which the materialist might frown upon or draw the devotee to wax into high-sounding eulogy. What I recount is factual without a grain of fiction. Yet these might seem impossibles. Why? Take for example the capacity for literary or musical creation I am supposed to possess. From where did I imbibe them – from my family? Good heavens! No. None in our past generations had either been a poet, a critic or a musician. They were hard-boiled materialists bent on the utilitarian pastime of earning and producing wealth. And yet I would be all these though I must confess if left to my own I could not turn out a single piece of music or a single line of poetry.

Perhaps I am putting the cart before the horse. From the very early childhood I have a faint recollection of my parents meditating before some photographs all bedecked with flowers. I was strangely attracted by the perfume of flowers and incense. From that time I learned to associate incense, flowers and photographs with things sacred.

I came to the Ashram as a visitor in November 1929. But I was not allowed either to enter the Ashram or for pranam. But I had darshan of the Mother going out for drive everyday at 4 p.m. in the afternoons. Also she went every Thursday to Duraiswami’s place on foot, passing in front of our house, when once I offered a box of chocolates to her and rushed back into the house. I felt so shy. That was my first contact with the Mother. This shyness I have never been able to overcome.

My most significant darshan and the turning point of my life came on the 24th of November. I went with my father and bowed down to the Master and the Mother. I came home in a daze. Later, my father and Barinda asked me how I liked the darshan. It was a casual question, more to humour a child than anything else. How could a child of nine feel the greatness of this stupendous spiritual personality which even to the adults was an enigma? Yes, neither my mind nor my heart was awakened enough, ready to seize the import. But I felt a great vastness, a height in Sri Aurobindo which to my childish mind seemed as great as the Himalayas.

There and then I made up my mind that I must stay on. What exactly attracted me, I cannot say, for there were no children (incidentally I was the first child admitted), no school, no games; only about a hundred men and women with serious faces moved about, met at pranams, meditations and withdrew to their homes. They were distant and uncommunicative, except for Purani whom I nicknamed the policeman and Barinda.

My father was not prepared for this strange decision, for I was brought here
more or less on an experimental basis; for my mother had died three years earlier and I had none to look after me, my father being a touring government official had no fixed establishment. My father had hesitatingly put everything before the Master who replied to say that though children were not admitted in the Ashram he could bring his son. “Let us see what can be done,” he added.

Again my father wrote to the Master when I told him my resolve to stay on. Sri Aurobindo advised me to go back for a few months and return after learning some English “so that he could talk to the Mother”. Accordingly I left.

I returned in July 1930. My father stayed for a month and half. But he did nothing to arrange for my stay. And what could be done? There were no “homes”, no people eager to keep boys. But the Divine Grace intervened in a strange way.

The wife of one of the first disciples of Sri Aurobindo agreed to look after me, while I stayed in an adjoining room vacated by her husband Bijoy Nag. All this happened almost without the knowledge of my father.

And I stayed on, a favourite of all, almost a spoilt child. Then a change took place in the Ashram. The Mother retired for a while from us. The distribution of evening soup was stopped and so also the morning meditation and pranams.

About six months later the new year came and we had meditation and darshan of the Mother at midnight. It was a memorable experience. The Mother appeared to me like a Queen of Beauty in the semi-darkness of midnight.

Next day, the Mother led me to her little dining room and presented me with sweets and two large books in French, ‘Gedeon dans la foret’ and ‘Les animaux’. She talked to me in French whenever I met her.

At the beginning of 1932 I complained to the Mother about the lady who looked after me, over some trivial personal matter. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me that though I was growing and progressing, I could not judge people. However, he added, the Mother was making arrangements to change my room. It was a reprimand to a spoilt boy, undisciplined in habit, and erratic in temperament. Even this reprimand was a gesture of Grace, for the Mother or the Master scolded only those they loved and this was aimed to pinpoint the limitation and overcome it.

1st May I left Boulangerie house; I was given accommodation in a room where the Mother before 1932 used to sit for meditation and pranam.

In the same year I started reading Shakespeare with Nolini and writing small letters to the Mother. These letters were letters of a boy attempting to imitate the older persons who sent letters or notebooks to the Mother every day. Hence most of the letters were sheer trash. Only the Divine could tolerate such foolishness. They contained my first attempts at writing Bengali verse, important and unimportant, and happenings of the day. Once it was about my bed infested with bugs. (I was yet to learn of hygiene.) Sri Aurobindo wrote back humorously that a deputation headed by Amrita was being sent to investigate the state of affairs and exterminate the bugs. The Mother wrote to me to say that running in the street in the sun was not the way to cure a cold.

Once I wrote to Sri Aurobindo that at times I had a strange feeling. I seemed to regard myself as an alien and I questioned: “Is this myself?” Sri Aurobindo wrote back: “This is Viveka.”

The changing of one’s name had a special attraction to me – Jenny Dobson
became Chidanandini, Chadwick became Arjava. There was an old French couple who taught me Mathematics and Geography (Oh, God! how I hated those subjects!) – I forget their French family names – Sri Aurobindo gave them Suchi and Sarala as their names of the spiritual life. Madame Gaebele, the mother of my French teacher, was renamed Suvrata.

Being childish and imitative by temperament, I asked for my name to be changed as well. The Master wrote that Rama – Indra – Ramendra was the name of Vishnu. It was a fine name.

Incidentally, it is the Mother who has changed my name from Ramen to Romen much before I even dreamt of asking for a name.

The Mother gave me a message:

“14.3.32

To Romen,
Always do with pleasure the work you have to do –
Le travail fait avec joie est un travail bien fait.”

This was written on my exercise book where I had done a rough sketch of a sunrise on sea, which she had corrected with her own hand.

From time to time I sent to the Mother a picture which was, I must confess, abominable. On one picture she commented thus (this is one of the few letters she wrote to me in English):

“Do you know what you have represented? The Christian Calvary, that is to say, the mountain on the top of which the Christ was put on the cross with the thieves. Is it a copy or the reminiscence of a picture seen? Or is it from your imagination? I would be interested to know.”

Then in 1934, when I was fourteen, I had a definite and exceptional experience of the psychic being coming to forefront in spite of all my unsteady nature, my moods and my constant depressions. This experience became the basis of existence and has been the support and aid in all my trials and tribulations. This was the Mother’s extended arm in my consciousness to rouse what was the most true, the most permanent in me. This altered all my life, my vision, and my valuation of things, persons, actions in general and my relation with the Mother in particular.

The Mother wrote to me that she was my mother who gave birth (meaning my spiritual rebirth) to me. On another occasion she wrote: “It is better that you do not speak to others what I speak or write to you; because they become jealous and their jealousy creates a bad atmosphere which falls on you and creates difficulties....”

On another occasion: “... I am always with you, you are in my arms which are around you with love and protect you lovingly.”

Once she wrote: “If, as you say, one part in you is happy and contented, stick to this happiness to drive out the ugly things. Do not allow these to take possession of you. For that, do exactly what I tell you to do and live a well ordered regular life. I am always with you to help you to carry out this good will and to help you – Love of your mother.”

It is apparent these letters were written to one vacillating between depression and happiness, between discipline and erratic tamas. This state of affairs continued up to 1946.
The Mother wrote: "You are right to want a new life, and you can be sure I would help you the best I can for this. I am sure that perseverance in study and the acceptance of a discipline in work and in life would powerfully help you to change you.

"All my love is with you to help and guide you."

She repeats:

"I always take you in my bosom but what can I do if you fly away from there?... You must remain quiet in my arms if you want me to help you."

It was not that the Mother was lavish with her love and help only inwardly. She was most generous even in her external bounty, e.g.

"Whenever you want anything, you can always ask me and if it is possible for me to give, I would give it to you."

"My force is always with you. But in order to receive and utilise it, one must open to it with tranquility and confidence."

This is repeated in another letter:

"I want nothing more than you become my instrument, my true little child. But for that the first thing necessary is to be obedient. And so that you can become that, my help is always with you."

Between all these movements of divine aid and human retarding depression which was a recoil to the lower nature, my creative effort continued. The Mother graciously listened to my music once a fortnight or three weeks. She saw my crude paintings, commented and corrected them.

On one occasion she saw a vision while I was playing to her. As a rule, Mother opened her eyes after I had finished playing and smiled, giving her encouraging comment. This time she remained with eyes closed, a gentle smile outlining her lips. After a while she opened her eyes, smiled and said: "Do you know, child, what I saw? On the bank of a river, there was a platform and seated there, you were playing some instrument. So you see you are not a musician in this birth alone." I had a feeling that perhaps it was in ancient Egypt, who knows?

Once she saw a huge bird which, I reckon, must have been Garuda who stood behind me with outstretched wings in a gesture of protection. This was divine protection which had been with me unfailingly in the worst of trials or disasters all through.

I played different ragas both on the Sitar and Surbahar. I played along with Sahana, Ardhendu and Lalita (now Mrs. Daulat Panday). Mother presented me to notable persons who came to see her and asked me to play before them. Once a few Europeans had come, before whom the Mother asked me to play in Pavitra’s room. The Mother herself was not present. But later on I learnt she stood behind the door and listened to my playing, a typical gesture of a mother.

She liked my music, especially my extempore compositions which were strictly neither Western nor Indian.

I had a flair for drawing which she encouraged, so much so that she saw my pitiful attempts and lavished her praise. Even she arranged for a small exhibition of the works of Ashram articles and I had a place there. It was in 1937. A small house was there on the north-east corner of Golconde (Golconde was yet to be built; this small building and other huts were later demolished to become the site for Golconde). Here the paintings of Krishnalal, Anil Kumar, Sanjiban,
Nishikanto and mine were exhibited. Some of my snow-pictures evoked good appreciation due to my young age and the unusualness of the motif.

Sri Aurobindo encouraged my writings of poetry from the very beginning. My first poems worth the name were written in 1935. There was a period when I sent up one poem everyday to the Master. I was not sure of the quality for by then I was developing a little sense of self-examination. So I asked A. to correct and send up these juvenile attempts. That was in 1937. There was a poem which was entitled by Sri Aurobindo ‘O Night, great Night’. A. had sent two versions to the Master; one, as I had written it; two, as he had corrected it. The Master in his own hand wrote out the whole poem making only slight changes for the sake of metre. This is what he wrote as comment: “It seems to me that with less alteration a few slight touches almost, it could be made into a very fine poem”, and at the end of the poem he wrote again: “The repetition of song and beauty is here intentional. The whole may be regarded as an invocation of the Night with all that is in it and behind it, the Mystic Fire, the invisible Beauty above which the stars flame, the ‘earthward Peace’ – I find the phrase very good... I find the last four lines remarkably fine even as they stand. I have altered only slightly for the sake of metre.”

On another poem he commented: “As usual the last lines are very fine. The whole has the substance of poetry, and once put into metrical form, succeeds by a very telling suggestion of atmosphere.” A few days later this was his comment on another of my poems: “A larger vocabulary, a freer choice of words will bring the necessary change, but even as it is, it is remarkable. The lines marked are superb – others are fine, but these would do credit to any poet.”

Like this I continued to write, the Master correcting my lines, even scanning them, showering his benedictions on me incessantly just as the Mother had done.

One day I had gone up to the Mother and was talking to her at random. The Mother was busy writing something and from moment to moment she looked up at me. I felt curious. After a few minutes she showed me the sketch she had made of me. It was done to show me the technique of light and shadow on a human face; she told me there was no line in nature – all lines were the result of light and shadow – this was of course the traditional European concept as opposed to the linear treatment by the Indian and the Japanese.

The Mother loved Japanese painting and the love of the Japanese for things beautiful. She told me how the Japanese built their homes which became harmonious parts of the surrounding landscape. Once she addressed others along with me about creating a tradition (in painting). To follow a tradition was easy but something was lost. But if, on the other hand, one needed to create a line of one’s own, it meant great work and patience. It was not easy.

Now I shall describe three important occasions of Ashram life.

Daily in the evening after the Mother had finished her talk with a few persons in the central Prosperity hall, she would come down and sit in the reception hall (near the gate). In front of her would be a pot of scalding soup. She would meditate for some time, then stretch out her hands and bless the soup. Then the pot would be shifted to her left. People sitting all around her in the hall would come one by one bow down to her, receive the soup in a vessel, rise and go. Then she would rise herself when everyone had finished and pass the courtyard and
the narrow passage near the Samadhi (this has been demolished since) and go upstairs. On two sides of her passage people would stand with flowers in their hands and offer them when the Mother passed them. I too formed this irregular queue. Once I remember she gave me a moon-flower. This was the last darshan, after that all retired to their rooms.

The darshan-days were then three times a year. I felt a great excitement as a boy which is but natural. But this joy had no external background. Why I felt so unspeakably happy, I cannot analyse or say. The previous night I could not sleep well. I often crept downstairs (when I was in Boulangerie house) where J. and others were busy bedecking the ornate canopy of wood covered with beads, flowers and other ornaments. Under these the Mother and the Master were to sit for giving darshan to people. Early morning I would reach the meditation hall, now all covered with mats for people to sit on; a board with typed sheets stood at one corner. Here the names of persons going up for darshan was put up. And each followed his turn in the order mentioned in the list. There was no bustle, no crowding, no talk. It was an atmosphere of silence, aspiration and expectation.

The doors of upstairs were opened at 8 o’clock. And one by one we would go, offer garlands and flowers to our Master and the Mother. After bowing to each in turn some of us bowed at the throne between them, when both of them would put their palms on our heads in benediction. The Mother was all in smiles, queenly and indescribably sweet and we could feel that she was The Mother of whom the Master has spoken in his book. The Master was grand, Shiva and Krishna in one, the supreme Purusha whom the Mother has acclaimed as the Lord whose presence would transform our Night into Day.

In the afternoon, the Mother would distribute garlands (which we had offered to her in the morning). Sometimes she distributed messages as well. When I went for this garland distribution on my first visit, the Mother was distributing Sri Aurobindo’s message: “The sadhak has no personal hopes....” When I went up to her, she handed me a garland and, waving her index finger, said with a smile, “No message for you.”

The birthday was a very special occasion. Each one of us individually went to her in the same room where the three darshans took place. There she would sit on a divan, while we sat on the carpet below. She would talk to us, meditate. Sometimes she would play on the organ, even sing – which was a special privilege – this music was a message to the person concerned.

Once she told me that if I had moods that would make me more unhappy, people would shun me. On another occasion she expressed that even if I wanted to take up ordinary life I must not, on any account, marry. That was the worst possible slavery. Then she asked me if I knew what people did when people married. I nodded. I had only a faint inkling of the thing men call sex. But psychologically I was not mature enough to assess the full import of the problem.

I would narrate something which may surprise. At that period physical education was a thing unknown. In 1932 a tract of land lay vacant which is now Lakshmibai house and garden. I conceived the brilliant idea of having a badminton court. But the place was full of weeds and thorns. So I wrote to the Mother that I needed a servant urgently. The next day was the first day of the month and the Mother came down to pay the domestic servants. Suddenly the
Mother turned to me and said “you will get your ‘urgent’ servant”. The place was cleaned and the few boys that were there plus one or two visiting boys gathered there to play. We had even an athletic competition where S. came first in high jump receiving an earthen dog which the Mother had sent as a prize for the event.

From my childhood I had poor health. I had fits of headaches. The Mother made arrangements for special food to be given to me: butter, eggs, ovaltine. But I was too lazy to take this. So she asked S. then Dr. N. to see that I partook of three eatables. And every day after people had finished pranam, the Mother would meet me at the staircase and ask “How was the food?” Then she would make me flex my arms. “You must become strong, my child”, she would say.

But all these, after all, did not have any lasting effect. The headaches continued. So the Mother sent me to Madras with D. I was there for a week. The Mother wrote to me very affectionate letters, encouraging me. I felt terribly lonely; I had been so much in tune with the Mother and her presence that I felt like a fish out of water.

In 1937 I was restless and in November the Mother asked me to ‘go out and see the ordinary life’. She wanted me to make a free and independent choice of life. She said that she did not want me to be like D. This person whom the Mother mentioned had begun to go out of the Ashram from 1936 and ended by leaving the Ashram altogether in 1953.

I went out. I was in Chittagong, then in Maharashtra, where the Mother sent me letters; sometimes the address too was written in her own hand. I returned two months later. The Mother enquired as to how I liked all these people and places. She had got my room freshly painted and distempered in my absence. She told me that she had got my room all cleaned and tidy. She was all smiles. I think she expected me to turn over a new leaf. But the lure of the external world was pulling. And my father, in spite of being an old associate, added to this unnatural thirst, by tempting me with prospects of sending me to England to become a member of the Indian Civil Service. I could not gauge the full import, but it was a fascination indeed.

In the meantime I left my studies and started working under Chandulal in the newly begun construction of Golconde, where I gave a good account of myself as a worker. The Mother was exceedingly pleased.

But this was not to last. The old depression, moods, the attraction of the external world returned and I succumbed to them. On the first occasion, it was almost the Mother who sent me out. The second time I myself decided to go; that was in October 1938. The Mother was not at all pleased. It was but natural. She told me that perhaps I thought that I would be happy with my father. No, that was not true. She added that I could go but I must return with the determination not to go back to ordinary life.

It was to be a brief visit. But it proved to be a long one.

Before I go into the next phase of my life, I would like to digress. The Mother gave her categorical views on people, specially those with whom I could associate freely without any harm. Some like A. who taught me Bengali metre and had declared that ‘Many are called but a few are chosen – I was to be one of the few chosen ones’ – well, about associating with him, the Mother was noncommittal. But with another person, X, the Mother definitely forbade me to
have any touch. That one she declared was a vampire. And it was true, for a few moments of association with this person used to make me feel dejected and tired. But there were people with whom the Mother encouraged me to mix with, Dr. N., S. etc.

The Mother was also very definite about books and journals. I remember she forbade me from reading ‘Life’ magazine which was, she said, definitely ugly.

Once she examined cursorily my palm. She said that I had a very good heart. Also a strong determination; once I decided to do a thing, nothing could prevent me from doing it. Lastly she prophesied that from my twenty-fifth year, there would be a change for the better, which would continue. How true and accurate! Yet those associated with me had the impression that I was a truant and erratic chap, especially when I was so restless. Some even thought that I would take up ordinary life and forget all about spirituality.

In the ordinary life, which needs no mention, I passed through a bitter experience of what life consists of. The Mother, however, continued to write to me regularly up to 1939 when I was outside. She told me that she could not make up my mind for me and that it was I who had to do it. About the April Darshan which began in 1939 she wrote that it was not a darshan (in the old sense) and I could certainly come. I revisited the Ashram in 1943 and the Mother was the same affectionate mother though I had altered due to my long association with the outside world.

The Mother knew that a great change would come in my life and a blow fall. Therefore prior to my going away in 1939, she confided to me that she wept at all the troubles that visited me, my unstable condition vis-a-vis the spiritual potentiality I had. Of course these were not physical tears, nor had the grief any human origin. She wanted me to be her true child, the child of Light; but conditions barred it. Her love for me had a much deeper origin than my growing, unsteady, adolescent mind could even conceive. The fact, however, came back to me with great impact that she was not only the divine mother, she was my physical mother as well. There was a blending of the human and the divine, which far transcended the human relation of a mother for her offspring or a spiritual relation of a guru with the disciple.

A black curtain was drawn over my spiritual life for several years. But even in that total change the Mother’s aid was there, her hand of succour saved me from complete disaster and ruin. The last letter she wrote to me was in 1942.

I returned in 1946, apparently a crushed individual but with an inner urge to rise. Here again the Force of the Mother was at work.

When I went up to her (1st April 1946) and bowed down to her, the Mother exclaimed “At last!” She gave me a carnation which signified “Obedience”.

A new life opened for me. The ordinary life now had no lure, whereas this life held infinite possibilities.

Once I wrote to her that I felt tired while doing the work. The Mother wrote that it should not be so and that I must learn to take rest even while doing the work.

I met my companion and persons around began writing signed and anonymous letters to the Mother complaining of this new development. The Mother showed to me one such letter and asked “Is this true?” I replied negatively. The Mother tore away the letter and said “I have trust in you.”
I felt distressed nevertheless; I wrote to her of my conviction that everything would be well. The Mother sent back my letter with her answer on the margin. She had underlined my word and wrote that it was the voice of Truth and that I must cling to it.

Once she told me that it was not that any particular work was important. The importance was to do some work. This implied that it is not what we do that is of moment but how we do it, is of capital importance.

She had been to my room three times, each time in a new location. In 1947 I lived at the Press where she came. On entering the room she spotted the sketch of me done by her a decade earlier. Turning to Chinmoyee she remarked, “This sketch I did when Romen was a child.”

Next, she came to Remplaçant House (now renamed by her as Ashish) on my birthday where she tasted the sweets we had prepared for her. She also heard my music. That was in 1949.

In 1954 she came to my room in the band quarters on the Sports Ground.

After the Master left his body I had a unique experience which opened a new way of literary expression. I was promised aid in my poetical venture. I read out some parts of the poem to the Mother. She remarked: “I have a very strong impression that Sri Aurobindo himself is behind this.”

Some friends had remarked that the Mother did not like poetry like Sri Aurobindo. But I had my doubts. So I asked the Mother about it. She remained quiet for a while, then replied: “After all that Sri Aurobindo has done for Poetry, how can I not like it?” Fortwith, she sent some poems which I had sent to her and got them published almost without my knowledge. Had I any intention of publication I would have edited the work.

Once, on my birthday, she wrote to me: “Remember Sri Aurobindo’s promise, ‘One who chooses the Divine, has been chosen by the Divine’.” When I had written to the Mother once about her serious expression at the time of pranam, she replied that perhaps it was the Mahakali aspect of her.

She pointed out my habitual frivolousness and remarked that I must be serious and not light as I had been during the ‘Marching’ for example.

She always encouraged my study, and, in spite of my being not of an age when people normally study, she permitted me to complete the higher course, once in 1955 taking English Literature, and again in 1959 taking Sri Aurobindo’s subjects. Though the students laughed behind my back, I knew I had the Mother’s blessings. I did not, and even now do not, consider myself to be old as the horizons of my mind, life and body are still expanding. This youth is the soul of the Mother in me urging me to move forward. That is why the Mother said with a smile to me on my fiftieth birthday, “Hello! you are not growing old!”

(Note: The letters quoted here were written in French and translated by me. Perhaps a better translation could be made of the 200/300 letters received by me. I have quoted only from the most important and in most cases given a gist in my own words for brevity. It is possible some words or expressions are not absolutely accurate for which I may be pardoned.)
Forty Years Ago
- by Sahana Devi

It was long ago that I came away to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in November 1928. Since then more than forty years have elapsed in this sacred pilgrim centre sanctified by the tread of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in observing their Divine Play.

At the time of my joining the Ashram the inmates were between sixty and seventy in number. Of these the sadhikas were not more than a dozen. In the facial expressions and glances of these one could detect that they had all received and acquired something, discernible in their firm movements—apparently all were concentratedly merged in their sadhana, in a sincere and vigilant effort to prepare themselves for the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. This sadhana did not mean sitting down to meditate or following any set method for them but whatever they did, physical work or literary pursuits, individually or collectively, was all done in a spirit of sadhana. Thus, all did not follow one single way, one sole course, but each one took one’s own inner bent in treading the Path, since there never was, nor is, any fixed, particular method or course. Neither did their actions follow the unalterable, age-long rules laid down from days of yore. It was clear that the sadhana here did not depend on them. What it did depend on was quite something else. What one felt within very tangibly, coming not at all from the outside world, was the prevailing atmosphere of the Ashram. No sooner than one crossed the portals one seemed to step into a silence so solid that a single word uttered loudly seemed a jarring discordant noise to one’s own ears. It did not take one long to realise that the rhythms of life were quite other than the ordinary but felt that on which the foundation of this rhythm was laid was densely pervading the silence reigning there. The life of the inmates was unfolding through a delectable silence. One never came across gossippings, disturbances of any kind; very few were the lazy conversations indulged in. All seemed to be steeped in their inner feelings. The inmates hardly ever visited one another, except on specially needed occasions.

What we understand by the “Ashram” is the main building where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have lived. It consisted of four small houses in an entire block, previously they must have been four separate houses, that were subsequently rebuilt according to the needs. In the house at the North-Eastern corner of the block the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor. On this floor too a room was used for “Darshan”, where at other times the Mother used to interview those who sought to meet her. On the ground-floor in a couple of rooms lived Nolini Kanta Gupta and just next door lived Amrita. The hall in front of their rooms was the Meditation Hall. Just outside the Hall on the Eastern side of the passage was Ambalal Purani’s room. Purani was at one time a leading light of the youth movement in Gujarat. In the other building attached to the house of
the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived ‘Pavitra’, a Frenchman named P. B. Saint-Hilaire, on the first floor. Chandulal, the Ashram engineer, lived in a room of the ground-floor of this building. This building, too, had a door leading to the road on the North. The Mother used this door to leave the Ashram premises for her daily evening drive lasting for about an hour and a half. It was Pavitra who drove the Mother’s car. Many inmates of the Ashram used to assemble near the door at the hour of the Mother’s going out to get a glimpse of her. Later the old building was pulled down and a new one constructed on the site.

As one enters the main gate of the Ashram one comes at once to a house called the Library House. Previously Sri Aurobindo occupied the room at the South-Eastern corner and the Mother the North room, both on the first floor. It was in this room that Sri Aurobindo had one of his special realisations after which he withdrew from public gaze. When I joined the Ashram it was Anilbaran Roy who was living in that room. And the Mother’s room was allotted to Champaklal, whom we always saw and still see as a devoted personal servitor of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. On the ground-floor of this building was the Ashram library. In another room called the Reading Room were kept the newspapers arranged on mats covering the floor; the inmates, in the pauses of their daily duties and if they so wanted it, came here to glance through them. In the courtyard facing it was a thatched shed where the milkmen brought their cows supplying the milk required. Before milking, their udders used to be washed with a mild solution of potassium permanganate. The inmate who was in charge used to strain the freshly foaming milk through a clean piece of cloth. This inmate was called ‘Dara’ – a name given by Sri Aurobindo. He belonged to a well-to-do Arab Muslim family who had came to join the Ashram about a month before me. The family consisted of three brothers and two sisters along with their stepmother. All of them were handsome.

Across the Library House one stepped into a smaller courtyard. On the left of this there was a tiled hut used as the kitchen. Cooking was done by maidservants, but food was served by the inmates. Sadhikas had not yet been engaged for these services which happened a year or two after my arrival. I too cooked twice a week. I was apt to use oils and butter in excess which was the occasion of a quip from Sri Aurobindo: “If Sahana were entrusted with the cooking, the Ashram would go bankrupt in three months.” Soon the number of inmates went up and now it had increased so greatly that men had to be enlisted to tackle the problem. Chunibhai who was in full charge of everything concerning food was named by Sri Aurobindo “Dyuman”. He went to the market for purchasing everything needed, undertaking various other commissions besides. The kitchen was named Rosary House, beyond the courtyard of which one came to the building that housed the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Now one can hardly differentiate the old houses on the site of which stands the main building. What is now recognised as “The Ashram” is a large building including a spacious courtyard – a result of many demolitions and new constructions. In the middle of this courtyard shines in splendour the “Samadhi” of Sri Aurobindo. A newly built second floor over the very house where Sri Aurobindo lived, now houses the Mother.

At the time of my arrival most of the houses where the inmates lived were
rented. Each one of them was given a particular name by the Mother and thus referred to by all.

Three meals were served every day. A big bowl of phosco that had a taste similar to cocoa but ever so much more tasty, a few slices of toast and one banana. The dining room was a longish, average sized room with a tiled roof, situated at the North-Western corner of the main building. Among those who served our meals was Nolini, dishing out our phosco and toast. At mid-day we were given some rice and two courses of cooked vegetable or one of vegetable and another of dal (lentils), as a variation on some days we were served with khichree and several kinds of vegetables fried in butter. A big bowl of curd and two bananas were a regular feature. One could also have bread instead of rice or even bread and rice if one so wanted. The evening meal, before darkness spread its cloak over the land, consisted of bread, a vegetable dish or dal and a big bowl of milk. Two or three times a week we got rice cooked in milk and sweetened – the quantity served was as much as the usual bowl of milk. There were some who did not sit at meals in the dining-room. These and the sadhikas were served in their room by maid-servants.

On the first day of every month the Mother used to distribute to all the inmates the necessities for the month in the shape of soap, oil, towels, etc. - of course regulated by a quota and one had to keep within the limits of this quota. The distribution was done on the first floor hall of the Library House, which took place in the afternoon. The Mother sitting on a raised seat distributed to each sadhak who came forward to receive from her hands a cardboard box bearing his name containing the articles; along with this the Mother used to give us two rupees as pocket money.

The part flowers have played in the Ashram has been quite unique, perhaps astonishing to an observer from outside. Flowers have always had a deep rapport with life lived here. Each flower was recognised by its inner vibration by the Mother and named by her according to its significance, and it so happened that we were prone to forget the usual names of most flowers. For example, the Tulsi plant meant ‘devotion’. We have become used to calling this plant ‘devotion’, receive it from the Mother as such and offering it to her in the same spirit. Similarly the flower ‘shefali’ is called ‘aspiration’. In this way flowers are not looked upon as just flowers but seen from a different point of view. Flowers everywhere are associated with offerings as well as for decorating the house of God. Here it is something more - a silent language in our inner dealings with the Mother. Nearly always we express to the Mother through flowers our inner needs and aspirations, our obeisance surging from our heart and she, too, gives us her blessings and directives through flowers.

Pranam

The daily march of our life every morning began after bowing down to our Mother and with her blessings. She used to come downstairs at about 6.30 in the morning in one of the rooms on the eastern row of the courtyard. It is here that Bula, the sadhak in charge of the Electric Department is lodged now. A raised seat with velvet covering was placed for her. Just beside her in a tray were heaped flowers of various kind. One by one as we approached to bow to her, she gave each one of us a flower after placing her hand on our heads. It was through these flowers that she gave her directions. We too took the flowers with an
ardent effort to divine what she meant. With the flower in hand we used to come out of the room, except a few who sat in meditation there. Every living moment in those days was eked out in an attitude of becoming aware of the reason why life here was bound to something other, never to be forgotten, and why one was here. That which we felt seemed to open out a new line giving a fresh turn to everything – a change of one’s point of view, as if we were learning things anew in a new light. Life was stirring to a new dream. Something within seemed to become alive rendering intensely concrete our asking and receiving.

There was a time when the Mother used to distribute soup every evening at eight o’clock in the reception room of the Library House facing the main gate. It was a ceremony rendering the atmosphere deep and intimate. She used to sit on a chair placed on a raised dais and all the lights, except a dim one, were put out. Just in front of her on a small table the large receptacle containing the soup was placed. She at first meditated for a while keeping both her hands stretched full length over the container invoking Sri Aurobindo’s power into it. The meditation over, the container was moved to the right side for her to begin the distribution. The disciples sat, each one of them at his place appointed by the Mother herself. Each one, an empty cup in hand, approached her and handing the cup over to her bowed down in pranam at her feet. As he or she got up the Mother gave him or her the cup. The cups received, the disciples, one by one, would leave the room. The distribution of soup took about an hour; and was accomplished in perfect silence; all were merged in a deep inner feeling in that dim light, a feeling of a different world, an impressive far-off existence pressed upon the consciousness of all and slowly spread all around the room surcharging the atmosphere as if a tangible influence was at work consolidating all that was external and inner in a seeming vaqueness of one’s personal existence. We hardly understood where we were but became aware of all kinds of feelings of many worlds. How enchanting the Mother appeared then to our eyes! Also, it was at that hour that diverse divine expressions used to manifest from her. If one looked into her eyes, one became aware of a look in them, not quite human, a look that penetrated into the inner depths of our physical body, observing all, into the farthest corners. Her smile was beyond comparison. Often she entered into trance with the cup in her hand, motionless as a statue. But as soon as she returned to her bodily consciousness the distribution went on as before as if nothing had happened a short while ago – utterly simple and natural as ever.

At the time when I came here, Sri Aurobindo along with the Mother granted three Darshans every year – once on his birthday on the 15th of August, once on the Mother’s birthday on the 21st February and once again on the 24th November. It was on this date in 1926 that there happened the “Descent of the Overmind” and from that date he withdrew into seclusion. He later wrote to Nirodbaran – “It was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the Supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards Ananda.” “It was also proclaimed that I was retiring – obviously to work things out.” A few years later, from 1939 onwards – on the 24th April, the day of Mother’s final arrival, another Darshan was granted making four Darshans every year.
Let me relate here what it was that occurred, ushering in the Darshan in April as also of our painful feelings. Sri Aurobindo could be seen only on the Darshan days and no other. Therefore to get his Darshan was something to eagerly look forward to – to wait from one Darshan to another with a thrill in the heart beating eagerly but not easily appeased. Can one ever have his expectations fulfilled, having seen Sri Aurobindo only once? Just seeing him cannot be called a Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. Each Darshan in our life was an experience, nearly a supra-realisation. It brought to us the golden opportunity to reach out to the unattainable. He instilled into us something that no one else could. Thus as the Darshan day approached our minds too leaned to a self-gathering, with a view to receiving rightly; this occupied the whole of ourselves. Darshan was to start at seven o’clock in the morning. I had a room, those days, in a small one-storied building across the road, opposite to the Darshan room. I lived alone. The room where Darshan used to be is the very next one to the Mother’s room, just above the gate of that building, easily visible from my room. The decorations of the Darshan room began usually from the previous night. From my room I could hear the hum of those engaged in the work and see the arrival of flowers in abundance and other paraphernalia. The awareness of all this gave rise to waves of joy in me to feel that as soon as the morning broke I would see Sri Aurobindo, approach him and receive his touch – things of such wonderful feelings. As I was proceeding for Darshan on the morning of 24th November 1938, someone told me, “There will be no Darshan today”. I was shocked and promptly said, “What rot are you talking?” The speaker in a pale and hurt countenance said, “Please inform yourself”, and moved away with his head lowered. In the meanwhile I had recovered myself enough to realise that I had been unnecessarily rude. I approached Nolini to find out what the matter was, meeting on the way many who had come for Darshan loitering with dejected mien. What I heard was that as Sri Aurobindo got up from his chair after replying to our letters, he stumbled on the stuffed head of a tiger skin. The fall was the cause of fracturing the bone above the knee. One could easily surmise the mental anguish of the ashramites at this news. A dark dejection enveloped me, I felt as if all daylight had been extinguished. I can hardly recollect how the day passed. In the evening the Mother alone gave Darshan in the hall just in front of Amrita’s room. Her compassion flowing in a hundred streams began to wash away the dejection from our minds. She filled all the profound emptiness in our hearts with her incomparable heavenly smile. We were uplifted by her inspiration and strength and we found our feet to rise again. Still I must admit I could not bear for long to see her giving Darshan alone. The next Darshan was to be on the 21st February 1939, but this too did not take place. Then after these two lapses the first Darshan was on the 24th April 1939, which has become since then a regular one.

Another page of the chronicle of the Ashram was turned, a new era started: Sri Aurobindo’s correspondence with the disciples came to an end as also the intimate interviews with the Mother. She gave her own room as well as the one where she used to grant interviews, for the attention and service needed for Sri Aurobindo. The Mother went into another room which was so limited that to meet her alone was no longer convenient. Things had to be spoken before all those who were also assembled there for her directions on various matters. A small secluded corner was prepared for her to rest in. But how little rest did she
get! For the personal attention to Sri Aurobindo, Dr. Manilal of Baroda, Becharlal and Nirodobar, Satyendra, Purani, Mulshankar and Champaklal, all inmates of the Ashram, were chosen. Later when Dr. Prabhat Sanyal began to visit the Ashram he too was in attendance on Sri Aurobindo. Whenever Nirod came out of Sri Aurobindo’s presence we were all very eager and expectant to hear from him the words of Sri Aurobindo in the conversations he had with them. Nirod used to come often and join Dilip at breakfast where a few other inmates gathered around to hear about Sri Aurobindo and his talks and we heard a good deal of talks of Sri Aurobindo. Nirod and the others attending used to glean out of him a lot of light with their questions on various matters touching upon subjects valuable and attractive. Their questions were of many sorts, multifarious were the topics dwelt upon. It hardly needs mentioning that any talk given by Sri Aurobindo is a priceless treasure. All that is in the treasure house of his knowledge cannot possibly be found anywhere else. With this in view Nirod and Purani too made all effort to get down in writing as much as they could without letting any opportunity escape. They were noting down as far as was possible all those talks of Sri Aurobindo. (Those talks, as “Evening Talks”, have been published in a book by Purani. Nirod too has brought out a book called “Talks with Sri Aurobindo”. Nirod has even translated his into Bengali and published it.) Moreover in these talks we often come across the amazing witticisms, razor sharp and skilful, of Sri Aurobindo as well as a great deal of the banter indulged in, highly appreciated by all. We heard a lot of amusing stories. The days were passed in listening to these amusing topics as well as spiritual experiences. Through our conversations with Nirod day after day we got, as it were, close to Sri Aurobindo in so many different ways. Without these it would not have been possible to be aware of his many-sided personality with so much clarity; on the contrary, perhaps it would have remained quite beyond even our imagination. Since the time Nirod and others were with Sri Aurobindo, whenever it became necessary to tell him something important from us we would send it through Nirod and he got the answer from Sri Aurobindo not written down but given orally.

After being in the Ashram for some time, gradually it became clear that the Mother or Sri Aurobindo as a rule gave no set directions as regards the sadhana. They helped to awaken the sadhak from within in the acquisition of the power to comprehend rather than to try and explain anything from without. Sri Aurobindo’s stress is on an “inner growth”, “development of consciousness” and such other like insistences. Nevertheless, if a sadhak found himself in any unusual situation and needed anything in particular Sri Aurobindo answered after weighing from within the need and importance of the question. Sri Aurobindo’s answer came in his letters whereas the Mother’s did go by her influence. The Mother could be met and seen if the need for it was there. She usually kept apart about four hours every day for such meetings. If the need was urgent and a meeting was asked for it was granted. She herself would send for some. There were a few who met her once or twice a week; there were others whom she met once a fortnight or even once a month. There were also some who met her daily at a particular hour of the day for her directions on matters of sadhana or work relating to the running of the Ashram. Quite often she would explain just by her look without a word being spoken. It has also been seen that
anyone approaching the Mother for directions got them just by her meditating with the person and placing her hand on the head. Remarkable as it may seem, after the meditation the problem was no longer there, instead the whole being was suffused by her influence. To some she gave a written reply. Again, the aspirant may get the directions all by himself in going into an inner silence. The compassionate presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is constantly working within us at all times whether we know it or not. That they have opened our inner vision is clearly understood. The very texture and hue of all we had asked for in life or all that we had been or felt or received so far were quite changed – we had begun to see everything differently from quite a different standpoint. The very aim of their yoga is a radical change of human consciousness – a complete transformation. It is for this they have taken upon themselves to bring down the supermind on earth and establish it there – a seemingly impossible endeavour. To bring all to that path they hardly take any notice of their ceaseless and unrelenting effort as any trouble at all. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me thus: “We mind no trouble so long as we can carry you farther and farther on the path of transformation. Let the greater consciousness, the vastness and the peace grow in you and the psychic liberated from these veils flood you with the divine love and the soul’s happiness. We shall certainly concentrate our endeavour to help you towards that.”

Within a few days after my arrival as an aspirant to the Ashram, permission was granted to me to meet the Mother once a week. She even came to my room once in a while and sanctified it by her presence. It was on these occasions that I have been able to fill the pages of my “Book of Life” with her priceless instructions. It seemed as if she taught me to walk step by step, to see true by granting the inner vision, gave me the strength to know myself by sifting the rubbish heap of falsehoods to get at things that were true. She was moulding our entire life for a God-oriented existence, a birth into a new consciousness, an inner life. Before my coming here Nolini once wrote to me, “Very few things of the ordinary life would be of use here” – gradually this remark of his was becoming clear while living here. The Mother’s visits to the sadhaks were usually timed as she was going out for her regular evening drives. Our meetings, however, when we wanted to see her used to be in the mornings. She used to come to Dilip’s house on Sundays. An English lady named Miss Maitland once came here to stay for a period of six months. She too was asked to come to Dilip’s place on Sundays in case she wanted to ask Mother any questions. Besides Miss Maitland, several of us regulars were also present, namely, Doraiswami Iyer (not yet a regular Ashramite but a very old disciple and a frequent week-end visitor from Madras) who was a very well-known lawyer of Madras, an American couple called Janet and Vaun McPheeters (Janet was given the name ‘Shantimayi’ by Sri Aurobindo), Pavitra, Nolini, Dilip and myself. At the commencement the Mother used to meditate with us; at times she asked us to meditate on a special subject asking each one of us at the end about the result of meditation on that particular subject. She asked if anyone had any questions to ask, if there were any she answered them. These questions and answers were noted down by Shantimayi in shorthand. These questions and answers began on the 7th April 1929, continued for fifteen weeks and were published in 1931 in book form having fifteen chapters titled “Conversations with the Mother”. The
book was meant for sadhaks to be distributed according to the Mother’s choice and was not for sale. Much later, however, it came to be put up for sale. It was at Dilip’s that I first had the opportunity to hear Mother giving answers to our questions. Our minds on these occasions became submerged in wonder at the touch of the light emanating from her vast and fathomless knowledge.

The Mother would sometimes take one of us by turn in her evening drives – of these we were the following: Doraiswamy, Nolini and Chadwick (Chadwick, an Englishman, came to India as a lecturer in Philosophy at the Lucknow University, but later came away to the Ashram as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo who gave him the name Arjava), Dilip and myself. It was Pavitra who drove Mother’s car with Doraiswami at his side. We others followed in a small Fiat car. Our drives used to be quite long ones, at least so it seemed to us. I believe Pavitra was instructed before where to go and on arrival the Mother would get down from the car and we would follow. The Mother, it seemed, knew quite well the paths we traversed. These walks were at times fairly long. Sometimes she would choose a spot and sit down and we would gather around her enjoying the scenery in the open – how pleasant it was with the Mother! She carried with her some sweets and gave one to each. Here too Mother often answered if anyone asked her a question. At times there was meditation. On one occasion while we were thus seated with the Mother a local person approached with some fruits carefully wrapped in banana leaves and offered them to the Mother. On being asked by her if anyone wanted to eat them, I remember only Dilip and myself took one each. Another day I remember, we had seated ourselves comfortably when I saw an ugly looking insect creeping slowly towards me. Needless to say I began to feel rather uneasy and began to fidget, the whole of my attention was solely upon the insect and I was thinking of getting up if it became necessary. The Mother, however, quietly pushed it away without the slightest show of perturbation. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo never approved that anyone should be frightened at anything, as it is very harmful for sadhana. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me, “All fear ought to be cast out.”

The Mother fell seriously ill on 18th October 1931, and we did not see her for a whole month. All this while we were very heavy of heart. When we again met her at “Pranam” what a joyful day it was! The intensity of our feelings was as thrilling as when we had the occasion of Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan. It is quite impossible to express in words the feelings of joy, a joy that is of a quite different quality – as if it was descending from heaven.

The trend of life in the Ashram became different after this illness of the Mother. The morning pranam was delayed, even the place was changed, that is, from the usual room where it used to be, it was shifted to the hall in front of Amrita’s room. The evening drives, Mother’s visiting the sadhaks in their rooms, the distribution of soup at night, all these came to an end. It was fifteen years later in 1946, that the Mother once again came out amongst us at the commencement of the sports activities. It became her daily routine to come to the playing fields to set in motion these activities of games etc.

A French lady named Madame Gaebelé used to come to the Ashram to teach French to the inmates. I do not recollect the year it began. She took several classes in the week. My initiation to French was begun by her – there were quite a few of us who began studying the language. The lady was given a new name –
Suvrata, by the Mother. She is a frequent visitor to the Ashram even now and is strongly attracted to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. After some time, however, I gave up attending her classes and was taken in hand by Nolini. Nolini, as is well-known, is a versatile scholar of the Greek, Latin, French and Italian languages as he had learnt them all from Sri Aurobindo himself. My study of French did not go very far and I gave up the study with only a smattering of it.

After the Mother’s illness in 1931 we could go to her only if she asked us to come. All fixed hours of meeting her were also dispensed with. When one speaks of Mother’s illness it means only what is apparent to all to an exterior view. This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote in answer to a question by a sadhak on this matter: “I have not yet said anything about the Mother’s illness because to do so would have needed a long consideration of what those who are the centre of a work like this have to be, what they have to take upon themselves of human or terrestrial nature and its limitations and how much they have to bear of the difficulties of transformation. All that is not only difficult in itself for the mind to understand but difficult for me to write in such a way as to bring it home to those who have not our consciousness or our experience. I suppose it has to be written but I have not yet found the necessary form, the necessary leisure.” (Sri Aurobindo on the Mother)

Soon after the Mother’s illness she wrote in her Prayers and Meditations of the 24th November 1931, giving some idea of the real matter. Although all that is well beyond our conception yet I venture to quote it here: “O my Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter; I have touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and the inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and supreme obscurity. But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive at Thee: ‘Lord. Lord, everywhere Thy enemies appear triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is a death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out Submission, Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stifled Thy sweet law of love. Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save us.’

Thus my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss, I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: ‘Lose not courage, be firm, be confident, - I COME.’"

I began to correspond regularly with Sri Aurobindo from 1932. Perhaps I began to write even from 1930 but that was intermittently and not regularly and the regular writing continued till November 1938, when Sri Aurobindo met with that accident. In the letters all my inner states, movements of my mind, stages of sadhana, all were mentioned. He too wanted to know everything in detail. He wrote, “It is absolutely necessary to write everything freely and write daily.” Thus good or bad everything had to be written. It was not often that the mind would agree to write all, quite frequently some ruse was in the offing to enable one to side-track the entire truth of the matter. Nevertheless, we could detect these games of the mind around us. All communications were addressed to the
Mother but were answered by Sri Aurobindo. My letters were written in Bengali and English as well according to the need, but Sri Aurobindo’s answers were all in English. I have, however, received a line or two from him in Bengali as well. What was amusing was that even if before beginning to write one had decided to keep back something, at the end it was seen that nothing was left untold in the letter – as if someone from behind was at work. I remember once I was very reluctant to write, not that I did not realise that one should not pamper this unwillingness, so I wrote to say, “I do not feel like writing today”, in answer the letter came back with three large notes of exclamation (!!!) on the left margin. On receiving it I had hardly any idea whether to laugh or to cry. One day arose a great desire in me to eat a few things and I was quite unable to resist it. The mind was busy trying to find some pretext or other. In the end I wrote “Mother, I feel extremely greedy today. Do you know what I would like to eat? – eggs, lobsters and some kind of sardines. Either you remove this desire from me or permit me to eat them with your protection.” Sri Aurobindo wrote an answer the next day! “Certainly not! You can eat up your desire – that is the only fish or flesh that can be given to you! It is simply an old samskara rising from the subconscious – these things have never to be indulged, they rise in order to be dismissed.” (12.11.33) – a banter replete with laughter! But strange to relate, soon after sending the letter all that inclination to eat had completely gone – this filled me with an unalloyed joy and satisfaction. The joy one feels to be able to rise above desire was first brought home to me on that clay. There were a few lines of Nolini, I have forgotten when I had read them, shining bright before my eyes: “… when you grant me a vital desire I am not pleased, your granting shows that the vital is still unprepared to forgo its food. But when you withhold from me an earthly satisfaction, a secret ease and joy flow into me; by this sign I feel I am ready for the Delight that is yours.” – every word of these lines was impressed in my feelings.

Let me now relate here two very strange dreams, so clear and tangible that I realised immediately that they were not just dreams. The significance of these dreams as was received by me, I wrote to the Mother. I am setting down here the two dreams with the answer from Sri Aurobindo:

First dream: “From my room I observed that the sea-waves were rushing from afar towards my room and were swelling tremendously, as high as the mountains. I felt that if these terrible waves broke in then the entire town where I lived would be totally washed away. Yet in spite of being face to face with this deadly peril I was not the least afraid or perturbed. It seemed I was in safe protection. Even if there came a flood on the breaking of these waves they will flow over my room and there was no danger or harm that could touch me nor come anywhere near me – such a feeling of safety as an armour was within me. So quite unruffled I was observing that tide from behind the glass panes of my window. Soon I saw that in fact the waves broke with water covering all around. There were several waves that broke and as soon as they were breaking the mass of water like an inundation was flowing past my room extending far behind it. I was observing it all without any excitement as if all this had nothing to do with me. I was a mere observer of that huge flood. When the flood waters had subsided and as I came out to look at all that had happened, I saw all of a sudden that a portion of the house I was staying in was broken but through it I could see
a part of a new construction coming up. Surprised I thought, “hello, it is strange that I was not at all aware that under the old house one had begun to build a new one - one could only see that because a portion of the old house had fallen.” As if it only waited for the flood to demolish that part of the mansion to reveal the new building as it was being constructed! In a mood of appreciation I was wondering how it could happen, strange that the new building was not seen even after so much work had been done! For some reason or other I had entered the house but as I came out again the old house standing as a covering had totally crumbled and in its stead was standing a new house of a new design. Even the material of which the new house was made was quite other than that of the old one. The idea of the dream seemed as if the room in which I was feeling quite safe in the midst of danger was a Divine protection which did not allow the danger to enter there but had made it to pass over. I was quite untouched within. Perhaps the sense of it was that the flood of one’s desires and longings surging from the vital plane comes to drown one but if at that moment one could invoke the Divine protection in one’s true self then the flood passes over without touching one and one could detaching oneself observe the huge waves passing over. To me the significance of the first half of the dream was that. I am noting down also the significance of the second half of the dream, that is, as much as was clear to me: The old house where I resided was the external being with its old value, – from the depths of the old nature unperceived one goes on building the new nature; the new edifice is not visible as one is not conscious, thus when the veil of obscurity of the old nature is rent (that is what was meant by the crumbling of a portion of the old house) I become somewhat conscious how much the Divine unperceived has built up from within the covering of the old nature and still continues to build. And in the measure of the growth of consciousness the veil of darkness is gradually dropping away. In the end I saw in the true light of consciousness the aspect of the integral transformation of nature. The new building was the symbol of the integral transformation of the ordinary human nature.”

To all this Sri Aurobindo replied: “It was a good symbolic dream and your interpretation seems to me correct except for one detail. The sea cannot be the tide of desires; it must be the flood of the world forces.”

Second dream: A few of us were walking along the seashore. It was a different sort of sea, something frightening and terrible it was, jet black was the water packed tight with the beasts of the sea, so thick they were that one could see less of the water and they were ugly to a degree bringing uncomfortable feelings to the mind and body. Of these beasts a species of huge reptiles were preponderant, long, thick and black were they, really frightful to see. There were no waves. As far as one could see it looked like a black mountain of frightfulness lying stretched creating horrors. Far away one could discern an island, a beautiful one where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were. I must go to them but could see no way to do so. On one hand the dark deep waters, on the other all kinds of terrible beasts filled it so thickly that it would be doubtful if one could find enough space to swim through them – one was sure to come in bodily contact with them. All of a sudden as soon as my companions had gone on a little ahead I found that plunging into the water I was swimming through those wriggling beasts. I was moving straight and fast pushing these beasts away from
me with my hands, there were more of these beasts I was touching than the water but I hardly noticed them aiming only to reach the island where were the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, nothing else came within my purview. As I came quite close to the island, my feet touched the ground and ceasing to swim I began to wade up towards the shore. All of a sudden I saw Sri Aurobindo lift me out of the water with outstretched hands. He said, “So, you have come across.” It felt strange to have heard him. Even when I awoke from the dream this thought was constantly in my mind: I am sure to cross when it is Sri Aurobindo who has said so. The dream became clear to me signifying what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo mean by “taking the plunge”. I realised that if one did not look at any other side, did not wait to weigh the pros and cons, but plunged in only for the Divine then He himself took one up to the shore. For as long as one continued to debate with the mind to find a way one could never take the plunge. Once one has plunged in then all worrying thoughts of what one should or should not do, all obstacles, all dangers could find no foothold. In fact, the dream showed the way fraught with so much dangers but nothing could matter. At the moment of plunging in, one did so, nothing could impede or draw one back, one did go through all those dangers aiming only for that island where Sri Aurobindo himself drew one on to the bank. In spite of being a dream the experience received was indelibly impressed for ever. Next morning, my day for meeting the Mother, I related to her all in detail. She listened with great attention, then placing her hand on my head for some time she looked straight into my eyes and said in a slow measured tone, “It is not just a dream.” She added much more but it is not possible to speak of it here.

This is all about dreams. Now let me tell here of a remarkable experience while singing - there used to be quite a number of such strange things. Here is a letter I wrote to the Mother on 20.12.31: “Mother mine, I had a strange experience, I can hardly wait to write about it to you. I was singing a song of Kabir (‘In whose heart resides Sri Rama...’) on the roof of my house at about 7 p.m., with the idea of singing this very song to you the next Friday. Quite frequently I have had fine experiences while singing; often have I felt the descent of a Presence bringing in its wake the idea in my mind as if I was just the instrument expressing the movement of that Presence through my song. At times I have felt a total inner opening through which from a deep source an aspiration like a mounting flame was lifting the whole of my being up. I have had such experiences before as well. But what has come today I have never experienced before. This is what happened. After singing the song for a while I could feel the Power descending in me and I was aware that the volume of my voice was increasing as well. Not only was there an inner opening but remarkably fine improvisations were spontaneously issuing forth with an amazing rapidity that I can hardly find words adequate to tell you. I was astounded to see these unimaginable expressions and improvisations and the surpassing increase of the volume of my voice. I felt, too, unmistakably that all this was not mine at all, they were only being expressed through me – they were crowding into me in a rapid and impatient succession to express themselves. As all this was taking place the strength of my voice seemed to have doubled – so powerful it seemed. Further, not only did I feel it but actually heard another voice coming through my throat; when this came home to me, this other voice bursting out, I became somewhat
nonplussed. I became more clearly sure that it was not I who was singing at my own volition. Even it became impossible for me to stop singing as it did not depend on me. I have never before sung a song for so long - I had no hold upon my voice which was moving with ease over the notes touching them lightly and the tone was so fine that I myself was charmed and felt overwhelmed at all that was revealed."

Sri Aurobindo wrote to say: “Yes, it was quite right and a very high experience."

Since this experience I often noticed that whenever I sang sitting on the roof in the presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo the songs I sang became quite other than when I sang elsewhere. So I wrote to the Mother (18.3.1932): “Mother, I have remarked that when I sing in your presence on the roof, my voice becomes much more powerful. At any other place the timbre of my voice is different. So I wrote to tell you that I tangibly feel singing in quite a different manner, feeling at the same time a particular influence of a power which was much more prominent. This is your power, is it not? I, nevertheless, am aware that it is your power in me that is compelling me to sing. It is far more intense than anywhere else, the difference is so clear. But why should it be so? If it is your power then it should be the same wherever I might sing. If between you and me there is a direct contact through the psychic then there should not be any difference on account of a change of place and time. Is it because one is not in the right consciousness, a true condition, that the difference creeps in?”

Sri Aurobindo wrote: “You have seen very accurately (as expressed in today's letter) the reason for the difference between your singing on the roof and your singing elsewhere. But that is no reason why you should not sing elsewhere.”

Even so many years ago, that is, when I first arrived here, the Mother used to accord us the special blessings of the New Year at midnight. It used to be a remarkable experience for us at that hour. In the silent depths of us all everything seemed to be self-gathered within in tune with the sombre night. The Mother too seemed to reveal herself in an eternity of expressive beauty. We too lost our limited selves as we silently mounted the stairs to receive the eternal touch from her, carefully guarding within the aspiration of the possibility of a new birth. On crossing the threshold into the room we would see the Mother seated on a chair faintly illumined by only a dim pink light - a dreamland of roseate hue. Her face alone was bright, as bright as the first glow of dawn. What we felt must remain unuttered as no language could properly express it. As we got up after bowing to her she blessed us with her radiant smile handing us something more concrete in the shape of an orange or a piece of chocolate. Whatever she gave, however apparently insignificant, seemed to us as something designed to shatter our sleep in ignorance. For three years this was the manner in which the Mother blessed us at the moment when the New Year arrived. Since 1932, however, after her illness, the procedure was changed. Everyone was gathered in the meditation hall below and in the courtyard merged, as it were, in meditation - in those days whatever we did was connected with a spirit of being withdrawn within - when just at the right moment like a flash of light tearing asunder the veil of darkness, pealed out a resonant chord from the organ and with it flooded out her voice in song. Her voice had a quality of magical power rising from the profundities as if endeavouring to awaken our consciousness to
meet the light from above. To call it fascinatingly marvellous is quite inadequate. The singing over, we trooped in to receive the Mother’s Blessings as well as something or other in the shape of fruits or sweets in the very room dimly lit. She was seated there as if with a world of gifts to bestow on us. Every New Year she did play upon the organ but perhaps we heard her sing only a couple of times. We too were in eager expectation every year of that night of music. Her music was her own that came readily to her as she sat down to play after a short concentration with closed eyes before she touched the keys, without any prior preparation, with never a false jarring note. Since 1939, that is, after the accident to Sri Aurobindo’s right leg, her organ was shifted to Pavitra’s room and she played from there. Since this year too we did not meet her after the music as before but met her on the stairs at six in the morning to be greeted by her with “Bonne Année”, we too replied with the same greeting, receiving from her a bunch of leaves signifying “New Birth”. I remember, however, that she used to give us the blessings of “New Birth” on the 24th December – this was before 1939.

For many years the Mother could be seen on the north balcony adjoining Pavitra’s room. She used to look towards the East before sunrise and the morning was bright. One or two of the Ashramites found this out and used to await her arrival on the balcony. Gradually instead of the few who saw her there, the entire Ashram came to get a glimpse of her and assembled on the street below. This came to be known as the “Balcony Darshan”. Later even outsiders, visitors from abroad and also a number of people of Pondicherry too gathered there. At this “Darshan” the Mother, after concentrating for a few minutes, used to sweep her eyes of benevolence over all who had come. This Darshan came to end on the 16th March 1962 when the Mother was somewhat seriously ill. In those days she used to bless us all also in the evening downstairs at the foot of the staircase in the meditation hall after a short meditation of about half an hour. As we approached her in a line she would occasionally, while blessing us, go into a trance, which lasted on rare occasions for even an hour and the sadhak or sadhika just in front had to wait motionlessly till she came out of her trance – once or perhaps on several occasions the hand of the recipient was in her grasp when the trance began and she could not withdraw the hand for fear of breaking upon her self-gathered condition. It was on account of her trance that the blessing hour used to stretch even up to midnight before it was over. Incidentally I may mention here that before all this that I have narrated just above, the Mother used to come down to the meditation hall the evening before the Darshan day to bless us all and also at 5 a.m. on the Darshan day. I do not recollect the exact period during which the two blessing hours used to take place. Needless to say both the occasions were as always most delectable for us.

My elder sister Amiya came here on a visit in September 1930 with her two sons Bula and Kunal. They were lodged in a house on the sea front specially hired for them for three months. I remember the Mother walked all the way from Dilip’s house along the strand by the sea to have a look at the house, we came with her too. This was before their arrival. The Mother came twice to this house on being specially requested by my sister – meanwhile Nolina, the sister next to Amiya, had come to the same house with her son. The house was rented from September to November as the sisters with their sons were to leave at the end of
the period. When the Mother heard of their impending departure, she came to see them a few days before. That day as she was looking at the sea from a window, she suddenly said “It is better not to be on the sea now.” Amiya too was undecided as to what to do when the Mother herself suggested that they leave on the 1st January next year. On being told that the house had to be vacated on the tenure of lease being over, she made all arrangements for them to be lodged in one of the Ashram houses. Amiya thus came to stay with me at the Savary House (it is renamed Huta House now), in the south room of the first floor. Bula and Kunal were lodged in the Guest House also on a first floor room. This house is now a boarding for children called Dortoir. I well remember the day on which Amiya and her sons were to set sail for Burma originally; there came a tremendous cyclone. It was a catastrophic storm uprooting many trees and razing houses to the ground, roofs of many houses were blown away. We could hardly keep our doors and windows shut, the bolts being useless, such was the fury of the storm – it was quite a battle that we waged against the storm to keep the doors and windows closed but with partial success and as a result our rooms were flooded with incoming rain. I have never before witnessed such a terrible storm. After the storm had abated Nolini and Amrita all wrapped in blankets came to Amiya’s house sent by the Mother to find out how she and her sons were faring – they were even then in the rented house on the sea front. When the storm broke I was at Dilip’s. As I tried to return hurriedly to my house I could hardly walk on the street, the force of the wind was pushing me towards the sea, that was the direction in which the wind was blowing to. With a lot of difficulty on arriving I felt a great danger had swept over me. Later I came to learn that during the storm Sri Aurobindo was in this room with all the doors and windows wide open but he was merged deep in his work heedless of what was happening all around.

Amiya with her sons left as arranged on the 1st of January after receiving the New Year’s Blessings. They returned in January 1932, Nolina too came with them. On that occasion too they were lodged in Budi House on the sea front.

My elder sister Aruna arrived here in April with her two infant sons. They were lodged in the same house then but were shifted to another house close to the Ashram main building. This too was a hired house, and in those days was named ‘Vigie House’, now it has been renamed Jhun Jhun Boarding. One remembers that in those days Nolini and Amrita used to come to this house in the evenings at the request of my sisters. From them we used to hear of the happenings of the early days of their life with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those evenings became memorable as they related many incidents connected with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, very enjoyable too were these talks. It was from Nolini we heard how Sri Aurobindo, avoiding detection, came by boat all the way from Calcutta to Pondicherry. Another very amusing incident we heard was how Amrita’s tuft of hair, emblem of his brahminhood, was done away with by plying deftly a pair of scissors. Then we heard also the incident of how pieces of brickbats used to be showered in the room although the doors and windows were closed all the time, materialising from thin air as it were – a fascinating tale that we heard with rapt attention. From Nolini we heard of their fiery revolutionary days centering round the garden house at Muraripukoor; the day of the police raid and the search. Then the story of their famous trial – also how
a revolver was passed to them secretly and used to kill Noren Goswami who had treacherously turned an approver. We heard as well their association with Sri Aurobindo in jail, the manner of their spending their days in prison. In this way we came to know of the true happenings of those days that had often come to us garbled in fantastic dressings.

All that we did in those days was done after informing the Mother. The root idea of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is to consecrate all of oneself to the Mother. It is she who would do in one whatever she decided in her own way. Thus we too could hardly dream of doing anything or meeting anyone or going out anywhere without informing her. To behave in this way, to order our day to day life, gave us an inner joy, the taste of which was quite of another sort. As an illustration I may cite here a letter of Sri Aurobindo in the matter of the visit of a relative of mine – evidently I had asked for his directions. This is what he wrote: “As for your inner attitude it must remain the same. Not to be excited or drawn outwards by these ‘incidents’ of life by the coming in of new elements is the rule; they must come in like waves into an untroubled sea and mix in it and become themselves untroubled and serene…. You must remain vigilant always. For when the condition is good, the lower movements have a habit of subsiding and become quiescent, hiding as it were, – or they go out of the nature and remain at a distance. But if they see that the sadhak is losing vigilance, then they slowly begin to rise or draw near, most often unseen, and when he is quite off his guard, surge up suddenly or make a sudden irruption. This continues until the whole nature, mental, vital, physical down to the very subconscious is enlightened, conscious, full of the Divine. Till that happens, one must always remain watchful in a sleepless vigilance.” (26.5.1932)

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had explained to us in minute detail without sparing themselves the time needed to do so that nothing is negligible or trash. With what insistence did they teach us to realise that nothing whatsoever happens without an inner meaning and cause, time after time by removing the covering veil of our outer consciousness. Once I wrote to Sri Aurobindo thus:

**Lord Sri Aurobindo,**

*You have written to point out to me that my physical consciousness has the habit of responding to illnesses. How am I to become conscious of that which I am not even aware? I can only understand that I do not want them, or, often I have remarked how much harm they do to me. That is why I would like to know how I could become conscious in this regard. How to understand it all? If you will please let me know I could try to follow the method.*

He replied:

“To get rid of that one must awaken a will and consciousness in the body itself that refuses to allow these things to impose themselves upon it. But to get that, still more to get it completely is difficult. One step towards it is to get the inner consciousness separate from the body – to feel that it is not you who are ill but it is only something taking place in the body – and affecting your consciousness. It is then possible to see this separate body consciousness, what it feels, what are its reactions to things, how it works. One can then act on it to change its consciousness and reaction.” Many were the questions put to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and they were of various kinds; they were asked to clearly understand
if there were any doubts or difficulties and as long as they were not made clear
the mind was not tranquil. Sri Aurobindo too not only answered them but did so
in great detail and at length till there remained nothing obscure and he dwelt on
each point with great care. As an example I am quoting here a letter of his in
answer to mine. I asked: “If I saw someone attacking the Truth and exalting
falsehood then what should be the attitude of the sadhaka? Would it be proper
to remain indifferent maintaining a yogic equality or take up arms against the
falsehood in support of the Truth?” This letter was the outcome of a letter I had
read where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were the target of attack. Needless to
say I was very annoyed. A feeling of disgust had spread over my mind and I felt
that I should have no truck with such people. The mind, however, felt: should
one take such a drastic step? I had asked another sadhak who was very firm to
indicate that we should never compromise in this regard. Sri Aurobindo wrote in
answer:

“No doubt hatred and cursing are not the proper attitude. It is true that to look
upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and
impartial in one’s own judgment is a quite proper yogic attitude. A condition of
perfect samata can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and
enemies included, and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The
question is whether this is all that is demanded from us. If so, then the general
attitude will be one of a neutral indifference to everything. But the Gita which
strongly insists on a perfect and absolute samata goes on to say, ‘Fight, destroy
the adversary, conquer.’ If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to
Truth as against Falsehood except for one’s personal sadhana, no will for the
Truth to conquer, then the samata of indifference will suffice. But here there is a
work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are
arrayed, invisible forces which can use visible things and persons and actions for
their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seeker of this Truth, one has
to take sides for the Truth, to stand against the forces that attack it and seek to
stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of
hostility even to the assailants. Sri Krishna, who insisted so much on samata,
strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted on his fighting the adversary. ‘Have
samata,’ he said, ‘and seeing clearly the Truth, fight.’ Therefore to take sides
with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the falsehood that attacks,
to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers, is not
inconsistent with equality. It is the personal and egoistic feeling that has to be
thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal
to compromise with the assailants and the hostile, or to dally with their ideas
and demands and say, ‘After all, we can compromise with what they ask from us,’
or to accept them as companions and our own people – these things have a great
importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the Mother and the work
and the Ashram, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a
subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right? It is a spiritual battle inward and
outward – by neutrality and compromise or even passivity one may allow the
enemy forces to pass and crash down the Truth and its children. If you look at
this point you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active
loyalty and firm taking of sides which Y insists on is as right, and the two cannot
be incompatible.
“I have of course treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal question. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportion.” (13.9.1936)

One day all of a sudden I was plunged into a heated discussion. The matter for contention was the ‘mind’. The others were of the opinion that the ‘mind’ has the capacity to discriminate between truth and falsehood, big and small, valuable and worthless etc. It is the ‘mind’ that is able to differentiate between belief and blind faith, truth and untruth. I could not quite accept this and was thinking of what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said that it is the psychic being that alone is able to see correctly. On this I wrote to Sri Aurobindo and asked his opinion. I reproduce here a portion of my letter to him: “I don’t believe that it is our mind that helps us to know the truth from the falsehood and so on, but our true being, our psychic, that helps us to know things, it is when the mind is influenced by the psychic consciously or unconsciously that the true discrimination can come, otherwise if the physical mind is left alone, however great it is, it always confuses things, and *prevents them being seen in the true way*.” (The italics was done by Sri Aurobindo.)

He wrote: “To see the Truth does not depend on a big intellect or a small intellect. It depends on being in contact with the Truth, and the mind silent and quiet to receive it. The biggest intellects can make errors of worst kind and confuse Truth and Falsehood if they have not the contact with the Truth or the direct experience.”

From these letters of questions and answers some indications of our way of life may be had, as perhaps some angles are discernible, although that our outward life is different from the inner root may not be quite easily grasped. It, however, matters little if it is not seen. The wish to write about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is a joyful thing. The very first thing that strikes one wanting to write of all that we have received from them, if it is at all truly possible, is can one really weigh all that, or can it be possibly compared with anything else acquired in life? Or have we the necessary command of language to give it a real shape or even the capacity to do so? This only I know that to recount these sacred happenings the heart overflows with gratitude to feel their presence and their boundless compassion for us. The opportunity to write of them brings this satisfaction.

There was a time when I was ailing a great deal from insomnia. Night after night, even day after day of effort was of no avail to close the eyelids in sleep. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo too were thinking much about it, doing all they could by pouring an endless affection in their letters. I can never forget the day when I had gone to meet the Mother. The soft soothing look she gave me, how deeply compassionate was that wonderful gaze! After a while in the softest of voices looking into my eyes, she said very sweetly, “You want to sleep?” With these words my eyes became filled with tears blurring my vision. This was not all, as the next day I got the following letter from Sri Aurobindo: “Mother said you looked rather thin and pulled down. Is it only the absence of sleep or are you eating too little? You said you had hunger – if so you ought to eat well because underfeeding is not good for the nerves.”

Once this ailment of sleeplessness persisted very much and as a result Sri Aurobindo suggested that some medical treatment may be made use of. I,
however, took this advice wrongly and was adamantly against any such imagining that he meant to keep me away from his influence. A perusal of the following letter of Sri Aurobindo will clearly show my wrong interpretation and reaction. His letter was so full of compassion.

“It was precisely out of solicitude for you, because the suffering of insomnia and the spasms had been excessive, that I proposed to you to take the help of treatment. It is a fact of my experience that when the resistance in the body is too strong and persistent, it can help to take some aid of physical means as an instrumentation for the Force to work more directly on the body itself; for the body then feels itself supported against the resistance from both sides, by means both physical as well as supraphysical. The Mother’s Force can work through both together. It is surprising that you should take my suggestion in this way as if it meant an abandonment and refusal to help you! But it is still more surprising that you should have taken Mother’s smile at Pranam for sarcasm! The only thing she put in it was an insistence for the cloud that she saw covering the body consciousness and interfering with its receptivity to light. You must not allow this clouding attack to come between your mind and the Mother. Reject these distorting suggestions and keep its openness so that it may help to reopen up a full receptivity in the material body also. If you do not like to take any treatment, I shall try to manage without that, if you keep me informed everyday without fail, even on those days you feel relieved till all trace of the attack is over.” (1.9.36)

I have seen many images of such variegated cloudiness of the mind - they will be apparent from Sri Aurobindo’s letters. One such was as follows:

“There is nothing to be discouraged about. The fact is that after being so long in the mental and vital plane you have become aware of the physical consciousness; and the physical consciousness in everybody is like this. It is inert, conservative, does not want to move, to change, it clings to its habits (what people call their character) or its habits (habitual movements) cling to it and repeat themselves (like a clock working on a persistent mechanical way). When you have cleared your vital somewhat, things go down and stick there, you see, if you have become self-conscious, you put pressure perhaps, but the physical responds very slowly, hardly at first seems to move at all. The remedy? Aspiration steady and unchanging, patient work, coalescing the psychic in the physical. Calling down the light and force into these obscure parts. The light brings the consciousness of what is there; the force has to follow and work on them till they change or disappear.”

And another.

“I see that you have not sent your book, nor any letter and I am told that you did not come to Pranam. Are you then determined to reject us and our help and shut yourself up in your despondency?

“But what is the reason for so violent a change? The Mother and myself at least have not changed towards you and the causes you alleged for feeling otherwise are so small and trifling that they could not support any such idea once you looked at them straight.

“There remains the difficulty of your sadhana. But you have had much more violent difficulties and downfalls and recovered from them and found your way clearer. Why should now a recrudescence of certain movements which you yourself say was slight or the sense of the difficulty of overcoming egoism (which
everybody feels and not only yourself) lead to such persistence in despair and a turning away from help and light?

“I hope you will gather yourself together, make an effort and get out of this groove quickly into the joy and love of the Divine which you had before. On our side nothing is changed – the love and the help are there as before and I hope you will feel them behind these few lines.” (9.11.33)

On reading this letter everything disappeared, washed away by my tears.

Often a remark such as this is heard: all those who are in the Ashram are they all fit for this yoga?

I brought this to Sri Aurobindo’s notice and said what I thought about it. Sri Aurobindo replied: “What you say about whom we receive that if one part of them sincerely desires the Divine, we give them their chance, is quite true. If we demanded more at the beginning, exceedingly few would be able to commence the journey towards the Divine.” (2.4.35)

Usually while writing to the Mother or Sri Aurobindo it was in English. At times that what was meant could not be properly expressed in English and I used to write in Bengali, within brackets I used to ask what it would be in English, Sri Aurobindo used to translate the exact words and place them above each Bengali word.

Here I quote a few of such remarkable translations: I wrote: Let me grow into the true consciousness and the veil of darkness that still keeps you separate from me drop down, and with your light let my temple become “‘agleam with light and radiant and may the downpour of the rays of the Light remove all veil of division in me and may I find you within me in your complete self-revelation.’” One more: “‘I feel now the inexpressible sweetness of that which is beyond description forming between you and me. It is such a satisfying experience.”’ (The words in quotes are Sri Aurobindo’s translations.)

There was a period when the Mother used to go on to the terrace and remain there for sometime, this she did nearly every day in the evening. I recount here what occurred one day and wrote to the Mother. “Recently I notice that when you come down from the terrace in the evenings you stand for a longer time and I feel just at that time you give us something special, so I also concentrate to receive and feel what you give; but this evening suddenly I saw your physical body had disappeared, there was no sign of your body, then again in a few seconds your figure reappeared. I felt at that moment that ‘you became merged in the sky (ether?) and became one with all things.’”

On this Sri Aurobindo wrote: “The Mother makes an invocation or aspiration and stands till the movement is over. Yesterday she passed for some time beyond the sense of the body and it is perhaps this that made you see in that way.”

My mistakes in English used to be corrected by Sri Aurobindo, it was at my coaxing that he took this trouble in spite of his being so pressed for time. It seems to those who deal with the heaven, the earth and the nether regions even a grain of sand on the seashore is not insignificant!

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo came to me as Guru although I hardly understood at first what and how much is meant by the word “Guru”. Slowly and much later I saw them installed in the temple of my life as my God and Beloved – they are that to me and I know no more nor do I wish to know.

In 1934 a proposal was made to translate into Bengali the “Six Poems” of Sri
Aurobindo and offer them to him printed in a small booklet.

Six sadhaks were to translate those six poems. It was Nolini who asked me to try one of them. The other five chosen were Nolini, Suresh Chakravarti, Anilbaran Roy, Dilip and Behari Barua. The one I was asked to try was “In Horis Aeternum”, a difficult poem, and I was in doubt if it could be done by me. Yet I was rather reluctant to let go such a lucky opportunity. Depending on the force from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, I agreed. On being asked, Sri Aurobindo too approved of it. With a great enthusiasm I began the translation. At nearly every step I was asking Sri Aurobindo much about the poem. I am quoting here a few of the diminutive letters. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo: “I am in great difficulty with your poem ‘In Horis Aeternum’. Many say it is a very difficult poem seemingly impossible to translate, quite a few have made an essay but have failed. It is only Nolini who supports me from another angle and that is, it is always beneficial to try. We are all quite aware that the poem is a difficult one, yet I have set myself to do it not depending wholly on my power or ability but depending fully on your help and inspiration with this idea that as I am relying on the force of one who can turn something impossible into a possibility, it may come to fruition! Moreover to be able to feel and give a form to your expressions brings in its wake a great satisfaction and joy. I have, however, translated four lines tentatively which will be much changed as I go on. Dilip has already seen them but he does not seem to think as if they will do, for he says, ‘It is hardly anything at all, they will have to be recast all over’. I am quite prepared to do them over again but I am still uncertain as to what it would be. Do you, too, think that this poem is truly untranslatable, if so then please tell me as much, and I too shall not cling to an impossibility.”

Sri Aurobindo’s reply: “The poem is not at all easy to translate but one cannot say that it is impossible, one can always try provided one is prepared not to mind if it is a failure or a half-success. To try sometimes even impossible things can be a very good training for the capacity.”

I wrote again: “No one can hope to come to a par with the original while translating some works of the Mother’s or yours. Still is it not adequate enough to come as near as possible assimilating the inspiration from you maintaining the thought and movement generally?”

Sri Aurobindo: “Yes. A complete equivalent is not likely – but something approximative can be done.”

SELF: “One thing more, I have begun the work in blank verse. Dilip strongly objects saying ‘how can it be done without rhyme?’ Are you, too, of the same opinion?”

SRI AUROBINDO: “If it can be done in rhyme so much the better – as the original is in rhyme. But if not, it can be tried in blank verse. The form will not be the same, but to keep something of the movement may not be impossible.”

SELF: “Lord Sri Aurobindo, I have begun it anew and in rhyme this time. I find it difficult but very enjoyable. There is a strong urge and I am putting all my ability into it. Even now the first four lines are not to my satisfaction – I can feel the movement but the words to express it are still eluding. Thus I am not satisfied yet with the result. Something has been done in the ‘yogic rhyme’ in long lines. Nolini remarks that it is slightly heavy and consequently I am changing again. I am still unable to find the right words in Bengali to express “unchangeable
monotone”. H. has come and given a few good suggestions and he feels very pleased about it. Normally they are beautiful but somehow somewhere they do not seem to bring out that grandeur; that restrained note is missed, missed too that solemnity. Please enlighten me and inspire me as well. Let me try some more. I would like a little clarification here:

Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play
Follows its curve…

This second ‘its’ means the sun, does it not? At least that is what it seems to me.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “It is the sun’s own curve.”

SELF: “Whether I am able to do your poem or not, I nevertheless feel transported with joy. I feel a constant contact with you – the consciousness is ever turned upward. That is why I have set myself to do it. If you would say so, I could send you the little bit done, as a sample, as then you can see if it will pass muster.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Yes, you can send.”
And the sample was sent.

Sri Aurobindo’s remark on the sample: “You have made an excellent start.”

SELF: “Lord Sri Aurobindo, will you, pray, explain this bit to me as I don’t get it correctly. ‘Something that waits, something that wanders and settles not, a Nothing that was all and is found.’ – this underlined portion”.

Sri Aurobindo replied to me in Bengali (translated here): “The inner thought is this ‘a something inexpressible – as if it is nothing, inexistent, yet that is all, everything is in it, – it is not there, yet can be found; further when this is found everything has been found. I don’t know if I have made it clear.”

SELF: “Lord Sri Aurobindo, I am in no way satisfied with the translation of the last line of your poem. Something is missing somewhere. I am trying hard and changing some. Dilip insists on further change and is helping a lot – the last three words as changed by Dilip are being sent here, please go over them. If they meet with your approval, and the change by Dilip is better, then they will be accepted.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “I cannot say that I approve of either of Dilip’s last three words or any of the other alterations suggested by N. All seem to miss the mark.”

The poem after many alterations later did come to stand. Dilip worked a great deal with me on this translation. Without his help and Nolini’s ardent enthusiasm perhaps this poem that seemed impossible would not have been made possible. When the poem was at last done Dilip wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo. This episode will be closed here with Dilip’s letter and Sri Aurobindo’s answer to it. It will be well understood from these letters with how much patience and in how many ways Sri Aurobindo has taught us all these things with his help.

Dilip wrote: “I feel the last verse makes clear meaning anyway, but since Sahana is not pleased with it and she has been labouring at it for days, I think I may have mistaken your meaning. Doubtless, the ‘something’ I could not keep is, I took it to mean, that the passing movement reflects the Eternal when ‘caught
by the spirit in sense’. Tell me therefore O Lord, I must stop. Dilip.” Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip: “I think it is a very fine rendering. For line 4, however, I would not say that there is no reference to day as a movement of time but only to the noon, the day as sunlit space rather than time, it is the fixed moment, as it were, the motionless scene of noon. The eye is of course the sun itself, I mark by the dash that I have finished with my first symbol of the gold ball and go off to a second quite different one. In the last line your translation is indeed very clear and precise in meaning, but it is perhaps too precise – the ‘something’ twice repeated is meant to give a sense of just the opposite, an imprecise unseizable something which is at once nothing and all things at a time. It is found no doubt in the momentary things and all is there, but the finding is less definite than your translation suggests. But the expression nasti rupe silo se sarvasti is very good.

“One point more. ‘Caught by a spirit in sense’ means there is a spirit in sense (sense not being sense alone) that catches the eternal out of perishable hours in these things.”

At one period I set myself to writing a lot of poems, this may be called a bright period of poetry. Many were they who wrote – Nolini Gupta, Suresh Chakravarty had been doing so for many years – even Anilbaran Roy was found writing. Dilip and Nishikanta had increased their tempo, even Behari Barua, Jotin Das of Chittagong were at it. Nirod’s niece Jyotirmala (she was called Jyotirmoyee before) began writing after her coming here and did remarkably well. Nirod too got down to it and was flourishing out. Even from my youthful days I had put my hand to composing poems but it was always when I felt the urge and again for quite long periods I did nothing. Anil Bhatta was also at it. Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna) wrote in English which he has been doing very well even before but here his poetry took a different turn. Arjava (Chadwick) began here and soon became a renowned poet, leaving behind a lot of his work that was brought out in book form after his death. Rumen, although a youngster, began in English and was doing well. Nolini, Dilip, Nirod wrote in English as well as in Bengali – perhaps Anilbaran also was in this group. Nolini, versatile linguist that he is, wrote poems in French too. Harin Chattopadhyay came with his genius and wrote a large number of poems and did most of them at his typewriter. He was, however, a recognised poet. Sri Aurobindo has spoken much about his poems in his book “Future Poetry” and elsewhere too. Nishikanta began writing while he was at Shantiniketan and his extraordinary genius began to show itself even there, but here his poetry reached a level quite other than where it was before. Sri Aurobindo has been profuse in high praise of his poetry.

We, Jyotirmala, Nirodbaran, Anil Bhatta, Amiya and myself, began to learn poetics from Dilip, who had then attained a good mastery over the subject. It was from Dilip that I learnt a particular kind of Sanskrit rhyming. Dilip and Nishikanta were experimenting with Sanskritic metre and rhyme that they toiled to introduce into Bengali poetry – I believe they have succeeded in doing so.

Jyotirmala, Nirod, Anil Bhatta and myself used to sit down to write daily at a fixed hour calling down Sri Aurobindo’s force with prayers to him, as we tried to make this too as a limb of our sadhana. With what enthusiasm we aspired to water the very roots of our poetry with the inspiration cascading down from Sri Aurobindo! We, all of us, were moving together with the sole and sincere effort
towards progress through poetry. A new taste in writing was ours aided by a constant impetus from Sri Aurobindo. Every poem written was eagerly submitted for Sri Aurobindo’s perusal and with a greater eagerness we were waiting to receive his comment brought by Nolini the next morning. It was Nolini’s job to distribute to everyone letters from Sri Aurobindo. By 7 a.m. we got our letters. His comments, “good”, “fine” or occasionally “very beautiful” were hailed with joy filling our efforts to the brim. All these were fresh experiences and delightful feelings. We often asked for not only his comments but his suggestions also and whenever a suggestion was due he rarely failed to give it. When several expressions giving the same idea were put before him for the better choice, he indicated them with such remarks as “On the whole this seems to me better”.

We were as it were moulded by hand to learn from him. We probed not only into poetic thoughts but also into rhyme and metre, the intricacies of these made the taste more and more delectable to write and read poetry. Dabbling in metre and rhyme I suddenly found a closed door - writing English poems – open and many lines began to form and this I could hardly believe. My knowledge of English is hardly worth mentioning and yet the following lines came as if by themselves:

Mother, in my deep heart I find
A jewel shines amidst the night,
When all the mortal senses are blind
It speaks to the stars of unknown height.
Mother, a flower of eternity
Unfolds its petals within my soul.
I sing to the light that unveils to me
The crystal tower, your shining goal.
Mother, in my precious secret spot,
I am nestled on your breast alone
Where all my parts are gathered and brought
Before the dream of your opening dawn.

When these lines came to me our correspondence with Sri Aurobindo had stopped, so Nirod was entrusted with it to be shown to Sri Aurobindo, who corrected and re-cast it as below:

Mother! deep in my heart I find
A jewel glistening in the night,
When every mortal sense is blind
It speaks to stars of unknown height
Mother! a love-flame swift and sweet
Swaying along the path of gold,
It rises to your heavenly feet
Where sun and moon and stars you mould.
Mother! the flower of eternity
Unfolds its petals in my soul,
I sing to its light that unveils to me
A crystal tower, your shining gold.
Mother! in a lonely secret spot
I am cradled on your breast alone
When all of me is gathered, brought
Into your dream of opening Dawn.

It will be appropriate to mention another incident here.
It was the period when I was working with the ‘Building Service’,
superintending the work of masons, carpenters and others. One day the house
called “Nanteuil” was being whitewashed. I was sitting and keeping a watch on
the work when I heard within a line like a refrain continually coming – “Travels
from height to height unseen,” - I could not make it out at first because in spite
of my repeated pushing it away it did not stop coming before my mind’s eye.
Then I got hold of a piece of paper and went on writing the whole thing. That
piece of paper is now lost, perhaps the result of negligence, but I have the other
piece where Sri Aurobindo did the correction. It is thus:

An emerald soul of peaks within
Travels from height to height unseen;
The shadow of the Infinite falls on earth’s pain
A golden desire, a heavenly rain.
Transcendent of Time’s moments’ power
Comes encircling the eternal hour.
The sun above, the moon below,
Unheard footfalls come soft and slow,
A bell rings from Eternity.
Whirling the Almighty’s power,
She creates a land of blue and white
Within the smoke and doze of night:
She comes in her golden robe of fire
To release God-music from earth’s lyre.

A few days later as I sat down to write at the usual hour a poem in Bengali
began to come in whose meaning was escaping my understanding. It was
mysterious, since Bengali is my mother-tongue and yet I could understand
nothing. So I tore it to pieces and got up. But every time I took up the pen the
same poem came repeatedly and this went on for six days. At last quite
exasperated I spoke to Nirod thus: “I don’t know what’s happening. Whenever I
sit down to write there comes in this one and only poem that I can make no head
or tail of and I do not want to write it for the same reason. And I am continually
throwing it into the waste paper basket. What do you think I should do?” Nirod
asked: “What sort of lines? Can you recall a few lines?”
The lines had impressed themselves upon my memory as they were being
repeated for the last six days. So I recited the lines. On hearing them Nirod said
“Are you sure this is not a mystic poem, Sahanadi? I seem to feel they are mystic
lines coming to you. Don’t throw them away. Please write down the whole of it
and I will show them to Sri Aurobindo.”

So it was written down and given to Nirod. While writing it gave me a good
deal of pleasure although it was not intelligible. Nirod, as he returned after
showing the poem to Sri Aurobindo, said before I could ask, “Sri Aurobindo said after reading the poem – ‘If Sahana throws away this sort of inspiration, then what kind of inspiration can I give her?’” The meaning that Sri Aurobindo gave to the lines not only left me astonished but I was stupefied to think how it was possible that through my pen matters of unseen worlds could be expressed. Nirod encouraged me to go on writing even if nothing was understood. I too kept myself at it for some time. At times a word here or there would come that I had never heard of before. So I looked them up in a dictionary or asked someone to find out if such words did really exist. There came a poem that when read seemed to indicate that I was a great pundit of the Bengali language. Later there dawned upon my eye of consciousness the image of Shiva although the poem was still unintelligible and a great feeling of satisfaction was pervading in me as I wrote. After I had completed I took it to Nolini who can not only penetrate into the meaning but likes mystic poetry. He said that it was a poem on Shiva. Nirod took it to Sri Aurobindo who also said it was Shiva and related to the higher regions beyond my comprehension. I dare not put here all that Sri Aurobindo said. However, after writing some mystic poems it became clear to me that no mystic poem can be written by any mental effort; nor can it be corrected, as the words come they have to be put down on paper accurately; moreover, if any change is needed that too comes in like manner and no mental effort is called for. For, what a mystic poem wants to reveal is not known ordinarily, the mind cannot reach it. The only thing the intellect can do is to become a docile instrument. This became very clear to me after several attempts. Mystic poems create an atmosphere of their own and the language made use of often hides the inner meaning under a shroud of mysterious words. It seems that the words can reveal an infinity of messages replete with boundless knowledge, the more one can go deep within the more light they shed, seemingly withholding much more as one goes on into its depth.

Nolini translated one of my mystic poems, and with that let me close the chapter of mystic poems.

The first tremor of the Light, to the dream-journey
Night’s desire is now appeased, she feels the Sun within her,
The Mother of Infinity holds in her bosom her first guest;
The call awakes in the lotus-scented senses!
On the far shore where moves the Fiery Wheel
Rose, unheeded, the cry of the Spaces –
It spread and enveloped even our shadowy horizons:
A golden vision flutters on earth’s eye-lids,
As the flaming spider weaves his luminous web around himself!
The Bard wheels onward in his sweeping march:
He gathers in perfect rhythm the soul’s obeisances,
Urges secreted in the heart of the sun-flower,
Hymns limned in her petalled gold!
Darkness massed on darkness has burst all of a sudden:
Eyes once closed open to the Lightning’s flare!

Once I asked Sri Aurobindo if song and poetry were akin to each other. This
was his answer:

“No, a song is not a kind of poem, or need not be. There are some very good songs which are not poems at all. In Europe, song-writers or the writers of the librettos of the great operas are not classed among poets. In Asia the attempt to combine song-quality with poetic value has been more common, but this is not essential. In ancient Greece also lyric poetry was often composed with a view to being set to music. But still poetry and song-writing, though they can be combined, are two different arts.

“The difference is not that poetry has to be understood and music or singing felt (anubhuti). If you only understand the intellectual content of a poem, its words and ideas, you have not really appreciated the poem at all. And a poem which contains only that and nothing else, is not true poetry. A true poem contains something else which has to be felt just as you feel music and that is its more important and essential part. It has first, a rhythm, just as music has, though of a different kind, and it is the rhythm that helps this something else to come out through the medium of words. The words by themselves do not carry it or cannot bring it out altogether, and this is shown by the fact that the same words written in a different order and without rhythm or without the proper rhythm would not at all move or impress you in the same way. This something else is an inner content or suggestion, a soul-feeling or a soul-experience, or vital feeling or life experience, a mental emotion, vision or experience (not merely an idea) and it is only if you can catch this and reproduce the experience in yourself, then you have got what the poem can give you, not otherwise.

“The real difference between a poem and a song is that a song is written with a view to being set to musical rhythm and a poem is written with a view to poetic rhythm or word music. These two rhythms are quite different. That is why a poem cannot be set to music unless it has either been written with an eye to both kinds of rhythms or else happens to have (without specially intending it) a movement which makes it easy or at least possible to set it to music. This happens often with lyrical poetry, less often with other kinds. There is also this usual character of a song that it is satisfied to be very simple in its content, bringing out a single idea or feeling, and leaving it to the music to develop it; but this is not always done.” (4.7.31)

The French litterateur and poet Maurice Magre was coming. I was busy embroidering a curtain for the big door of the Mother’s room on the design submitted by Sanjiban, one of the best artists in the Ashram. The old French houses of Pondicherry have large doors and windows. Consequently the curtain too was large.

I had gone to ask the Mother about some points as regards the curtain when, after a moment’s reflection, she asked, “Maurice Magre is expected, do you think you will be able to finish the curtain before his arrival? There are still three months in hand.” Guessing her intention, I said enthusiastically, “Yes, Mother, most certainly.” Mother was very pleased and blessed me, I too made my obeisance. She gave me a big red rose, signifying “All passion turned into love for the Divine.” This gave me further impetus to finish the curtain in time, cost what it may. Mentally working it out, it seemed that to finish the curtain within three months would entail a work of eleven to twelve hours a day, which I put in, but strange to say I never felt tired even after such long hours of work. The work
was intricate and extensive – a very thick trunk of a tree spreading proportionate branches mounting upwards, on a branch towards the top a white peacock looking down and on a lower branch another white peacock gazing up towards the other bird. The size of the birds would come up to the stature of a full grown Bengali girl. The design was superb too. I was surprised at the energy with which I was able to complete the work without tiring – it was clearly derived from the Mother herself. When it was taken to the Mother and spread on the floor for her inspection, I can hardly describe the expression of her eyes, I wonder if I have ever seen anyone appreciating in like manner. After looking at it for a long time, with a face beaming with joy, she said in French, "Oh! c’est magnifique!" Even today the same curtain is hung in Sri Aurobindo’s room on every Darshan day of the 24th November; and each time I remember and gaze at it in wonder; I try to imagine what I had offered the Mother and how she has transformed it, that even after nearly four decades it hangs as perfectly as on the first occasion – a perfect example of preserving a thing with the utmost possible care.

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I am quoting from my earlier writing “On the way to Pondicherry”, some portions about my coming here:

I started from Madras for Pondicherry on the 21st November 1928. Leaving Egmore station at 9 p.m. arrived at 5 a.m. next morning, that is on the 22nd November. The whole night in the train was passed in a self-gathered state of consciousness. Thus I came here in the end, a sort of one journey’s end to start afresh on a new journey.

With the first hint of daylight, accompanied by two sadhaks who had come to meet the train, my steps were directed towards the Ashram.

The sadhaks, after depositing me at the room allotted to me, left after informing me that Nolini would be coming to meet me there. My room was in the “Ladies’ House”, now used for sewing and embroidering work for the Mother. Just across the street is the Ashram main building. I was delightfully surprised to be lodged in such a beautiful room, never having expected anything more than a thatched room at best.

Nolini came along with another gentleman wearing his hair long and his face covered with a beard and moustache. Soon it became apparent from a few words that he uttered that he was a very witty person and given to bantering a lot. It would have been impossible to guess that he was a Tamil brahmin from the way he spoke Bengali faultlessly. Nolini introduced him to me as Amrita. Of Nolini I had heard much before as an eminent writer although I was quite wrong about his figure – having imagined him to be a man of grave demeanour, thick set and reserved, whereas I found him to be quite lean having a broad forehead and the look in his eyes was deeply indrawn and extraordinary. He was a man of few words and informed me that the Mother would meet me at 9.30 a.m. and I should be at the gate a few minutes earlier and he would himself take me to her. I was beside myself to feel that the Mother would see me so soon and so I shut the door of my room trying to be more within myself. As I opened the door to a knock at about 8.30 a.m. I saw a maid-servant with my breakfast on a tray – the sumptuousness of the meal surprised me no less. All arrangements were perfect even to a pitcher of drinking water and a glass. The maid-servant quietly did the
routine cleaning of the room, and left as quietly no sooner that the work was done. Normally everything seemed commonplace to an external point of view but one could feel something above the ordinary pressing from behind the veil. The Ashramites seemed to be all very satisfied with something not quite mundane, their affairs were otherworldly.

What was a dream seemed to have taken on the garb of a sacred reality – my day of days to meet the Mother!

A little before 9.30 a.m. Nolini met me at the gate and asked me to follow him. We came to the house where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived and mounted the stairs to the first floor where in a small room at the eastern side the Mother was seated on a couch with her feet tucked in and holding on to one end of the sari covering her head. At the very first glance, although hers was a human material body, yet it became quite clear to me that hers was rather an incarnated divine form. I gazed at her spell-bound and remained standing with joined hands. As she bestowed her heavenly smile and looked at me I bent to place my head on her feet. The touch of her hand on my head seemed to melt the whole of my being in an inner ecstasy. As she removed her hand, I sat near her feet. She again put her hand on my head and my eyes closed by themselves, my consciousness seemed to ascend rapidly and a force came down to spread itself over the nerves and the entire body filling them completely. I could hardly open my eyes till the Mother touched a spot on my forehead between the eyes when I saw the Mother looking deeply into me, into the remotest recesses of my being. She then asked me if I had anything to say. She listened attentively to all I had to tell her – about myself and my life. When I had finished she drew me into her arms and kissed my forehead. It is impossible for me to translate that touch into words. Then she raised my face tilting it with her hand gazing into my eyes with an expression of compassionate consolation. Thus she accepted me. My eyes became full with tears of joy.

I returned to my room and when there I felt the Mother’s presence all the time and cried and cried – whence did they come, all those ceaseless tears! But they were tears of happiness never before tasted.

Next day the Mother came to my room at five in the evening. After sitting down on a chair I had specially arranged for her she asked me to sing. I sang to her the well-known Bhajan of Mirabai, “Keep me as your servitor”, after which she asked me to sing some more. Thus I sang four or five songs to her. Afterwards as she was leaving she said in great affection. “Don’t hesitate to let me know if you need anything or feel inconvenienced in any way” – a fascinating embodiment of compassion.

The next day was the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo: 24th November. My first Darshan. From early childhood days he had been enshrined in our heart and mind as the greatest among the great as the tales, truths, were dinned into our ears by the elders, of his nobleness, his scholarship, his love for humanity and his great sacrifice. We were told if there were any worthy of worship it was he. Much later he came into my life as my Guru.

Darshan day. The very atmosphere of the Ashram was charged. Many visitors had arrived from outside replete with eagerness to come to him. The countenances of the Ashramites were suffused with an inner light of ecstasy
quietly yet expectantly waiting to receive the blessings from him to whom their lives were dedicated.

The Darshan was arranged in the room where the Mother gave interviews. It began at 7 a.m. There was a list of names of all those who had come for Darshan with the time given to each, hung at the foot of the stairs leading to the upper storey. In the Meditation Hall below were spread carpets where people were seated awaiting their turn. The entire building presented a sanctified air as the perfume of incense filled it - a solemn atmosphere. As his turn came, each one mounted the stairs to enter the holy precincts, the next one waiting on the last step. A profound silence reigned everywhere; even the slightest whisper was absent. As my turn came to wait on the last step, I saw Sri Aurobindo seated on a sofa leaning back, still and majestic like the Himalayas, a perfect image of a glorious sublimity. As I came before him I was enchanted by his amazing handsomeness. The Mother was seated on his right in a dazzling splendour. As I bowed down and touched her feet with my head, the Mother placing both her hands on my head, blessed me, then on raising my head she poured into me the nectar of her incomparable smile. Then my gaze came upon the fascinating feet of Sri Aurobindo. My head as it lowered itself on those feet was quite reluctant to leave them as the whole of my being was brimful of all that came into it and in particular a feeling of supreme reliance pervaded me. The touch of his hand was soft and reassuring. What I received from that touch cannot be described but it was certain never before had anything similar been received. As I looked into his eyes an unfathomable profundity was there - I could not take my gaze away till he himself shifted his. Slowly I came away to my room. I remembered not at all how the day was spent as my entire awareness was all the time surcharged with what I had seen.

Thus I had my first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. Him I saw to whom all my life was dedicated even from before. Whenever I had thought of God it was his image that used to come before my mind’s eye.

Did I get him as my Guru? The soul answered – not only as the Guru. Then was it as the wisest of sages or a great Yogi? not even that. As the Seer of the Integral Yoga? No, not that either, but as Sri Aurobindo himself, the one and only Sri Aurobindo, the supreme Beloved.

The first time that I was nervous to sing was when I sang in Sri Aurobindo’s presence on the 15th August 1929. It was four in the afternoon when the Mother was distributing the blessing flowers to all. Both Dilip and myself were to sing. This was on the first floor Meditation Hall; Sri Aurobindo was in the next room, his own, and only a curtain separated us from him. First I began to sing a famous song of D.L. Roy, “How can I worship Thee in any single image, when the entire universe is Thy image”. My throat seemed to dry up, the voice had lost its flexibility. The song was very plain and I was disappointed. Often have I sung before large audiences, with Rabindranath on many occasions, but never had such a thing happened to me. Dilip sang after me but he too did not fare very well. After his song we sang a duet, the famous Bhajan of Mirabai, “O Lord, keep me as Thy servitor”. Later I asked the Mother the cause of my nervousness. She said: “You are forgetting in whose presence you were singing. It was your vital being that was nervous in his presence.”

Nearly once every month or at times once in two months there used to be some
sittings of musical performances mainly by Dilip and myself. Occasionally some other ashramites who could sing were taken in hand by Dilip and joined us. They were held in front of Amrita’s room in the Mother’s presence. It was all a sort of votive offering to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo through music. The presence of the Mother was instrumental in infusing a special spirit other than what usually these sittings did manifest. The Mother was very fond of listening to Dilip’s European songs. There was also Lalita who used to play the piano as also an English lady who was named Nandini by Sri Aurobindo who used to be a remarkable performer on the Cello. The Mother was very fond of her playing. Sri Aurobindo said of her that she was a born musician. Once in 1932 we arranged for a special musical performance on the 24th April. The Mother gave the following message written in her own hand:

“To all those who took part in today’s singing and music: Sri Aurobindo and myself have felt that there was a great progress this time. It was not only from the external point of view of execution, but in the greater aim of the concentration behind and in the inner attitude. May the day bring its benediction to all.” (24.4.32)

The first part of Dilip’s “Geetashri” was coming out containing many songs with their notations. I agreed to his proposal to help him with the notations of a few songs.

I am not well conversant with the technique of Indian classical music, so I sat down with some recognised books on classical music by Krishnadhan Bandopadhyay and Pandit Bhatkhande. But, how much can books help when the training was lacking? So I appealed to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in my helplessness. The result was that unbeknownst to me theretofore I was yet able to do the work that later seemed to be not mine at all, yet the notations were done. Even when I tried to sing them later I had to do exactly as one trying a completely new thing. So on my appeal to Sri Aurobindo to clarify it, he wrote:

“As you have opened yourself to the Force and made yourself a channel for the energy to work, it is quite natural that when you want to do this musical work the Force should flow and act in the way that is wanted or the way that is needed and for the effect that is needed. When one has made oneself a channel, the Force is not necessarily bound by the limitations or disabilities of the instrument; it can disregard them and act in its own power. In doing so it may use the instrument simply as a medium and leave him as soon as the work is finished just what he was before, incapable in his ordinary movements of doing such good work; but also it may by its action set the instrument right, accustom it to the necessary intuitive knowledge and movement so that it can at will command the action of the Force. As for the technique, there are two different things, the intellectual knowledge which one applies and the intuitive cognition which acts in its own right, even if it is not actually possessed by the worker. Many poets for instance have little knowledge of metrical or linguistic technique and cannot explain how they write or what are the qualities and elements of their success, but they write all the same things that are perfect in rhythm and language. Intellectual knowledge of technique helps of course, provided one does not make of it a mere device or a rigid fetter. There are some arts that cannot be done well without some technical knowledge, e.g., painting, sculpture.

“What you write is your own in the sense that you have been the instrument of
its manifestation – that is so with every artist or worker. You need have no scruple about putting your name, though of course for sadhana, it is necessary to recognise that the real power was not yourself and you were simply the instrument on which it played its tune.

“The Ananda of creation is not the pleasure of the ego in having personally done well and being somebody, that is something extraneous which attaches itself to the joy of work and creation. The Ananda comes from the inrush of a greater power, the thrill of being possessed and used by it, the avesa, the exultation of the uplifting of the consciousness, its illumination and its heightened and heightened action and also the joy of the beauty, power and perfection that is being created. However, one feels it depends on the condition of the consciousness at the time, the temperament, the activity of the vital. The yogi of course (or even certain strong and calm minds) is not carried away by the Ananda, he holds and watches it and there is no mere excitement mixed with the flow of it through the mind, vital or body. Naturally the Ananda of samarpana or spiritual realisation or divine love is something far greater, but the Ananda of creation has its place."

Another letter from Sri Aurobindo:

“If you wish to be free from people’s expectations and the sense of obligation, it is indeed best not to take from anybody; for the sense of claim will otherwise be there. Not that it will be entirely absent even if you take nothing, but you will not be bound any longer.

“What you write about the singing is perfectly correct. You sing your best only when you forget yourself and let it come out from within without thinking of the need of excellence or the impression it may make. The (great singer) should indeed disappear into the past, it is only so that the inner singer can take her place." (22.8.37)

There was a wish in my mind: why should I not dance before the Mother? Not that I knew anything of dancing but why should the Mother not see the little that I could do? When I came I had thought that perhaps I would have to renounce singing and dancing altogether for sadhana. But Sri Aurobindo assured me in a letter: “The development of capacities is not only permissible but right when it can be made a part of the yoga; one can give not only one’s soul, but all one’s powers to the Divine.” Then I took courage and wrote to the Mother of my wish. She agreed to see me dancing. With a happy heart I prepared a dance, which she did witness. Thus was my wish fulfilled. I have loved dancing since my childhood, as much as singing.

On the first day I prepared a dance on Rabindranath’s song “In the steps of the dance” and the dance was accompanied by the song, sung by Dilip. This was sometime in 1932. The Mother then gave us the idea of a dance on Radha. Dilip was entrusted to compose the song for the dance and I was to translate it into a dance. There were four movements – first, a vast emptiness had enveloped Radha, within as well as outside – she was groping in the dark; the second – longing without finding what she was seeking; the third – the revelation of Krishna; the last – the surrender of Radha. Dilip composed a marvellous song for the dance much praised by both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I can hardly check myself from mentioning here two humorous remarks of Sri Aurobindo. When the idea of showing the dance to the Mother was first mooted, we asked
her to allot a particular room for practising, but in the room below resided a sadhak. Sri Aurobindo wrote in answer to our request: “He is too serious to be danced over” - while later when asked where could one practice the ‘Radha dance’, he indicated that very room. Much astonished I wrote mentioning about the sadhak: “You had written to say, ‘He is too serious to be danced over’.’ He replied at once: “Perhaps before long he will cease to be too serious.”

The practising of the dance was on, when something happened. It was this: Dilip had composed another song entitled: “The Dawn-dance”. This one too I was preparing along with the Radha-dance but in my own room. This one, the Dawn-dance, soon got ready and easily. From this dance I had a novel experience and I wrote about it to the Mother. I am quoting here portions of that letter: “It seems to me I have at once understood something new while preparing the dance. When I began the Radha-dance I started with the idea of expressing the inner mood of the song through the movements of my dancing; the mood expressed in the song I have tried first to feel and then tried to give it a form, but when I began the Dawn-dance then there did not arise in me any definite form of the mood of the dance. What has actually taken form is from a feeling that came before I could even realise the language of the mood the song had in it, as if the mood, the movement of vibration of the song were spontaneously expressing themselves through the movements of my dance; I was paying no attention to the words of the song rather, it seemed, I was following only the inner movement. Thus it appears to be a new experience of mine, and there is some truth in it. Perhaps these words of mine are too big, but what I am trying to say is this that the song for the Radha-dance from the point of view of the composition is much more easily understood than the Dawn-dance. Whereas the mood that the Dawn-dance has expressed, we are not very familiar with it. It is no doubt a new creation from the point of view of the inner expression, the form, expression all are unfamiliar to us and the composition too is quite intricate, at least it is so to me. This is just what I am trying to tell: I did not try to grasp a definite form at the outset, spontaneously the vibration of the inner movement came to me and the movements of the dance followed. That is why I wrote to tell you that the Dawn-dance is fairly easy, but I have not grasped why it is easy. As I dance, the inner vibration is becoming clear, as it were, I understand well an inner movement. I am writing to you to find out if there is any truth in it.” Sri Aurobindo replied: “To feel the vibration and develop from it the rhythm of the dance is the right way to create something true; the other way, to understand with the mind and work it out with the mind only or mainly is the mental way; it is laborious and difficult and has not got the same spontaneous movement.”

In spite of my efforts with the Radha-dance the result was not up to my expectations, it seemed the real thing was eluding me. I realised that I was following the second way of which Sri Aurobindo told me, that is, my mind was more at work. Although I met the Mother often who watched my dance with a lot of care and affection and eagerness too, encouraging me a good deal, yet I seemed to be in the same dark alley and was not able to open myself in the manner I wanted to and consequently what I wanted remained unexpressed. In the end I veered off towards the Dawn-dance leaving the Radha-dance in abeyance.

All of us living here a life of slow awakening of consciousness, we begin to see
why we are not able to do certain things and where we go astray in spite of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo helping with their force to crown every one of our resolutions with success, in spite of their sentinel-like vigilance watching over all our efforts. Be that as it may, when I was trying to shape the last movement of the Radha-dance I got a priceless letter from the Mother, written in her own hand. A letter like this one will show the manner of their help and explain how daily they are trying to raise us up, where and in what way. This episode on dancing will end with the quoting of the Mother’s letter. This is what she wrote:

“Sahana,

To complete what I told you yesterday about Radha’s dance I have noted down as an indication of the thought and feeling Radha must have within her when she stands finally in front of Krishna: ‘Every thought of my mind, each emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every feeling and sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all, all is yours, yours without reserve. You can decide my life or my death, my happiness or my sorrow, my pleasure or my pain; whatever you do with me, whatever comes to me from you will lead me to Divine Rapture.”

I had noted when I arrived that there were no separate arrangements for cooking the meals of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo nor any separate kitchen. Some sadhaks and sadhikas with their sanction cooked something or other and offered it to them. A few cooked daily for them, some once or twice a week, again there were some who occasionally did some cooking for them. This is how things were going on, there were no regular cooking of meals for the Mother or Sri Aurobindo nor was anyone given any direction as to what should be cooked and in what way. Whatever was offered with devotion by whosoever they accepted that. They, however, were very small eaters. I, too, did cook for them twice a week. We all knew where the tray of our cooked offering had to be placed and at what hour of the day or it was given into Champaklal’s hand; what a fine taste of joy we had in doing that! In the evening again we used to bring back our trays containing their ‘prasad’, which some of us shared. There lived in the Ashram an English lady, who was given the name Datta by Sri Aurobindo, she too often took in the tray from us and kept it in its appointed place. We have heard it said that even when she was in Europe she was a companion to the Mother for quite some time and also travelled with her to many countries. The very sight of this lady was indeed a pleasure, she seemed to us a pure white flower consecrated to the Divine.

In those days every sadhaka or sadhika was allotted a separate room. Their rooms had the following furniture – a bedstead, a table, a chair and a clothes horse. A domestic servant too was allotted to one for about an hour or an hour and a half according to the minimum need. No one did any cooking in his or her room except those used to drinking tea, who made it themselves in their rooms over a stove. All our regular meals were partaken at the dining hall.

It is only after coming to the Ashram that I realised how small are our real needs, elsewhere we are apt to make much of them. It should, however, be noted that in our Ashram the path of sadhana followed is not that of austerities. The Mother has therefore provided for all that is really necessary so that we could devote all our mind and energy to the seeking after the Divine.

At the beginning the stress in me was for meditation, not so much for work.
There was felt no great impetus to work or to realise the true value of work. The necessity for work grew in me slowly by degrees, gradually the joy of work too was born. Still after taking up some work I used to feel the need for meditating in the pause of work, at those periods I used to forget the work and become merged within. Soon a doubt arose, if it were desirable to meditate at the hours of work, as naturally while meditating the attention on the work was not there. I wrote to the Mother about it and she herself replied: “...when you are at work it is always better to remain fully aware of your body and its action. With my love and blessings.”

Bit by bit I came to realise that unless one went through work it would not be possible to arrive at what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were aiming at – the entire transmutation of our nature and consciousness.

I feel like quoting here a few letters of the Mother to clarify the point. The Mother wrote:

“It is very good to have recovered the calm. It is in the calm that the body can increase its receptivity and gain the power to contain. With love and blessings.”

“Sadhana is always difficult and everybody has conflicting elements in his nature and it is difficult to make the vital give up its ingrained habits.

“That is no reason for giving up sadhana. One has to keep up the central aspiration, which is always sincere and go on steadily in spite of temporary failures, and it is then inevitable that the change will come.”

“Our help is always with you. With my love and blessings.”

“Sahana,

“I am very glad to hear of this new opening and fine experience. Always when one faces difficulties and overcomes them it brings a new spiritual opening and victory. Our love and blessings are with you.”

And yet another:

“Sahana, my dear child,

“You have indeed passed from one life to another, but it is in your body that this new birth took place, and now the road is wide open before you for a new progress. With my love and blessings.” (19.4.1960)

It was here in the Ashram that a new world opened in front of me at the touch of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo – in that light I saw a vast unknown world bringing in the possibility of being born into a new consciousness. It is not the method of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo to lead forward as one leads a blind. Thus inspired by their marvellous teaching my journey began in the inner regions, in the very depths of consciousness through a variety of experiences. Gradually things began to clear where they were vague. The feeling was that in those regions there were no end of steps.

The hour struck when the Mother and Sri Aurobindo gave me the direction to tell them all without reserve, even the tiniest movement of my mind.

I had asked Sri Aurobindo to explain in clear and understandable terms about consciousness and transformation. This was the letter he wrote: “As for your question about consciousness and transformation, the answer is that consciousness is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth, but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a will and a
force that makes the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force but for want of the right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right consciousness and its will being in harmony with the Mother’s will, you can call in the Mother’s force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect and not definitive. It is only in the supermind that awareness, will and force are always one movement and automatically effective.”

If one could place oneself in tune with the force of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo constantly at work on us, amazing things are apt to happen. One can discern one’s life moving in another rhythm, one gets a state of entering into a world quite different. Once one can enter into the current one can see that one has nothing else to do. WHATSOEVER there is to be done, accepted or rejected, is done automatically. There is no effort, no questions, no feeling of pain in rejecting anything nor even any vain pleasure to become someone. One feels oneself to be someone quite different living in another world, watching all from another level. One can feel an endless ardour, a love for all, that comes from elsewhere. All this is the natural movement of the consciousness that grows in one and leads towards its own particular goal. The most remarkable thing felt is that one hardly comes across the ‘I’ that before used to be so much in the front. When a trial comes in life one is rarely able to keep the right attitude, it is this failure that is the cause of much trouble, – this truth is clearly projected. One becomes aware that in truth we are reft from the inner contact of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and are plunged in turbulent waters. The intensity and wakefulness required are no longer there and one flounders in that region where the ego is master, where the vision is blurred, from where sprouts all pain and sorrow. All these observations I have made known to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as I was directed to do. Sri Aurobindo sent me a letter in reply: “The automatic tendency is a good sign as it shows that it is the inner being opening to the Truth which is pressing forward the necessary change.

“The attitude you describe is quite the right one.

“As you say, it is the failure of the right attitude that comes in the way of passing through the ordeals to a change of nature. The pressure is becoming greater now for this change of character even more than for decisive yoga experience – for if the experience comes, it fails to be decisive because of the want of the requisite change of nature. The mind, for instance, gets the experience of the One in all, but the vital cannot follow because it is dominated by the ego-reaction and ego-nature or the habits of the outer nature keep up a way of thinking, feeling, acting, living, which is quite out of harmony with these experiences. For the psychic and part of the mind and emotional being feel frequently the closeness of the Mother, but the rest of the nature is unoffered and goes its own way prolonging division from her nearness creating distance. It is because the sadhaks have never even tried to have the yogic attitude in all things – they have been contented with the common ideas, common view of
things, common motives of life – only varied by inner experience and transferred
to the frame-work of the Ashram instead of that of the world outside. It is not
enough and there is great need that it should change." (9.9.1936)

I was keen to see what Sri Aurobindo had to say about “intellect” and
“intellectuals” although I had heard from others his point of view, as I was not
quite clear about them. Sri Aurobindo’s answer:

“D asked me the question and I answered it on the basis of the current
meaning of ‘intellect’ and ‘intellectual’. People in ordinary speech do not make
any distinction between intellect and intelligence, though of course it is quite
true that a man may have a good or even a fine intelligence without being an
intellectual. But ordinarily all thinking is attributed to the intellect; an
intellectual therefore is a man whose main business or activity is to think about
things – a philosopher, a poet, a scientist, a critic of art and literature or of life,
are all classed together as intellectuals. A theorist on economy and politics is an
intellectual, a politician or a financier is not, unless he theorises on his own
subject or is a thinker on another.

“N’s distinction is based on those I have made here, but these distinctions are
not current in ordinary speech, except one or two and those even in a very
imperfect way. If I go by these distinctions then the intellectuals will no longer
be called intellectuals but thinkers and creators – or an intellectual thinker will
then be one who is a thinker by his reason or mainly by his reason - e.g.
Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Wells etc. Tagore thinks by vision, imagination,
feeling or by intuition, not by the reason – at least that is true of his writings.
C.R. Das himself would not be an intellectual – in politics, literature and
everything else he was an ‘intuitive’ and ‘emotive’ man. But, as I say, these
would be distinctions not ordinarily current. In ordinary parlance Tagore, Das
and everybody else of the kind would all be called intellectuals also. The general
mind does not make these subtle distinctions, it takes things in the mass roughly
and it is right in doing so, for otherwise it would lose itself altogether.

“As for barristers etc. a man to succeed as barrister must have legal
knowledge, and the power to apply it. It is not necessary that he should be a
thinker, even on his own subject, or an intellectual. It is the same with all
professional men – doctors, engineers, etc. etc.; they may be intellectuals as well
as successful in their professions, but they need not be.

“P.S. Argument properly speaking needs some power of logical intellect; but it
can be specialised in a certain line. The power of argument does not by itself
make a man an intellectual.”

Now with a few minor questions and answers from Sri Aurobindo I shall bring
to a close the chapter on my life in the Ashram of the old days:

**Question:** How can things go on unless ‘rejection’ can be made effective?

**Answer:** It will be easier when you bring down a settled peace and equanimity
into that part of the being. There will then be more of an automatic rejection of
such movements and less need of tapasya.

**Question:** O Mother! How to bring down a settled peace and equanimity? If you
tell me how, I may try and see.

**Answer:** The Mother’s peace is above you – by aspiration and quiet self-giving it
descends. When it takes hold of the vital and the body, then equanimity becomes easy and in the end automatic. (25.8.33)

**QUESTION:** O Mother! I am immersed in my writings, is it right, what I am doing, I don't know. Now I do not seem to have grasped your opinion about my efforts on writing a novel. So I am dubious if I am doing something not approved by you, if so, I will stop it. I had thought of offering the completed novel on my birthday.

**SRI AUROBINDO’S ANSWER:** Mother does not disapprove of your writing a book - what she does not like is your being so lost in it that you can do nothing else. You must be master of what you do and not possessed by it. She quite agrees to your finishing and offering the book on your birthday if that can be done - but you must not be carried away. You must keep your full contact with higher things. (1.5.34)

**QUESTION:** Mother, may I ask something now? Whenever I get any doubt or some such thing, I have seen that automatically I begin to feel more strengthened in faith, aspiration - a feeling as if my faith covers me as behind a shield, an unshakable faith is concretely discerned. When I hear about doubts my strength increases - strange, is it not? Is there any meaning in this?

**SRI AUROBINDO’S ANSWER:** It is the reaction of the psychic to mental doubt and the vital disturbance which caused it. The psychic knows that the Divine is and affirms its knowledge against all appearances. (1.9.33)

**QUESTION:** When I close my eyes for meditation my physical mind becomes too active, and instead of allowing it to go deeper, it pushes me on to the surface, and then I feel heaviness on my forehead because I feel the movement moving about there only; I find when I am at my work I am quite cheerful and enthusiastic, happy, quiet but after such a meditation I feel I am in discomfort. O Mother, how to improve my meditation? I think I could meditate better. After straining to meditate is it possible to have a fall in the consciousness? The difficulty is this that I am no more able to go deeper at all. Anyhow you will know what is wrong there.

**SRI AUROBINDO’S ANSWER:** It is on the surface that the transformation is done. One comes up to the surface with what one has gained in the depth, to change it. It may be you need to go in and find it difficult to make the movement back quickly. When the whole being becomes plastic you will be able to make whatever movement is needed more quickly.

**QUESTION:** Today I took my afternoon meal with A. Do you think I have taken a risk in doing so?

**SRI AUROBINDO’S ANSWER:** If you keep the intensity, it is all right - but you must see that the intensity continues and is not replaced by some other condition in which you only feel at ease and do not notice that the intense condition is gone - for if that happens, then something may again begin to matter. (13.7.32)

**SELF:** I am always aspiring for Sri Aurobindo’s light in my mind. Tell me, Mother gracious, will I ever be capable of receiving the touch of His Light in my mind?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** It can always come in the mind if you aspire patiently. But the
basic condition, if you want that Light, is to get rid of other mental influences. (22.5.32)

SELF: What a turmoil came this afternoon as I was resting after the mid-day meal! A sea of images of my earlier life and that of many people were coming and receding one after another. I seemed to be smothered in that crowd. I got up to meditate, but wonder of wonders, there too they were coming in hordes, no meditation was possible. Much as I tried to reject them, it was still the same kaleidoscopic cinema show into which I was plunged with no possibility of detaching myself from all that. All this renders the peace of forging ahead to stop, the mind heavy, depressed within.

SRI AURUBINDO: So long you have not learned the lesson, the past had to touch you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come, you will see that they are connected with some psychological movement in you that has to be got rid of. So you must be prepared to recognise all that was not right in you and is still not corrected, not allow any vanity or self-righteousness to cloud your vision. (24.10.32)

SELF: Slowly I am beginning to understand from where the impulse to blame others or slander comes, what is behind these motives or in what spirit one indulges in them.

SRI AURUBINDO: It is the petty ego in each that likes to discover and talk about the “real or unreal” defects of others – and it does not matter whether they are real or unreal, the ego has no right to judge them, because it has not the right view or the right spirit. It is only the calm, disinterested, dispassionate, all-compassionate and all-loving Spirit that can judge and see rightly the strength and weakness in each being. (12.6.34)

SELF: Whereas I should gather myself in I seem to be all dispersed. It seems to me that if I could detach myself internally from everything and all, consider myself quite alone then perhaps I shall be able to do sincerely that which I am here to do. What wants to be only in my petty mind concerned with petty things forgetting all else, this depresses me a lot.

SRI AURUBINDO: You must gather yourself more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettiness of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from a constant communion with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it - and it is at that price, by learning to do that, that one can have the siddhi in the Yoga. (5.6.34)

SELF: Why is it that I think that weeping opens the door through which weakness gets a way of entry into us, an opportunity to allow the force to get in which saps our strength of mind?

SRI AURUBINDO: It is quite correct that weeping brings in the forces that should be kept outside – for weeping is a giving way of the inner control and an expression of vital reaction and ego. It is only the psychic weeping that does not open the door to these forces – but that is without infliction, tears of bhakti, spiritual emotion or Ananda. (3.7.37)

In answer to a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote:
The ananda you describe is evidently that of the inner vital when it is full of the psychic influence and floods with it the external vital also. It is the true ananda and there is nothing in it of the old vital nature. When the psychic thus uses the vital to express itself, this kind of intense ecstasy is the natural form it takes. This intensity and the old vital excitement are two quite different things and must not be confused together. Where there is the intensity with a pure and full satisfaction, content and gratitude leaving no room for claim, demand or depressing reaction, that is the true vital movement. (6.12.31)

**SELF:** How can the right relation between all of ourselves be established and what should it be like?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** What you must have with other sadhaks is a harmonious relation, free from any mere vital attachment (indifference is not asked from you) and free from any indulgence in wrong movement of the opposite kind (such as dislike, jealousy or ill-will). It is through the psychic consciousness that you have found it possible to be in a true constant relation with the Mother and your aim is to make that the basis of all of your life, action and feeling, all in you, all you feel, say and do should be consistent with that basis. If all proceeds from that psychic union of your consciousness with the Mother, dedicating everything to her, then you will develop the right relation with others. (10.2.32)

Here ends the memory-image of my life in the Ashram of the old days. But before that I would like to reproduce a rendering by Sri Aurobindo of one of my songs.

*Sri Aurobindo's rendering of a song:*

*Since thou hast called me, see that I*  
*Go not from thee, – surrounding me stand.*  
*In thy own love's diviner way*  
*Make me too love thee without end.*

*My fathomless blackness hast thou cleft*  
*With thy infinity of light,*  
*Then waken in my mortal voice*  
*Thy music of illumined sight.*

*Make me thy eternal journey's mate*  
*Tying my life around thy feet.*  
*Let thy own hand my boat unmoor,*  
*Sailing the world thyself to meet.*

*Fill full of thee my day and night,*  
*Let all my being mingle with thine*  
*And every tremor of my soul*  
*Echo thy flute of flutes divine.*

*Come in thy chariot, Charioteer,*  
*And drive me whither thou wouldst go.*  
*All within me and all my acts*  
*Make luminous with surrender's glow.*
Their Deep Compassion

- by S.T.

You ask me how my contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother started and when. Well, it is difficult to fix it. All that I would say is that when I was a small boy I remember standing as a volunteer witnessing a procession in Surat of Sri Aurobindo and the other national leaders of that time. Later as a student in the college I had occasions to read the Master’s books like Yoga and its Objects, Yogic Sadhan, Isha Upanishad, etc. My cousin (who later became Advaitananda) was a regular subscriber to the Arya and held Sri Aurobindo in very great regard; he introduced me to the writings of Sri Aurobindo. I was intensely interested in the deeper side of life from my very childhood. What I read in this literature strengthened my aspiration and filled me with happiness. It was while going through the Yoga and its Objects that one day I saw a golden sun rushing at me and pulling me out through the forehead centre. It was the first of such experiences that started during this period.

The Arya volumes came to me in an interesting way. I was once travelling in a local train and had the Essays on the Gita in my hand. Seated opposite to me was a Maharashtrian lawyer who queried what book I was reading. On coming to know that it was Sri Aurobindo’s work on the Gita he said that at one time he had been interested in the Arya and had in his possession the whole set excepting some five numbers. He offered to send the volumes to me as he was no longer so much interested in them and had taken to a study of Tukaram, his works being more simple, less complicated, suited to his taste. And he kept his word. Later when I came to Pondicherry the Mother gave me the missing numbers and helped to make the Arya set complete.

About nine months after the experience of the golden sun, I was lying quietly one night. Suddenly I became conscious of something bright and luminous in the form of a serpent with jewels studded on it, lifting and moving its head upward. Words came to me (which I heard distinctly) saying, “It is death.” I said “All right” and immediately I found myself above and outside the body, but not in my subtle body. I was conscious of myself as an entity of white light in the form of an egg or a lingam; I was conscious of the night around me and the stars above. A little later I came down into the body with a thud. From then on the feeling that I am not the body has been always with me, even if not always on the surface.

It was in 1922 or 1923 that I met my first guru. He was a householder living a simple life and I had been to see him along with a few friends. I remember that when I bowed to him and he patted my back there was a deep flow of peace and joy through his fingers. When I looked at him he said something cryptic in Gujarati which I can only roughly render as “maintain the Love.” Subsequently I sought initiation from him which he was pleased to grant. At that time he asked me to see the guru in everything. He also added that both the guru and the
disciple are in the same boat that is being piloted by the Sadguru, the Lord. The same night I had a thrilling experience and it was this. I saw the guru coming towards me in his subtle body. He entered straight into my heart and described a circle with a small wand which he had in his hand and light flooded my heart accompanied by a sense of purity and joy.

I had many meetings with him but this is not the place to speak of those details. Suffice it to say that he clearly told me that sanyas was not for me and so I went back to my college for the studies that had been interrupted by my impulsive turn to spiritual life. The next memorable meeting with the guru was in 1928 in a dream. As he was coming, I heard the words: “He is coming to bid you goodbye. This is the severance of the link.” He sat down and I laid my head on his lap and wept.

I should have mentioned that he had passed away two years earlier, i.e. in 1926. And though the link was snapped in 1928 this way, I had occasion to have his darshan again in 1932 when I had gone to his place at Godhra, where I met his niece for the first time though I had heard about her earlier, as specially devoted to him and who had received the most from him. I had not long to wait for confirmation of her status. For, in the evening when we were sitting in the courtyard below a neem tree and she was singing a bhajan in that half-lit place, I saw his beloved self standing behind her with a curtain of white light in between. I rubbed my eyes and made sure he was there.

I have not seen him thereafter.

* Sometime in 1928 there was an interesting experience. I saw vividly a personage dressed as a Rajput coming towards me on a phaeton drawn by two white horses. He told me, thrice, “surrender to the Mahamaya”.

One night, in a vision, I saw the Divine Mother standing in front of me about twelve feet above the ground. But I did not see her full figure, I saw only her dark blue legs up to the knees. She had worn golden anklets and the soles of her feet were lotus red. I saw a silk cloth descending from her right side, – the kind of cloth she wears in traditional worship.

At the instance of certain friends I applied for permission to Sri Aurobindo for the Darshan of November 24, 1932, but the reply I received from the Secretary was to the effect that permission could not be granted as the November Darshan was meant only for disciples. Thereafter I did not think further of the matter and proceeded to Bombay to rejoin my work at the college.

There were, however, one or two striking vision-experiences which revealed their meaning to me later. The first was the vision of two feet with golden anklets. While seeing them I had the distinct feeling that they were the Mother’s feet. The second experience came to me in response to a telegram I had sent to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother conveying some good sentiments after I was refused permission for Darshan in November, 1932. I saw a marble staircase rising in front of me up to 8 or 10 steps then taking a turn to my right then turning again arising straight up into infinity. I saw a lady swiftly descending from its invisible top and coming and stepping in front of me at the first bend. She opened out her arms wide. Her face was European and her dress of the Greek type. It was difficult to judge her age, but no doubt she was young. This scene has remained stamped on my consciousness even four decades after.
It was in 1934 November that a friend wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking him whether I could come for the November Darshan that year and the request was immediately granted and I came for Darshan. On the 3rd or 4th day of my stay here, as I was lying down at night I had a peculiar experience. It was as if someone was drilling a hole in my head. In a spiral of light I saw a little figure entering through my head, entering into the heart and stopping there in the heart. Immediately I recognised the figure to be the same lady with a European face that I had seen two years earlier.

During that visit every time I approached the Mother for Pranam I experienced a strong impulse to give and give. If I had a gold button on my shirt I would take it out and place it at her feet. If there were a few coins in my pocket I would do the same thing. I could not resist the push.

You ask what was my experience at Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The moment I had sight of him from a distance, there was a surge of emotion and I strongly felt that I had known him for ages. There was such a joy that I could not contain myself and I embraced the man who was in front of me. When my turn came, Sri Aurobindo looked at the Mother and Mother looked at Sri Aurobindo and he nodded.

Before going back I met the Mother. She asked a few questions about myself and then asked “Will you come here?” “Yes, Mother” was my answer. And it was not long before I was back.

Once while speaking of some of my difficulties, I had asked Mother if she saw any possibility in me. “Yes, even exceptional possibilities”, Mother replied and added: “Would I have called you otherwise? There has been a descent of the Divine Will in you.”

I do not need to speak here of the various visions – some of them prophetic, some symbolic – that I had during my stay here after I came finally in February 1935; nor is it necessary to speak of the experience of the vast infinite that was given within a few years of my coming. The particular experience was this: A vast golden light with white masses in it descended and touched the crown of my head, then receded. At that moment of contact I became aware of its quality of peace, joy and freedom – each particle dancing with joy.

As a result, perhaps, soon afterwards I saw the heart lotus standing upright with some petals fully open. And then in a total stillness of the outer being I saw and felt the cool presence of a brilliant white flame, the size of a man’s thumb deep within the cave of the heart. This repeated itself for two or three days.

I wouldn’t say, with you, that I have arrived. Far from it, very far still. But the Grace of the Beloved Two has given me a feeling of certitude that my feet have touched the path that leads to Truth. And I hope and trust that my spiritual future, as that of the race, is safe, quite safe, in the hands of the Well-Beloved whose love and compassion know no bounds and whose Will has the sanction of the Supreme.

You may, if you like, see some of these letters from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. They will give you an idea of their deep compassion, love and grace which have been vouchsafed to me in abundance. And I am no exception.
Some Answers from the Mother

1935

Q: To talk of surrender is easy, very easy indeed. To think of surrender in all its complexity is not easy, not so easy at all. But to achieve even the beginning of a genuine surrender of self, oh, how difficult it is, Mother! There are many things wrong with me, I know. But there must be something fundamentally wrong that stands in the way of my genuine surrender to you. What is it, Mother?

A: Nothing special to you. It is the same difficulty that exists for all human beings: pride and blindness of the physical mind.

1936

Q: There is an old Hindu belief that one should not lie down or sleep with one’s head towards the North. Has it any real significance?

A: Many things have been said on the subject but, as far as my own experience goes, I do not attach much importance to that belief.

24.3.1936

* You must know that yoga frees us from all subjection to the horoscope, the horoscope expresses the position one has in relation with the material world, but by the sadhana we get free from the slavery to that world.

14.9.1936

1937

I want you to ask freely what you need....

From your mother you can always take, it is quite natural, especially when things are given to you full-heartedly – and am I not your mother who loves you? ....

3.1.1937

* Q: Though I do not understand my own nature and its highest needs, I feel that you know me better than myself and that my life and its aspirations are safe in your keeping.

A: Yes, my will is to lead you to the realisation of your highest aspiration.

Q: And though I do not know what true love is, I love you in my own crude way. May I offer you my love such as it is?

A: Your love is welcomed and receives the answer of our love and blessings.

9.9.1937

* Q: How I long for the day when I can truly feel and say that my one desire and happiness in life is to love and serve you. Will it come to pass?

A: I see no reason why it should not!

30.9.1937

* You can be sure of my love and affection – and my help and force will never fail
18.11.1937

1938

I always mean what I say.

4.5.1938

* 

I know that it is only the weak who complain. The strong never do because they can’t be hurt. So I never attach much importance to complaints.

9.10.1938

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Has the psychic flame any correspondence to the Vedic Agni? They seem to have more or less the same chief qualities.

A: Yes, these are two names for the same thing.

20.10.1938

* 

Q: Lead me to Thy own home in truth, Mother. I offer Thee my will of progressive submission and increasing adoration.

A: The way is opened, my dear child, and I am waiting for you with my arms wide to receive and enfold you affectionately.

22.10.1938

* 

Q: I also want to come to you, for in your arms alone will I have peace and joy and Ananda and the true truth and fulfilment of my life and being. But still the way is not clear to me. And how shall I be ever able to climb to your dizzy heights with the heavy chains of a mortal’s nature at my feet?

A: Let me carry you in my arms and the climbing will become easy.

25.10.1938

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Q: Here is my pledge, Mother. I place the whole responsibility of my life into your hands. Now do what you like with me. Carry me in your arms, if you please. Whatever happens to me, in me or around me, I shall try to have the faith that it is your Will, Divine Will, that it should be so, but that I am always safe in your arms. Yes, Mother?

A: Yes, my dear child.

26.10.1938

* 

Q: How shall I ever repay you for your exquisite act of love, Mother? You are very, very kind to your little child who loves you and is happy.

A: My dear child, live in my love, feel it, be filled with it and be happy - nothing can please me more than that.

29.10.1938
Q: I am your child first and last and the work that I do has no other value for me except that through it I can serve your Will, except that through it I can grow to be a better and truer child to you....

A: Yes, you are my child and it is true that of all things it is the most important.... Dear child, I am always with you and my love and blessings never leave you.

31.10.1938

Q: On my last birthday, your parting words to me were, “Keep your faith.” I am still wondering what exactly you meant. What kind of faith would you like me to aspire for?

A: Faith in the Divine’s Grace and its power to transform you.

4.11.1938

Q: Dear Mother, every day you are growing more and more lovable and adorable to me. By what divine Mystery do you cast this sweet spell on us?

A: The only mystery, the only spell is my love – my love which is spread over my children and calls down upon them the Divine’s Grace to help and protect.

6.11.1938

Q: You send me your love and blessings everyday of late, and in rare blessed moments I do sense that we are always surrounded by your love. But as for a real response, my heart seems to be made of stone, otherwise, why should it refuse to open itself to your love? The more you shower your love, the more I feel ashamed of myself ... I have no power. Thy will be done.

A: Nothing can resist the steady action of love – it melts all resistances and triumphs over all difficulties.

9.11.1938

Q: Open my entire being to your love. Purify my being of all sensuality and take me in your Arms. Otherwise I will surely be lost.

A: To lift you out of the ordinary vital nature, my love and help and blessings are always with you.

15.11.1938

Q: My most humble salutations to the Lord and my very special love and greetings to the Divine Mother for the coming darshan.

A: Remain quietly and joyfully open on the 24th to receive the special Light, Love and Force which will be given on that day.

21.11.1938

1939

Q: I know your love and blessings are always with me and I sometimes wish
you had not been so invariably kind and gracious to me. For it makes it still more hard for me to tell you that there are difficulties of my nature which make it difficult for me still to accept you and your yoga in the requisite spirit. And without this what is discipleship?

A: It is not as a Guru that I love and bless, it is as the mother who asks nothing in return for what she gives.

9.7.1939

* Q: It was very sweet of you to tell me that yours was the love of the mother who does not ask for anything in return. That is all right for you, for yours is a self-fulfilled life. But I have yet to achieve everything, yet to justify my human existence. I have yet to know my soul and my self, to know and love the Divine and above all to have the vision of the World-Mother, Mahashakti, who will know what is best for me. Then how can I do without a Guru who will lead me to Her Feet?

A: I do not see anybody in the world more qualified than Sri Aurobindo to lead you at the feet of the Mahashakti.

16.7.1939

* Q: There happen to be bad sons now and then, but a bad mother never.

A: But what a joy and love it is when both mother and son are good! My love and blessings to my dear (good) child.

27.7.1939

* Q: I know you mean well, but to be good, truly good, may be possible only for those who have gone beyond all egoism. But if my mother chooses to see only the good in her child, that only speaks of the goodness of the Mother’s heart.

A: My child’s heart is filled with love and light from the Divine, let them shine throughout your whole being and the clouds, if any, will soon disappear.

28.7.1939

* Q: I have approached Thy feet with great hopes, O Mother, and let it not be said that I had to return empty-handed.

A: My love is always with you, let it fill your hands and your heart, let it fulfill your aspiration.

30.7.1939

* My love and blessings, help and protection to my dear child whom I would like to see always happy.

4.8.1939

* (On receiving a pot of pickles from the Mother)
Q: You overwhelm me with your love, dear Mother. I do not deserve one iota of the kindness you show to me, but then what shall I say to you, you whose very nature is an overwhelming divine love? Your love itself is a priceless gift. Why then these other gifts?

A: There is a great joy in giving; there is a still greater joy in pleasing those we love ... and when you will eat the pickles you may remember me and think, ‘Mother loves me’...

6.8.1939

*

Q: Dear Mother, in the lotus of my heart may I have your lotus-feet permanently installed on the throne of love.

A: My dear loving child, your heart is quite a sweet place because of your love - let me remain always there so that I may fill your whole being with light and love and joy.

8.8.1939

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Q: In the sweet recesses of my heart’s chamber I have always been aware of an instinctive belief that you are an Avatar of the Divine Mother whom I adore, but whom I know not except by Her lotus-feet. That is the reason why my eyes seek Her in your lotus-feet and my heart yearns to press them to itself knowing them as its sole refuge.

A: Let the Light of a conscious certitude and the joy of the everlasting Presence be always with you – concretely – in the sweetness of love divine.

10.8.1939

*

Q: Will you kindly tell me, dear Mother, if you love me truly and genuinely in spite of my poor humanity or is it all an experiment? If feel ashamed to pose such a question to you, but I hear the word ‘experiment’ used so often and in such a variety of ways that I feel frightened and would like to hear from you personally if you are not merely experimenting with us.

A: Well – the best thing you could do is not to listen to what people say, it would save you from many falls of consciousness –

This afternoon when I looked at you in silence I told you, “be faithful to your love”. I suppose this is a sufficient answer and you do not expect me to justify my love in front of the foolish ignorance of such interpretations. Whether you believe it or doubt, my love and blessings are with you.

12.8.1939

*

Q: I apologise humbly for my yesterday’s query and pray to be forgiven. How could I question your love, you who are the soul of truth and love and goodness? If you were not true, you who are the incarnate Divine Mother, what else could be true in this world of death, disease, ignorance and incapacity? You are right, Mother, it is for me to be faithful to my love and to your lotus-feet.
A: I knew that it was a passing mood and that you would soon come out of it, – but let this love and this truth be your shield and protect you against the intrusion of any force of falsehood. My love and blessings will lead you to the goal.

13.8.1939

* 

Q: But time is flying and I must hasten to offer my humble love to my dearest Mother, to see whom is to love her. How sweet you are, Mother!

A: If only you could keep always your inner happiness, it would please me immensely and help you very much on the way.

17.8.1939

* 

Q: Your love for me is my true refuge and sole strength. What I offer you is a turbid mixture of which I am ashamed but which you alone can purify.

A: Whatever is the nature of the offering when it is made with sincerity it always contains a spark of divine light which can grow into a full sun and illumine the whole being. You can be sure of my love, you can be sure of my help and our blessings are always with you.

19.8.1939

* 

Q: How extremely loveable you are, dear Mama! Is there anyone like you in the whole world?

A: Love, love, love to my very dear child, all the joy, all the light, all the peace of the divine love and also my loving blessings.

20.8.1939

* 

Q: I have returned the pot of pickles but I still have the pickles and whenever I see them I remember you and say to myself, “The Mother loves me.” On the crest of a great wave of love the gift came to me and I have felt the presence of the ocean which projected that wave. With that pot in hand when you called me, you know of whom I was thinking? I was thinking of Kali standing before me ready to give a boon! In fact, I was invoking Her and there you were with the pot of pickles and an ocean of Love! Such is your play, dear Mother!

A: Indeed, that day I heard you distinctly calling me and I wanted to answer very concretely to your call.

21.8.1939

* 

Q: You were asking me this morning as to what was the matter with me. It is the same old thing but nonetheless distressing. It is a civil war, a conflict between two different tendencies and ideals, a war on all the fronts, mental, vital and physical. But I am deeply sensible of your kindness and grateful too.

A: There is no contradiction that cannot be solved and harmonised in a
synthesis if you rise up high enough in the intuitive mind and yours is not at all irreducible. I am sure that one day you will find this out.

27.8.1939

* 

Q: Accept my love and forgive my lapses, as you have been doing for so many years. I expect these moods will come and go, but may I never lose sight of your luminous smiling face through all these passing clouds!

A: I truly hope you will soon be out of all your troubles. Just one good jump to the higher consciousness where all problems are solved and you will get rid of your difficulties. I never feel that I am forgiving. Love does not forgive, it understands and cures.

28.8.1939

* 

Q: Sometime back you wrote to me, “One good jump to the higher consciousness where all problems are solved and you will get rid of your difficulties.” What exactly is this higher consciousness and how may I rise or jump into it? And again you have said, “Let divine love be your goal. Let pure love be your way. Be always true to your love and all difficulties will be conquered.” Is this higher consciousness the same thing as a state of pure love and, if so, how would it be related to a state of higher knowledge?

A: The higher consciousness is a state of pure love but it is also a state of pure openness to divine knowledge. There is no opposition there between these two kindred things, it is the mind that makes them separate.

The best way to get to it is to refuse all mental agitations when it comes, also all vital desires and turmoils, and to keep the mind and heart turned as constantly as possible towards the Divine. The love for the Divine is the strongest force for doing this.

19.10.1939

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Q: You once said “I am in you”. This form and force of your divine self in me, this “Little Mother”, is the secret tie between you and me. Like you she is very modest in her demands and very, very patient (so far); but I know that so long as she chooses to make her abode in my being, sooner or later, poor me will have to abdicate in favour of Her Imperial Majesty and till that day comes there will be no rest for me.

A: So, the best thing to do is to abdicate at once and to get rest, peace and joy. When you have to get rid of an obstinate resistance, you must not make more delay than when you have to pull out a bad tooth.

Inside, outside and everywhere is this help of the mother.

29.10.1939

From Sri Aurobindo

The desires of the heart and the body which stand in the way of Brahmacharya, give a glow to the vital and emotive nature and prevent it from being dry and shut to feeling. To keep the heart warm and open, not dried up or closed, and at
the same time attain to spiritual purity the best way is to turn it towards what is eternal, pure and ever true, behind and beyond these earthly emotions – the everlasting Love, Bliss and Beauty.

18.9.1936

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The experience you had of the power of the Name and the protection is that of everyone who has used it with the same faith and reliance. To those who call from the heart for the protection, it cannot fail. Do not allow any outward circumstance to shake the faith in you; for nothing gives greater strength than this faith to go through and arrive at the goal. Knowledge and tapasya, whatever their force, have a less sustaining power – faith is the strongest staff for the journey.  
The protection is there over you and the watchful love of the Mother. Rely upon it and let your being open more and more to it – then it will repel attacks and always uphold you.

8.10.1936

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The experience you had was that of exteriorisation or going out of the body. The consciousness went up and remained above the body for a time. The feeling or vision of oneself in the form of an egg is frequent in such cases. It is not always so, for many go out in an individualised consciousness with an awareness of a subtle body, subtle thought, subtle sensation etc. and move about in the vital or even in the physical world till they come back to the body. But when one begins, the vital body is at first a little vague and the consciousness also with the result that all is at first dim and unorganised. The serpent must be the Kundalini force which had left its coiled sleeping position in the Muladhara and taken the lengthened one in which it joins the embodied consciousness with the consciousness above.
The power of exteriorisation is one that can be used for many purposes by the Yogi when it has been developed.

2.6.1935

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Q: I saw a small bright flame as big as a man’s thumb in the region of the heart. What is it?  
A: It is the psychic fire kindled in the heart. The psychic being is described by the Upanishads as of the size of a thumb angushtha-matraḥ purusō’ntaratma – it may manifest first as this psychic flame.

8.4.1938

*  
The Mother in her cosmic power is all things and all divine Personalities, for nothing can be in manifestation except by her and as part of her being. But what was meant in the “Visions and Voices”** was that the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti were one Person or Being in two aspects and it puts forward this vision of them as Krishna-Mahakali as a great power for the manifestation.

20.10.1936
Durga combines the characteristics of Maheshwari and Mahakali to a certain extent, - there is not much connection with Mahalakshmi. The combination of Krishna and Mahakali is one that has a great power in this yoga and if the names rise together in your consciousness, it is a good sign.

It depends on the shade of the yellow. If it is golden white it comes from above the mind and the combination suggests the Maheshwari-Mahakali power. Higher Mind colour is pale blue.

Although the vital and physical may join in the resistance, yet the most of it is in the mind - a doubt and a wrong angle of vision there; this imposes itself on the vital in the form of a corresponding feeling and the two together obscure the physical and tire and depress it. You say that if it is so in the beginning what will it be in the future when you are in the real swing of the thing. But when you are in the real swing of the thing, you will have the experience, - for the stream of sadhana will mean that and in it these difficulties will one by one or together disappear. The others belong to the ordinary course of sadhana and will yield to the increasing experience of the inner Truth and the growth of the spirit. Faith will come by experience, by the opening of the inner vision that sees the Truth behind appearances - or it will come by a simple opening of the soul to the Truth. It cannot be commanded by a struggle in the mind between old beliefs and new ones.

There is no need to give up entirely what you had in the past. Spiritual truths are not warring enemies - they are parts of a single truth and complete each other. It is only the mind that turns them into disparities and wants one to bar out another. That is the weakness of making something in the past the standard by which you judge the present - the mind takes advantage of its own limitations to declare that the two are incompatible. But it is not so in reality - between two truths of the Divine there is always a reconciliation when to the limiting mind they seem opposites; as one is realised after the other, their unity appears, it is not necessary to deny the past experience in order to go forward to the new realisation.

This will before long become apparent to you if you do not allow the mind to stand in the way of the heart’s permanent opening. Let the doors of the heart swing open freely - allow yourself to enter into the stream without making any mental conditions before you plunge in; the stream itself will carry you to your goal.

Q: By no means at my command can I make my mind even reasonably quiet. Again it has started bringing doubts and misgivings. One of them is that perhaps I am on the wrong path, that it is some ambition that has attracted me to this path and that the other paths which satisfied thousands of seekers
before me would probably be quite enough for me, etc., etc. I write this to you because I cannot deal effectively with this difficulty and it is by my will only that I am clinging to you. Or perhaps it is not my will but the compulsion from a greater will than my own acting from behind the veil. But the rest of my nature seems temperamentally more amenable to influences representing other paths and other goals. Because of this, this path will be more difficult for me than for most here. Am I really on the right path? Have I really a call for it?

A: It is the right path for your inner nature and there is the call. The resistance is from the outer, especially the mind, but that is due to a dissatisfied restlessness which is part of the outer mental nature - the reasons given are only supports which it builds for its restlessness - and that would have interfered wherever you might have been and on whatever path. To conquer this outer nature is the only way and that can be best done here, since the change of the outer being is here a part of the sadhana and you will receive the necessary help.

17.7.1937

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Q: You say: “To conquer this outer nature is the only way.” But how to conquer this restlessness and dissatisfaction in the mind, I do not know.

A: There must first be the will to change firmly conceived and held - then to open the consciousness to the Force and let it work with the inner consent to its working. When there is the psychic opening, then even the things most obstinate in the nature can change.

19.7.1937

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Q: Grant me one little bit of devotion, Mother, just a little bit of it. Otherwise I do not know what will happen to me, I do not indeed know how I can live here. And I do not want to leave the shelter of Thy Lotus-feet.

A: Do not allow mental anxiety to harass you. Wait on the working of the Mother’s force which will open the lotus of the heart. In the light from above devotion will blossom in you.

25.10.193?

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You are not weak, there is a considerable strength in you, but it is covered over by the fluctuations of the mind - when these are mastered, then the strength will be apparent.

20.10.1936

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Very little - nothing that is definite - can be said from the photograph; for it is too small. The general impression that disengaged itself was of a fine consciousness and especially of a deep quietude. It is probable from what you write that he had achieved the consciousness above the human mental in which one is aware of the self, the Brahman and lives in it - that includes of course the
sense of the Divine in all. What you report of his sayings is the utterance of one who has this realisation.

There have been several Yogis who have declared that the Avatar was coming, or, more recently, that he was there already in the human birth, - but none have been able to say where.

7.8.1935

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I have only now had time to go through the three letters you sent me. X can of course have the Conversations***. As to what your other friend asks, it is quite possible for him to receive where he is without coming here if he has the adoration of the Mother in his heart and an intense call.

About the question of the Avatar, I do not think it is useful to press in the matter. It has become very much the tendency, especially in Bengal, to regard the Guru as the Avatar. To every disciple the Guru is the Divine, but in a special sense - for the Guru is supposed to live in the divine consciousness, to have attained union and when he gives to the disciple, it is the Divine that gives and what he gives is the consciousness of the Divine who is within the Guru. But that and Avatarhood are two different things. It is mostly in East Bengal recently that those have come who were acclaimed as Avatars; those who came had each of them the idea of a work to be done for the world and the sense of a Divine Power working through them, which shows that there was a pressure for manifestation there and something came in each case, for something of the Divine Power always comes when it is called, but it does not look as if there was anywhere the complete descent. It is this that may have created the idea that the Avatar was born there. It has always been said of the Advent that is to come now that there would be many in whom it would seem that it had come, but the real Avatar would work behind a veil until the destined hour came.

I do not gather from what is quoted as said by your Guru that he claimed to be the Avatar. It seems to me that he claimed to be a Power preparing the way for the work of the Divine Mother and even to indicate that all that he meant would be manifested not only by his own followers but by other groups (sampradaya), consisting evidently of those who had not had him for Guru but had some other Head and Teacher. This is also confirmed by the saying that some other one than his disciples might be the means of his prakasa - that is to say, would be the means of carrying on his work and aiding the manifestation of the Mother. If this meant proclaiming him as the Avatar, I do not see how it can agree with the other saying that after his leaving of the body the Avatar would come to the Ashram he had created.

I do not quite know what is meant by ayoni-sambhava. An incarnation is always through a human mother, though there have been one or two cases in which a virgin birth has been proclaimed (Christ, Buddha). The only other meaning - unless we suppose an unprecedented miracle - might be a descent such as sometimes happen, the Godhead manifesting in somebody who at birth was a Vibhuti, not at once the full incarnation. But in the absence of a clear statement from your Guru himself, these are only speculations.

I have written this much as an answer to your question, but I doubt whether it is necessary or advisable to write anything of it to your friends. They have their
own feeling about the matter; it seems to me better not to challenge or disturb it.

25.8.1935

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Birthday-Messages from Sri Aurobindo

A veil behind the heart, a lid over the mind divide us from the Divine. Love and devotion rend the veil, in the quietude of the mind the lid thins and vanishes.

9.9.1936

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May the inner Sun tranquillise and illumine the mind and awaken fully the heart and guide it.

9.9.1937

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In a quietude of the mind open to the presence of the Divine in your heart and everywhere; in a still mind and heart the Divine is seen like the sun in still water.

9.9.1938

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Rise into the higher consciousness, let its light control and transform the nature.

9.9.1939

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By the heart’s self-giving the Presence and the Influence will be there even in the inconscience and prepare the nature for the true light and consciousness through the whole range of the being.

9.9.1940

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Put stress always on the aspiration within; let that get depth and steadiness in the heart; the outer obstacles of mind and the vital will recede of themselves with the growth of the heart’s love and aspiration.

9.9.1941

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Keep the mind and heart open and turned inward and upward so that when the touch comes from within or the flow from above, you may be ready to receive it.

9.9.1942

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To persevere in turning towards the Light is what is most demanded. The Light is nearer to us than we think and at any time its hour may come.

9.9.1943

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To keep the soul ready for the Divine Grace so that it may be ready to receive it when it comes.
A persistent will for the work to be done in us and in the world is what is most needed; there is a sure spiritual result, the growth of the consciousness and the soul’s readiness for the touch of the Divine’s Light and Power.

When the Light enters into the Inconscience which hedges in all our being and prevents or limits the manifestation of the true consciousness in us, when it inhibits the habits and recurrences and constant repetition of the same stimuli which besiege us and rise from the subconscient, then only can the nature be wholly free and respond only to the Truth from above.

Clarity of knowledge and inner self-vision, subjugation of the ego, love, scrupulousness in selfless and dedicated works, are the four wheels of the chariot of yoga. One who has them will progress safely on the path.

A Mantra

In 1938 I had asked Sri Aurobindo for a brief prayer with His and the Mother’s names to use as a mantra. Sri Aurobindo sent the following:

“OM Sri Aurobindo Mira
Open my mind, my heart, my life to your Light,
your Love, your Power. In all things may I see the Divine.”

While sending this mantra, Sri Aurobindo wrote:
“I have written for you a brief prayer with the names in the form of a mantra. I hope it will help you to overcome your difficulty and get an inner foundation.”

On receiving the mantra I inquired:
“Have I to consider the names and the prayer as one mantra?”
Sri Aurobindo replied: “Yes.”
I came to Pondicherry on the 17th November 1930. I was 13 at that time. But there is a history behind it.

My father first came to the Ashram in 1927; he settled here two years later. He left the family without intimation and all the children were in great straits. We used to write to him describing our plight. But he was not opening our letters; he used to pass them on to the Mother. One day, however, an uncle of ours wrote to him mentioning the distress of the family. Finding the handwriting unfamiliar he opened the letter and was greatly upset by its contents. He informed the Mother and asked her what he was to do in the circumstances. The Mother told him: As you are touched by the letter, it is better you go back and return only with your wife’s consent.

Consequently my father came back and stayed with us though only for a short period. Suddenly one day he again left us without notice and returned to the Ashram. This time I started writing to him that I wanted to come to the Ashram. The Mother was approached and she gave permission which was communicated to me. But before I could start I received a wire that I was not to come. It appears the Mother had subsequently enquired of my age and then remarked that I was too young to be permitted to come. But I persisted and the Mother finally said that I could come for the Darshan only. My relatives tried to stop me from starting in many ways. But ultimately I managed to come.

I arrived by the early morning train by 6 a.m. The Mother was to see me the same evening at about 5 p.m. in the Library room. I was informed and taken there by my father. I still remember the scene vividly. The Mother was clad in all white sari, blouse and crown. She was sitting on a high chair. When she saw me she was all smiles and a spontaneous recognition arose in my heart that she was my adhisthatri. I told the Mother that I did not want to go back. She replied that she would ask Sri Aurobindo.

On the 24th was the Darshan. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were seated on the sofa. As I approached them after my father, Sri Aurobindo smiled. He looked simply wonderful – I cannot describe what he looked like. When I made pranam holding his feet he bent down and blessed. (I must add that each time I did Pranam this way he used to bend down to bless me. I add this because I learnt recently that was not Sri Aurobindo’s custom with all.)

The day after the Darshan, Premanand, the Librarian, came and told me: Mother has sent word that Sri Aurobindo is pleased with you and you can start learning French. Naturally I was overjoyed and started my French lessons with Premanand that very day.

Because of my age I was at first not allowed to participate in the soup function in the evening. But at the instance of my father I was allowed from the Darshan
day, 24th November. I was given work with Amrita. My job was to note the meter readings in all the houses in a note book which I was to present to the Mother on the first of every month. In those days the Mother used to sit in the Pranam hall downstairs every first morning and pay the wages to Ashram servants. Amrita used to hand over the monies to her and the workers would come in a line and receive their salary directly from her. I would go with my book at the end.

After fifteen days of my starting French lessons she spoke to me in French but I was unable to follow! However I came to know that after I had started conversing in French she had expressed appreciation of my accent. It would even appear that Sri Aurobindo hearing my talk to the Mother in French had remarked that my pronunciation was good. I mention this by way of recording my gratitude to them for the minute interest they took in my upbringing.

It was in 1932 on my birthday (22nd of May) that there was a memorable interview with the Mother.

**Mother:** What are your ambitions?

**I:** I do not know anything.

**Mother:** You have ambition to be a big yogi?

Suddenly I remembered that I did have some such desire though at the moment it was not active in my mind. So I corrected myself and said: Yes, Mother.

She then explained to me what it meant to be a big yogi, to have a large number of disciples around oneself. How one had to have a divine consciousness and a realisation of the Divine for that purpose. As I was listening I realised that I had none of those things and I burst out: I don’t want to be a yogi. I want to be your child.

The Mother was pleased and said: Très bien (very good) and blessed me.

Then I mentioned to Mother my ambition to be a big writer.

She heard and went on to describe what qualities are necessary to be a writer and how one must have wide knowledge of so many things before one could become a writer. I saw that I had none of those qualifications then.

As I look back I am moved by the considerate way in which Mother helped me to see myself as I was and to give up vain ambitions on my own. I myself was helped to realise the true state of things.

In keeping with the spirit of Sri Aurobindo’s injunction to speak and act as one would in the presence of the Mother, I started reporting to Mother in my notebook every day the persons to whom I talked during that day and the topics thereof. This continued for one full year in 1933. Occasionally I would ask a question or two and the Mother would invariably answer. Here are a few selections translated from the originals in French.

A friend had just offered to present a blanket to me. On my asking the Mother about it, she replied:

If one wants to progress in yoga, one ought not to receive anything except from the Divine.

10.12.1933

Q: What is the meaning of this passage in the Prayers: What wisdom is there in wanting to live this way or that?
A: The Wisdom is to know what the Divine wants and not to decide for ourselves.

13.12.1933

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Q: Is it possible to acquire silence by intense aspiration alone and can one do the sadhana by means of this silence?
A: Yes.

* 

Q: Does all impurity – mental, vital and physical – disappear by the descent of this silence?
A: Silence cannot cure all impurities but it relieves a good many.

23.12.1933

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Q: Is my mental surrendered to you?
A: In certain parts yes, but not entirely.

24.12.1933

* 

Q: What are the parts of the mental that are not yet surrendered?
A: They are parts of the physical mind that are still under the influence of falsehood and ignorance. It is only a perfect sincerity in the aspiration that can illumine them.

25.12.1933

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It was the 31st of December 1933. A sadhika was ill and the Mother asked Doctor Babu whether the lady could not get well by that night (for the New Year function at midnight). The doctor had said it was impossible. I observed in my notebook that if the doctor had replied, “If it be thy will, it will surely happen”, then the patient would have been able to attend.

The Mother replied:
An answer is not sufficient to change the course of things. Only an aspiration or a faith can do that. For it is only the aspiration and the faith that allow the Divine Grace to act.

3.1.1934

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Q: This evening I have seized you strongly and I shall never let you go. I will never leave you, never, never, never.
A: Very good, I am very happy you will not leave me. Come for Pranam a little more in silence and quietude and you will see that you feel the force and love.

3.12.1934

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Q: How do I lose what I receive?
A: By dissipation, by throwing out – either in thoughts, words or acts – the
force and energy received.

4.12.1934

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Q: This evening during meditation I felt something descending through my head. I thought it to be thy force.
A: What else do you wish it to be?

4.12.1934

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This is very good. If you persevere with sincerity – an increasing sincerity – one day the vital will be convinced and get converted.

5.12.1934

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Most certainly if you prove yourself to be firm and calm in your resolution not to be identified with the vital, soon it will be tired of its useless revolt and convert itself.

6.12.1934

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In this world all movements are mixed until one attains identification with the Divine.

7.12.1934

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Each one has his difficulties.

7.12.1934

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Q: What is thy aim? To transform the whole world and lead it towards the Infinite? Or something still more vast?
A: Unite your consciousness with mine and you will know my aim.

8.12.1934

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You will always find my blessings with you when you will be attentive and work hard on your studies.

8.12.1934

* 

Q: How do illustrations (in journals) harm?
A: Naturally that depends upon what the illustrations are; but very often they are related only to things of ordinary life and thus they pull the consciousness towards that.

10.12.1934

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Q: May I have a file?
A: What do you want to place in your file?
10.12.1934

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Q: I want to place myself in thy file so that I may not go far from thee.
A: It is a very good idea.

11.12.1934

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Q: O Mother, when will I become one with thee? When will I live in thee, by thee?
A: You must want it with persistence but without impatience. It is with calm determination that one arrives most speedily. In getting agitated one loses more time than one gains.

12.12.1934

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The resistance, the revolt of the vital is supported by this bad force, otherwise it would have yielded long ago.

13.12.1934

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(I had written the following prayer in my notebook and then struck it off:

O Sweet Mother, I pray for thy presence and thy descent in my physical consciousness, in all its activity; thy will and thy knowledge behind all acts, all thoughts, all movements; thy ananda dispelling all the desires of the vital, all that is hostile...)

A: I do not see why you have crossed this prayer; it is as if you wished to suppress the best of yourself.

13.12.1934

* 

Q: What are the conditions for the descent of the supramental in myself? I was very happy when I learnt that the supramental is going to descend in a measurable time.
A: These are things of which it is better not to talk. All sincere spiritual effort for the growth of consciousness is a preparation.

18.12.1934

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Q: Why are joy and love attacked by obscurity? I am not conscious of having done anything wrong. Then how is it that joy and love withdraw and depression takes their place?
A: No, nothing withdraws. It is the physical being that by its nature is incapable of keeping for a long time the joy and love, unless it is fully governed by the psychic.

19.12.1934

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Yes, it is mostly during the night that the physical being falls into obscurity and
inconscience.

19.12.1934

* 

Q: Why does depression follow joy and happiness, so often?
A: The movements of the consciousness are like those of a pendulum. The more it sways in one direction, the more it then swings in the opposite direction.

19.12.1934

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Q: I have decided that on the day I do not study, I shall not take my food.
A: What a funny idea! You are going to punish your body for a fault the vital commits? That is not just.

22.12.1934

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I think it necessary that you rest in the afternoon, otherwise you will be still more restless.

24.12.1934

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Q: When will I know thy will for carrying it out?
A: When you learn to be quiet.

24.12.1934

* 

Q: I have just heard that you are not well. What is it, my dear mama? Give me your illness I shall accept it with joy.
A: You are very nice, my dear child, but what you propose does not appear to me very practical.... With my blessings.

25.12.1934

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Q: I am sure that yours is not an illness as we think.
A: There is some truth in what you say.

26.12.1934

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Q: Dear Mother, how are you now?
A: Much better, it is almost over. My blessings are with you.

26.12.1934

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Q: When you are not well, I should not write much. Pardon me, I have not done so.
A: No, it is all right. You can write freely when you have something to say.

27.12.1934

*
Make your love strong enough to conquer your desires. My help is always with you.

28.12.1934

*

All my blessings at the beginning of the New Year; I hope it will bring you peace and strength to overcome what seeks to oppose your spiritual progress.

1.1.1935

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Q: Y. says that the supramental has already descended. Is it true?
A: No.

5.1.1935

*

Q: My being says it does not know what this world is. Then why is it so much attracted to the ignorance, falsehood and obscurity of the world?
A: It is just because it does not know the world that it is attracted to its obscurity.

5.1.1935

*

Q: I do not understand this: you are an eternal soul trying to manifest in a body. I thought that the soul is always in the body; there is no existence without its presence.
A: Certainly, it is in the body, but it is not manifested, that is, its presence is not evident and has only very little action on the life of this body.

7.1.1935

*

Q: What am I?
A: Outwardly: You are a child who is unconscious trying to become conscious. Inwardly: You are an eternal soul trying to manifest itself in a body.

7.1.1935

*

Q: What part of the being aspires for love, peace etc.?
A: Whichever part of the being (physical, vital or mental) that is open to the psychic influence.

7.1.1935

*

Q: I think I see a hidden smile on thy lips in the new photograph. But R. says he does not see it.
A: Yes, the smile is there.

8.1.1935

*

Q: How to know if there is depression in another person? One cannot judge by
external appearance or by simply looking at the figure.
A: Certainly, it is not by the appearance but by an inner contact.

*  
Q: May I know for how many centuries past you have been on the earth?  
A: I have never left the earth since its formation.

Q: A dream: A serpent bit me. But by mere will the poison was expelled. At last the serpent was killed. I could not have done this in waking condition.  
A: Certainly, there are profound parts of the being which have more knowledge and power than the physical being has.

*  
Q: The mind wants to know which is the part that rejected the poison (in dream).  
A: It is a subtle part of the mind which is in contact with the psychic power.

*  
Q: What is the part that now aspires in me?  
A: A part of the mind that responds to the psychic influence.

*  
Q: Were you not Krishna?  
A: No.

*  
Q: Did people know you to be the Supreme incarnate in your previous lives?  
A: That depends upon the lives and the people.

*  
Q: What does it mean to be calm?  
A: Not to get agitated – I mean, above all, morally – in feelings and thoughts.

*  
You cannot understand all these problems until your thinking is quiet and mind silent.

*  
It is good that your mind is able to control your vital; it is necessary that this
control grows till your vital has no more power to upset you and depress you. If you can remain calm, you will see I am always by you to help you.

14.1.1935

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Q: How to bring about the change in the sex centre and turn the energy into a creative power, and ananda pure and divine?  
A: By an infusion, little by little, of the Light into the centre.

15.1.1935

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Q: This morning there is a great depression making it impossible to study.  
A: That cannot be allowed. Force yourself to study and that depression will go. Imagine yourself to be a student going to school and telling the teacher: “Sir, I have not done my exercises today as I was depressed.” Surely, the teacher would punish very severely.

16.1.1935

*  

Q: My being is still in a state of lower consciousness; gradually it is going worse.  
A: Don’t you see that you are thinking a little too much about yourself? You appear to me like an imaginative patient who always feels his pulse to see if he has fever.

17.1.1935

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Q: I no more feel thy love; it is as if I did not know thee. I think it is the vital that feels all that.  
A: Yes, and also the greater part of the physical consciousness.

19.1.1935

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Q: What must I do to feel thy love and peace?  
A: Do not allow, any more, anything hostile to find expression through you.

21.1.1935

*  

Q: Would you tell me what I have permitted to thus express itself through me?  
A: When your vital revolts you let it express its revolt and even all its impertinence. But perhaps you do not know the value of the words you use when you speak French.

22.1.1935

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Q: I see that I lack peace completely. At one time it was there in me.  
A: Consequently there is no reason why you should not receive it again.

22.1.1935
Q: Someone told me in dream that on one occasion there was no food at all for Sri Aurobindo and Thee. I said to him that if I were there he could cut me to pieces and serve. Which part of my being said this?
A: It is something from the physical consciousness responding to the influence of the psychic.

23.1.1935

Q: Is it a fact that at one time there was divine reign everywhere? Satyayuga?
A: Certainly not on the earth.

23.1.1935

Q: Will there be no end for the soul? Must it always take a body?
A: Not necessarily. But the soul has to arrive at a very great perfection in order to have the power to choose between the return to physical life and rest outside the manifestation.

23.1.1935

Q: Often I wonder how men can live a life without joy, peace, love. How do they exist where there is no Truth?
A: They are not even aware of their not being in the Truth.

24.1.1935

Q: I had thought that the soul is fully perfect by nature. Then what is meant by evolution of the soul?
A: The essence of the soul is divine, but the soul (the psychic being) grows through all the forms of evolution; it individualises itself more and more, becomes more and more conscious of itself and its origin.

24.1.1935

I know the inner movements without one’s telling them to me. But to tell is good for the person who has the movements.

24.1.1935

Q: I have the faith that one day I will realise Thee.
A: You are right in having the faith; it will lead you to the goal.

24.1.1935

Q: I think that your action changes according to my state.
A: My action does not change; it is your way of seeing that does.

25.1.1935
Q: I will try to keep calm and not get agitated.
A: Very good, indeed. If you try with persistence, you are sure to succeed.

25.1.1935

Q: Why was my night yesterday so agitated?
A: No doubt you did not calm your mind before sleeping. One must always, before sleeping, begin with quieting the mind.

28.1.1935

Studies strengthen the mind and divert the attention of concentration upon the impulses and desires of the vital. Concentration upon studies is one of the most powerful means to control the mind and vital; that is why it is so important to study.

28.1.1935

Q: I think there is a difference between finding your presence and finding you in oneself.
A: If there be a difference it is quite subtle.

28.1.1935

Q: I do so many things that do not conform to thee. There is so much to do and if I go on losing time, when will I be able to do it?
A: It is a matter of will. You must cultivate and strengthen your will; then time is no more whiled away in vain.

30.1.1935

Q: T said she was getting ill.
A: Thus she purposely falls ill!

31.1.1935

Q: I do not wish that others are affected by my depressions.
A: A very laudable sentiment; but the best would be if you yourself come out of the depression, thus you would not risk passing it on to others.

16.1.1935

Q: I think too much of my own movements, wrong or otherwise. Hereafter I won’t write to you of them more than once.
A: No purpose would be served by not informing me about them, if you think so. On the contrary, if you tell me I can help you more easily.

18.1.1935
Q: Why did you give me such a serious look at Pranam this morning? What fault have I done? I am unhappy.
A: I was serious this morning because I want you to get cured, to come back to a more true and more peaceful attitude. You should never doubt my love and solicitude.

19.1.1935

Q: One part of me says it is not necessary to inform you of this incident but another part says that I must inform. I am inclined to the latter. What are those parts?
A: Both of them are parts of the physical mind; but one is submitted to the Divine Will while the other is not.

23.1.1935

Q: One part is inclined to revolt, the other says it is better to submit than to revolt.
A: The same answer. The part which asks to surrender is already under the influence of the psychic.

23.1.1935

Q: To know your will at each moment one must...
A: One must be very quiet within and very attentive.

24.1.1935

Q: I like solitude very much.
A: Taste for solitude is, indeed, a very good thing.

25.1.1935

What you have written in this letter pleases me for it shows that you can reflect and reason.

25.1.1935

Q: There was again a depression, but it was removed by aspiration. Perhaps all hostility can be burnt out in the fire of aspiration; nothing can resist it.
A: Here again entirely true. My Blessings are with you, my dear child.

28.1.1935

Q: There is some part in me which likes to help others; not to take anything from others but to give and give freely.
A: It speaks of a very good nature, but to be able to do that without danger, one
must have complete control over oneself.  30.1.1935

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One does not study for pleasure; one studies to learn and develop mentally.  1.2.1935

*  

Q: If I am able to give up my life without hesitation the moment you ask for it, then only my love for you is real.
A: Evidently that is a perfect love; but one can arrive at it by stages.
Q: Is my physical consciousness turned entirely to you?
A: This also is a progressive condition.  2.2.1935

*  

Q: When you were very young, in your infant stage, did you know you are the Divine incarnate?
A: I was conscious.  2.2.1935

*  

Q: All that I do is not in conformity with thy truth. Is it all discordant?
A: All is not in conformity with the Truth, but neither is all discordant. There is a little of one and a little of the other.  4.2.1935

*  

Q: What should be my aspiration at present?
A: To make the mind clear and increase the consciousness.  4.2.1935

*  

Q: O Mother, on this earth, is there none but we two?
A: If what you write is for you a living experience, that is very good.  5.2.1935

*  

Q: “Till one sees the eternal truth in itself.” I do not understand the in itself.
A: I mean the pure Truth, without all the deformations that ensue from its manifestation in an obscure world.  6.2.1935

*  

Q: It is said that knowledge is already there within oneself. I believe the soul receives the knowledge from the eternal Truth and transmits it to the mind or the vital. Which is right?
A: I do not see any contradictory ideas. The Truth is received by the psychic
which transmits it to the mind and vital.

6.2.1935

* 

Q: It looks to me that the victory is approaching.
A: Undoubtedly.

6.2.1935

* 

Q: If there is an illness that does not allow one to come to you for pranam, is it not possible that by sheer resolution to come to you, the illness may be suspended, at least for the time being?
A: Yes, it is possible, but for that one must have a faith intense enough and without contradiction in the being.

2.2.1934

Q: Often I reflect after doing an act. If only I could reflect before doing this, I could avoid many wrong movements.
A: Yes, it is a very good habit to have to reflect for a few seconds before acting and ask oneself if that action is truly useful from the point of view of spiritual life.

4.2.1935

* 

Q: I report my experiences to you in order to get confirmation in the absence of which I do not believe them. Since you have not said anything regarding some that I have written about, I take it they are mental construction.
A: It is rarely that a thing is wholly good or wholly bad. That is why it is difficult, at times, to say anything.

6.2.1935

* 

Q: So many things appear to be true from outside but within they are false. One sees it clearly by throwing light upon it. You alone can give that light.
A: Yes, exactly. It is very difficult to discern the true from the false as long as one is not able to see the Eternal Truth in itself.

6.2.1935

* 

It is always dangerous to form intimacies; there is always a tendency for them to become ties.

6.2.1935

* 

Q: I do not understand the difference between the supramental and the Divine in this passage from Sri Aurobindo: “The psychic is not, by definition, that part which is in direct touch with the supramental plane. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine.”
A: The Divine spoken of here is He who has been, all the time, in relation with the earth; the supramental is a new aspect of the Divine which has, till now, not been manifested on earth.

7.2.1935

* 

Q: What is the flame of Agni?
A: It is the flame of purification, the will for progress.

9.2.1935

* 

Q: What is the vital soul?
A: The vital soul is what the ancients call “anima”, that which animates, which gives life to the body. One calls it at times the etheric being.

11.2.1935

* 

Q: Once I imagined and wrote that the external action of the Mother is not of divine origin while the inner action is.
A: You confuse two different things. I may assure you that my action, whether inner or external, is always from divine origin. The uneasiness you feel is no proof of want of divinity in the action, but of want of plasticity and receptivity in your mental, your vital and your physical.

13.2.1935

* 

Q: My uneasiness continues. It looks as if aspiration alone is not enough to get relief.
A: It is only a true humility that can save you from these uneasinesses – humility which consists in knowing that, at the moment, you are totally incapable of understanding me and it is a presumptuous stupidity to want to judge me.

13.2.1935

* 

When I wrote again that I did not mean to understand, much less to judge her and was feeling miserable, she wrote:
A: Do not torment yourself; be tranquil. Certainly that part of you which speaks now never wanted to judge me.
It is in the calm that the being can unify itself around the highest aspiration.

14.2.1935

* 

Q: Then, which parts of my being wanted to judge you?
A: A part of the physical mind and the most material vital.

15.2.1935

* 

Q: Is it desirable that I speak on yoga to others who wish to hear from me?
A: I do not believe it is good for you to talk thus to people; that gives you the illusion that you have something to teach them and it does not help for humility in yourself.

*  
Q: “To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda...” (Sri Aurobindo). What is meant by beauty here? Is it what people call beauty – beauty in things?  
A: There is a beauty on all the planes of being up to the Divine Himself. The material beauty is only a very poor rendering of that.

*  
Q: Is it not inadvisable for G. to speak to me of his sadhana?  
A: That is not of much importance so long as you do not give him advice. However, as a general rule, the less one talks of sadhana, the better it is.

*  
Q: What is within the depths of the being hardly matters unless it expresses itself on the surface.  
A: What the inner being has is far from being without importance; but that is not sufficient.

*  
Q: Is it possible to progress without encountering difficulties and obstacles?  
A: No, the difficulties present themselves, but there is no reason at all why they should produce depression.

*  
Q: What I write about the inner being must be all imagination, for I am not yet really conscious of it.  
A: Your imagination is fairly correct, though incomplete. For there are many inner beings and their nature differs according to the plane to which they belong.

*  
What is mentalised vital and middle vital?  
A: That part of the vital which thinks is the vital mentalised. The middle vital is that which is between the lower vital and the higher vital.

*  
Q: What is to be done to prevent difficulties from producing depressions?  
A: Become conscious.
Q: What is meant by the yogic term heart? Higher vital?
A: Yes, the emotional being.

Q: Is it not possible to surmount a difficulty without a lowering of the consciousness?
A: Certainly, it is even impossible to surmount the difficulty if the consciousness lowers itself. To surmount the difficulties, the consciousness must, on the contrary, make an effort and raise itself above its ordinary level.

Q: It is absurd that I get irritated against you. After all I do yoga not for your good but for my own. With this attitude all revolt, all irritations must stop.
A: This is perfectly true. Surely if you can remember this you will never have to struggle against revolt.

Q: To detach the inner being from it (sex tendency). Detach?
A: To detach, in this case, means not to identify oneself with.

Q: Is it not possible to stop the vital from creating difficulties by calling your help?
A: Certainly, not only possible but relatively easy.

Q: “When the central being has made its surrender, the principal difficulty has disappeared.” What is this central being? The psychic? I believe it is already consecrated to the Divine by its very nature.
A: The central being is not the same in each. It is that which governs the rest of the person and imposes its will. When it is the psychic being that has this central position in the person, then all becomes very easy.

Q: I do hope you will rid me soon of all this obscurity and ignorance.
A: Certainly, it will be done in as little a time as will be possible.

Q: Mother, I call thee, come, light up the obscure part that has come up.
me thy love and thy peace.

A: My love and my peace are always with you. Open your heart and your mind to receive them.

15.3.1935

*

Q: The vital must cease from all these stupidities and become wise. For this, I am ready to do all you wish. I hope to be able to succeed with your help.

A: Yes, you will certainly be able to do it. The part that has goodwill must strengthen itself till it has the power to govern the recalcitrant parts and force its conversion.

16.3.1935

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Q: What is the difference between the voice of the mental Purusha and the voice of the psychic?

A: The psychic voice is silent, it manifests itself more in the form of an understanding, a knowledge, rather than with words.

17.3.1935

*

Q: Is there no difference in the effect of the voice of the psychic and that of the mental purusha?

A: Indeed, there is a great difference. It is much more difficult to hear the message of the psychic than the voice of the mental purusha. The latter is not infallible and can err. The psychic never errs.

18.3.1935

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Q: From where did the love and peace that I used to experience before come if my heart was always closed?

A: Your heart is not always closed. When it opens, the peace and love enter into you.

18.3.1935

*

Q: Open my heart and set afloat, O Mother, the stream of love and peace.

A: Very willingly, my dear child.

18.3.1935

*

Q: My vital being is normally under the control of the mental purusha; why is it not under the vital purusha?

A: The vital purusha awakes only when all the desires are mastered and the vital being is calm.

19.3.1935

*
Q: When can one hear the voice of the psychic?
A: When one is very silent and very attentive.

19.3.1935

Q: How is the mental purusha to be awakened?
A: The mental purusha is always more or less awakened in those who are used to observing themselves.

19.3.1935

Q: I take it that the love and peace that come with the opening of the heart are psychic and therefore without mixture.
A: Not necessarily. Even though they come from the psychic, they can get mixed up with other movements less enlightened, when they manifest in the mind or vital.

Love and peace can come also from above directly from Divine regions.

19.3.1935

Q: Is there no difference between the voice of the psychic and the voice of the Divine?
A: One can hardly say that the Divine expresses Himself through voice but rather by communicating a certain state of consciousness.

20.3.1935

Q: When can the physical purusha awaken and control the physical being?
A: When the Light has descended into the physical consciousness.

20.3.1935

Q: Cannot the love and peace that descend from above get deformed when they enter into the mind or the vital?
A: Certainly they are so very often; love changes into a kind of passion and peace into inertia.

20.3.1935

Q: Are there other purushas besides the mental, vital and physical?
A: The psychic.

Q: As long as the psychic is veiled can one hear its voice without any deformation?
A: Little likelihood.

Q: As long as the being is not ready, can love, peace, ananda descend?
A: Partially.

Q: What is the function of the purushas?
A: Read the “Essays on the Gita”.

Q: What do you mean when you say, ‘open the thought’? open the thought mind?
A: Yes.

Q: I do not wish to take your valuable time. I shall not let anything hostile take expression in me; I shall not accept any influence except yours and shall reject whatever does not come from you. But certainly that is not easy.
A: Yes, but it will be so nice, good and useful! If you do that, nothing else will remain to be done - that will be entirely good.

Q: P says that there is nothing we can give to the Mother, as all is Mother’s. It is She who has made us. I said I have so far not given anything to Mother. I have still to give all, on the contrary.
A: You are both right – on different planes; and it is only in harmonising the two ideas that one approaches the Truth.

Q: Normally I do not feel anything about material objects, whether they are broken or lost.
A: That is wrong. Not to take care of the material things which one uses is a sign of unconsciousness and ignorance. One has no right whatsoever to make use of material objects, whatever they be, if one does not take care of them.

Q: Now I understand that even in material things there is the Divine.
A: Yes; and one must take care not because one is attached to them oneself but because they also manifest something of the Divine Consciousness.

Q: How to know that the heart is fully open?
A: That is a thing which one feels and which one cannot doubt when it happens.

Q: To open the heart – does it mean to bring the psychic being to the front?
A: The psychic coming to the surface is rather a result than the procedure.
Q: Today the whole world appears to me to be at peace; all is quiet and it looks as if I am a stranger in this unknown world. I am not aware of things around me. Was it always like this or had there been a change? I am not sure if I have expressed my experience correctly.

A: I understand very well what you want to say. It is an experience that takes place when one enters into a new field of consciousness.

27.3.1935

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Q: If this is a good experience, I do not understand why I do not feel your love and happiness.

A: Happiness and love do not accompany all experience.

27.3.1935

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The experience is only of an awakening of the consciousness.

27.3.1935

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Q: It appears these are the last moments of my life. I do not know what will happen, but in any case, my life will no more be as before. Something new is going to come soon.

A: I hope, indeed, these are the last moments of your revolts and depression and soon you will awake to the psychic consciousness, no more to depart from it.

28.3.1935

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Q: To live without Thee is to live in hell. I know nothing and I do not even question, for all is according to Thy Will.

A: All this is very good and you seem to have put one step forward. But you must be calm and quiet, a calm strong and full of aspiration, but without impatience.

30.3.1935

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Q: I wrote yesterday that there was a great calm; today it looks there is only a great depression.

A: There is simultaneously a part of being which lives in light and joy and another part which lives in depression and obscurity. If you turn your attention towards the depression, you feel it. If, on the contrary, you turn your attention towards the light and joy, you live in them.

2.4.1935

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Q: Let me turn entirely to thee, let me become thee. Thou alone shalt exist. I await that blessed hour. I do not know if I exaggerate.

A: It is for you to make true, by practice, the ideal your mind sets for you to fulfil.
2.4.1935

A*Q: What is my central being at present?
A: Most probably a part of your mental being.
Q: Under what conditions can the psychic awake?
A: It depends upon no conditions.
Q: I feel your presence. In which part do I feel it since my heart is closed?
A: You can find me in all the parts of the being if they are open and receptive.

3.4.1935

Q: The depression is increasing. You ask me to come out of it, but I cannot do so without knowing how and why it comes.
A: Try to understand and see clearly, then tell me what you see.
Q: Formerly I used to get rid of a cold within a few hours but this time it continues giving no end of trouble. Its reason is plain enough.
A: What reason do you see for it all? Try to express it precisely and clearly.

6.4.1935

Q: I take it that my depression is the cause of my cold; it always pulls down the consciousness.
A: It is also a resistance in the brain pointing to what refuses to get transformed in the physical mind.
Q: I attribute the depression to the obscure parts of my being preventing the consciousness from uplifting itself. Maybe also it is ambition pulling the consciousness to the ordinary life.
A: Both are true.

6.4.1935

Q: The psychic consciousness is the part by which one enters into the divine consciousness. Once one has the psychic consciousness, it is easy to get the divine consciousness.
A: Surely.
Q: It is only when one has the psychic consciousness that effort disappears and life becomes harmonious, full of beauty, divinity.
A: Yes.
Q: I believe that it is only when the psychic comes to the surface and acts that one has the psychic consciousness.
A: Or when one interiorises oneself sufficiently to enter into contact with one’s psychic being.
Q: Then what should I do to overcome the resistance of the physical mind – it obstructs and its pressure is always there.
A: You must first of all detach yourself from it, not identify yourself with its movements.

Q: Would you tell me something about the obscure parts of my vital? I do not know how they pull my consciousness, how they act on the physical plane.

A: It is through the organs of sense (sight, hearing, etc.) that they are in relation with the material plane.

8.4.1935

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Q: How to conquer the subconscient?

A: By advancing step by step, attentively observing with the light of consciousness.

9.4.1935

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All that one does with care becomes necessarily interesting.

11.4.1935

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Q: I have no more hope of psychic consciousness. I do not understand what is happening.

A: Do not torment yourself, be quiet and peaceful. Little by little, the consciousness will grow.

11.4.1935

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I have told you already, and I repeat it, you cannot understand with mental agitation. You must keep the mind absolutely quiet. It is only in quietude that the light can penetrate without resistance.

12.4.1935

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Q: The depressions comes everyday. I do not know what to do.

A: The only unfailing way to get rid of depressions is to divert one’s attention from and not to give them any importance.

16.4.1935

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Q: I fail to understand why people seek the help of others who are themselves imperfect.

A: They understand them better because they are nearer to them.

23.4.1935

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Q: My nights are disturbed. I feel fatigued in the morning; there is obscurity all round. How long will this continue?

A: Certainly it is not by getting agitated or impatient that the wrong movement
will pass soon. On the contrary, if you can remain a little calm within you will be sooner out of your difficulties.

It is only in calm that one can enter into touch with the psychic consciousness.

Q: *Is my life going to continue for ever in this unhappy way as at present?*
A: I certainly hope not. But if you remain a little more peaceful inwardly, your boredoms will end sooner.

Q: *I hope to be thy child and nothing else; I do not want to lose time.*
A: You are my child; you have only to become conscious of it. I bless you, my dear child.

Q: *When will people cease idling away their time and gossiping? Why don’t they understand?*
A: Because they are still mentally too young.

Q: *Remove from me the depression and fill my being with a supreme felicity.*
A: You ought to be able to come out of your depression, to keep away from it and take refuge in a more harmonious consciousness.

Q: *I aspire to have the psychic consciousness which would prevent me from wrong movements.*
A: In the absence of the psychic, an enlightened mind can prevent the vital from its stupidities.

Q: *Why does not the spiritual consciousness stay always?*
A: Because the ordinary consciousness chases it out.

Q: *The part which tells me, “unite yourself with the Divine”, is it already united?*
A: Not necessarily, but it can have had a little experience of the Divine Reality.

Q: *What is to be done so that the ordinary consciousness does not chase out
the spiritual?
A: Remembrance of it always and in all circumstance. 20.4.1935

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I do not believe much in pure love among human beings. 20.4.1935

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Q: What do you mean by “spiritual consciousness”?
A: In a general way, the consciousness that is turned towards the Divine. 4.1935

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“When we have passed beyond individualising then we shall be real Persons.”
“When we have passed beyond humanity, then we shall be the Man.”

(Sri Aurobindo: Thoughts and Glimpses)

Q: What is the difference between Person and Man?
A: A Person is a being fully conscious and individualised (not necessarily a man). The gods are persons.
Man is he who still belongs to animality. 28.4.1935

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Affinities are almost instinctive and do not have much importance. One has only to take care that they do not turn into attachments. 2.5.1935

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Each one has his qualities and his defects. 2.5.1935

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Only he who seeks the Truth integrally does yoga. Those who do it in the mind alone or in the higher vital alone are not in yoga.
Things are not so strictly cut out. One may have commenced the yoga in some part of his being while the rest - the other parts of his being - still refuse to be transformed. 2.5.1935

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Almost all persons descend to their most ordinary consciousness when they enter into contact with others. 3.5.1935

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It is better, evidently, not to lay stress on the dark side of things. 3.5.1935

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Q: What should I do to remain in my central consciousness and not to go down to the ordinary when I meet others?
A: Never to forget the Divine Presence.

4.5.1935

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Q: P says that you change according to her condition.
A: No, I do not change according to the state of the people. It is their impression of me that changes with their mood of the moment.

4.5.1935

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To be in peace is good. You must not risk spoiling it by speaking of this state.

4.5.1935

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It is desire and revolt which prevent the vital from feeling the Presence; but the fact that you do not feel it is no proof at all that it is not there.

8.5.1935

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Q: What did you say this morning during Pranam?
A: That it is very easy to convert the vital if the will is not divided.

9.5.1935

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Q: Today I felt thy Presence and closeness. But I feel it no more now. I think the atmosphere of somebody from outside has spoilt it.
A: The loss of the experience is most probably due to the intrusion of a foreign force.

9.5.1935

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Q: What is to be done to prevent a foreign force from entering into us whenever there is a good experience?
A: A foreign and undesirable force does not always enter into us every time we have a good experience; on the contrary, the good experience ought to give the necessary force to repel the foreign force when it tries to enter.

10.5.1935

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Q: I do not understand what one gains by telling lies.
A: Certainly, one gains nothing by lying, on the contrary one obscures the consciousness.

12.5.1935

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Q: I do not see anywhere any superhuman life, the divine life.
A: If your consciousness were superhuman, divine or even spiritual, you would
see this same consciousness everywhere.  

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It is only in inner peace that your consecration can become perfect.  

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Q: I have headaches. Perhaps I should stop thinking of sadhana, I do not see any other way of keeping peace.
A: It is certainly not the sadhana which hinders the inner peace; on the contrary, since the sadhana is entirely based upon this inner peace which is the essential condition for progress. Certainly a patient concentration is necessary for entering into contact with the psychic consciousness.

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Q: What hinders the inner peace?
A: Mental and vital restlessness.

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Q: I do not know why obscurity sets in so often and remains long. It was not so before. Does it mean that I have deteriorated?
A: No, you have become more conscious. Formerly there was much more obscurity but you were not conscious of it. It did not appear to you as obscurity.

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Q: There is no more peace, love and energy to work. Through what state am I passing?
A: A period of transition in which you have become more conscious but have not yet acquired control.

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Q: In which part is this obscurity and how long will it remain?
A: Especially in the physical consciousness – till the physical is illumined.

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Q: What should I do to get illumined the physical and the vital which, I suppose, is also equally obscure?
A: Prefer always light to obscurity.

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Q: Are there many persons in the Ashram who do not believe that you are the Divine Incarnate?
A: I have made no enquiry on the subject.
Q: Is it true that you will disappear one day?
A: Who has told of this extraordinary thing?

18.5.1995

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Q: The obscurity must go. I am prepared to do anything you wish. Let it evaporate.
A: I am there and I cast on you all the light needed to dissolve the obscurity no matter which. It is for you to receive it.

18.5.1935

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Q: What should I do to get rid of vanity, ignorance, jealousy etc.?
A: To rise above the lower nature and take shelter in the psychic nature.
Q: I have already made effort to dissolve them, has it been in vain?
A: No, you have made progress; but character is difficult to change and that cannot be done quick.

21.5.1935

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Q: When shall I be thine?
A: Sooner than you think.

21.5.1935

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Q: What is the way I should follow? What is the correct method?
A: Make the brain work by studying regularly and systematically; then during the hours you do not study, your brain which will have worked enough can rest and it will be possible for you to concentrate in the depths of the heart and find there the psychic source; with that you will, at the same time, become conscious of gratitude and true happiness.

23.5.1935

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Q: P says she had a great depression after the Pranam.
A: Obviously she had approached me with a desire and her desire, finding it will not be satisfied, made her sad and depressed.

23.5.1935

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Q: In the beginning I felt so much love for you, but now the stream seems to have dried up or deviated; also it has become egoistic.
A: Yes, that is so. You have begun to bargain with what you gave and that has dried up the source.

24.5.1935

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Q: I have not known how to love you truly. What shall I do?
A: However, if you resolve not to ask for anything in exchange for what you give, you will soon recover the unique joy of loving.

24.5.1935

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Q: O Mother, do not let me go as I please. Hold me to thy bosom.
A: Certainly I do not want to let you leave me and there is nothing of the kind either.

25.5.1935

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Q: Let me keep the silence; let me enter into the solitude.
A: Keep the silence in your mind, enter into the solitude of the psychic being and there you will find me.

27.5.1935

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Q: Is it possible to come close to you with a love that is egoistic, full of desires and demands?
A: Until the nature is entirely transformed, it is always mixed: good and bad are side by side. Hence till the transformation, there will always be a mixture of egoism in all who come to me.

28.5.1935

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Q: How to make my love pure and psychic?
A: Do not think of yourself.

28.5.1935

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Q: You have asked me to keep the silence in the mind and enter the solitude of the psychic being. But how to do it? It is only you who can put me into that stage.
A: This is a totally tamasic response. My consciousness is always at work but on your side you must want and make an effort.

28.5.1935

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Q: Perhaps I need to live in physical solitude before I am able to enter into the solitude of the psychic being. I live only in the external consciousness.
A: Certainly, you live mostly in the mind, vital and physical. A little concentration would do you no harm, but you must keep a just balance.

28.5.1935

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If what you call solitude is to see just those whom it is indispensable to meet and no more and talk to them only when it is indispensable, then we agree.
30.5.1935

Q: The depression continues. How long will I have to suffer this way? Take me up, Mother.
A: My dear child, I ask for nothing more than to get you out of this absurd depression. But I am afraid it is made of conflicting desires; in that case you must, first of all, give up these desires and ambitions. But you can be sure my help is always with you.

31.5.1935

Q: What do you mean by psychic life of the world?
A: Just as there is a psychic life in human beings, there is a psychic life of the Earth and no doubt of the other worlds.

5.6.1935

Q: How long will it take for the divine control to be established over my nature?
A: The time cannot be measured this way.

5.6.1935

Q: What is the goal of human existence on earth?
A: Make the consciousness progress towards the Divine.

5.6.1935

Q: P says one can do everything before Thee, revolt against Thee, show irritation, make demands, etc.
A: Of all the ways to approach me this is the worst. If you revolt, you can receive nothing and thus by revolting you waste your time and mine.

6.6.1935

Q: When will I learn to live by Thee and for Thee?
A: It seems to me you are in the course of learning it and soon you will be able to do it continuously.

6.6.1935

Q: When will I give myself completely to Thee?
A: When your whole being will be centralised around the psychic will.

7.6.1935

Q: All to Thee, all that I am and to me...
A: The love, protection and help of your mama.
8.6.1935

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Q: If I have the psychic consciousness there will be no more difficulties.
A: Certainly the psychic consciousness has none of those difficulties; it has constantly the experience of my love and presence.

10.6.1935

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Q: How to acquire this psychic consciousness?
A: By aspiration, prayer and concentration.

11.6.1935

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Q: Perhaps my aspiration is not intense enough.
A: It is especially too intermittent.

11.6.1935

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Q: Would you tell me why I do not succeed immediately in my effort?
A: Because the external ignorance is too obstinate and yields only to a persistent effort.

11.6.1935

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Q: Why does your presence in me not prevent me from wrong?
A: Because the outer being – the one going wrong – ignores or refuses to recognise this presence.

11.6.1935

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Q: I am prepared to pay any price for the psychic consciousness. Tell me what I should do to get it?
A: The price to be paid is only a persevering will without fluctuation.

11.6.1935

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My blessings and my help accompany you on the path towards the psychic victory.

11.6.1935

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Q: Is the obscurity there within me or does it come from outside?
A: Obscurity is everywhere in material things – within and without.

12.6.1935

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Q: It is now three months since you said that you hoped I would soon have the psychic consciousness. It has not yet come. How long will it take still?
A: All depends on what one understands by *soon*.

12.6.1935

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**Q:** What do you mean by ‘soon’?

A: In my mind it means as quick as will be possible for me to do it under the given circumstances of your character. And the quantity is variable according to the resistance you will put up to me. May be some months, perhaps some years.

13.6.1935

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**Q:** I am not open, nor plastic, what shall I do?

A: If you were a little more calm inwardly, surely you would be more receptive.

13.6.1935

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**Q:** I have faith that you will lead me to the goal. I am impatient, I will try my best to persevere and be patient.

A: You will always find me with you in this effort.

14.6.1935

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**Q:** This notebook is ending. It has brought me thy presence. Perhaps the next one will bring thy self, at least glimpses of thee.

A: Yes, I wish that with the next notebook you receive the light and peace. With my blessings.

14.6.1935

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**Q:** What an effort is needed to turn to thee from this rigid, egoistic and obscure nature! When will this sort of life end?

A: When you will take the resolution to be a little more calm and poised in your mind and vital.

1.6.1935

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**Q:** I think I must stay physically at a little distance from you as long as I have these demands in me.

A: This is a hostile suggestion, totally false, to be rejected immediately.

3.6.1935

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**Q:** There is a part in me which takes joy in the evolution of the world.

A: Certainly there is a part in you which is in harmony with the psychic life of the universe.

4.6.1935

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**Q:** Turn my consciousness towards Thee.
A: Never doubt my love and then, all naturally, you will turn towards me.

Q: I made a great effort yesterday to rediscover myself in light and joy, but I floundered.
A: It is very good to have made the effort, but you must not get discouraged so quickly because you did not succeed immediately. You must, on the contrary, persevere in your effort till you succeed. My help will be always with you.

Q: Last evening I made an effort and the illness disappeared. But today again it has come back. Why? How?
A: It is always so; there is nothing exceptional in it.

Q: Now I have the hope that I will be surely out of all obscurity and ignorance.
A: There is no doubt about this; and the more you will remain calm and confident, the sooner it will be done.

Q: Sometime after the Pranam I had been to X. I started crying. Something had happened during pranam.
A: During the Pranam I had put you in communion with your psychic being. But why did you then go to X? It is because you thus lost what I have given you, that you wept.

Q: Always the same fire ravages from all sides!
A: You will do well to extinguish it if it ravages you or utilise it if it can purify you.

Q: S says that those whom you caress during Pranam make more progress than the rest.
A: What are these stories?

Q: Why has it not been possible for me to put into effect all the knowledge the mind has?
A: Because the vital is not habitual to obey.
Q: What parts of my being are still under foreign influence?
A: Principally in the physical and the vital, but also some parts of the mind.

Q: I always lose what you give. What is to be done?
A: Be more careful in future and take care not to lose what I give.

Q: I think I must go into solitude if I am to save myself from going far from Thee.
A: It is for you to know if you can do it without falling into depression which will be still worse than gossiping.

Q: If my physical, vital are entirely under the influence of falsehood and also parts of the mind, what then have I been doing in the past four and half years?
A: What is four years for sadhana! Very little....

Q: The physical vital has become uncontrollable. It destroys everything that I put by way of control. I burn. I feel weak and helpless.
A: All these are wrong suggestions that you must reject. Have you got fever? In that case you must ask Nirod to treat you. But if you have no fever this story of fire is a wrong imagination that must be rejected.

There is a sacred fire that burns in the heart and envelops the whole being; it is agni that illumines and purifies everything. Each time you ask me for progress, I light up this fire in you; but it destroys nothing except falsehood and obscurity.

Q: If still falsehood and obscurity persist in me, what is to be done?
A: An integral purification and a long and slow work.

Q: A prayer for peace and silence rises towards thee.
A: Yes, you need peace and silence, but an inner peace and silence.

Q: Once the earth is transformed by the Divine Presence, will it always stay in the Divine state or will it again turn towards obscurity and ignorance?
A: One should hope not.

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Q: Will you tell me from where we come and where we go?
A: You are asking for the story of the universe!

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Q: Is it not a fact that it is the divine that has made us ignorant and inconvenient?
A: It is stupid.

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Q: Then how have we become inconscient and ignorant?
A: I take it that by us you mean human beings. Human beings have not become ignorant and obscure, they have always been so, for the material nature was inconscient and obscure long before the appearance of man.

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Q: I want to know about silence. Is silence more worthwhile than concentration upon the lower nature to control it?
A: Concentration upon lower nature is never good; one must concentrate on what one wants to develop and not on what one wants to destroy.

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Q: One ought not to concentrate upon the lower nature; but I believe great care is to be taken not to allow it to express itself.
A: Yes, certainly.

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Q: I think one must be peaceful and silent externally also.
A: Peaceful, certainly; silence is not always possible.

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Q: Does silence bring all the force needed for purification and transformation?
A: Does not bring it positively but it is in silence that one receives.

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Q: S. tells me contradictory things; how can one trust her?
A: Only those who have the inner vision and the knowledge of Truth, have a judgement in which one can have confidence.
Q: Can silence bring me the force to correct my error and soar towards Thee?
A: Of course if in the silence there is a sincere aspiration.

Q: Tell me why I love Thee.
A: It is your psychic being – like all psychic beings – that loves me.

Q: All have psychic being; why then do not all love Thee?
A: Either because they are not conscious of their psychic being or they do not know me.

Psychic love never bargains; but the vital always tries to draw some profit from all circumstances.

Q: Is it that only my psychic being loves Thee and no other part?
A: In the measure in which the mind, the vital and the physical are under the control of the psychic being, they also love me.

Repose is not necessarily a cessation of inner effort.

Q: Do you think there might be some redoubtable difficulties which would make me give up yoga?
A: I do not think so.

Q: We saw H making extraordinary progress; in spite of all that he disobeyed Thee. I ask this in order to be sure of myself.
A: You have had no past before coming here. It is H’s past that stands in this way.

Q: I am yours; what have I to fear?
A: Certainly you have nothing to fear.

Q: I am afraid of the old ambition to be a yogi, though it is much less now.
A: Since you are conscious of the danger, why not conquer it?
6.1935

Q: Can the subconscient reject an attained union with the Divine?
A: A part of the being may have attained union (naturally partial) and another part remain in its obscurity and ignorance.

6.1935

Q: Anyway I have no fear; you are leading me.
A: Yes, if you are sincere in your aspiration and your will to reach this goal.

6.1935

Q: What attitude should I have so that nothing may harm me?
A: Perfect detachment, equality of soul, disinterestedness.

Q: One must not kill animals that do not harm. It follows that one must kill all those that do harm.
A: The solution of the problem does not lie in mental rules but in a conscious union with the Divine Will and in a constant perception of the Truth.

7.6.1935

Q: In our yoga, what is the right attitude towards animals?
A: It is only when one has attained the consciousness of the divine Unity that one can have the right attitude. In the meanwhile it is always good to act towards the animals with respect, love and compassion.

8.6.1935

Q: But then should not injurious insects be killed?
A: Without any doubt.

12.6.1935

Q: What is the way to get out of the obsession of pain when it is too much?
A: Look at a beautiful flower.

13.6.1935

Q: But when the pain is too much even the flower looks poor.
A: That would be the proof of a total slavery to the vital part that suffers. You must learn to bifurcate yourself and detach from external and inferior movements.
Q: Not to be able to watch the suffering of others but to flee is a weakness.
A: If one has not the means, moral or material to relieve them, I do not see what purpose it can serve to watch them. 16.6.1935

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One must be capable of giving all in order to learn to possess truly. 24.6.1935

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Q: It is by wish that one attains beatitude. Without wishing one gets nothing.
A: No. The desire is useful only at the beginning of the evolution to awake the consciousness out of its torpor, but it is not desire that can lead towards Beatitude; that is the result of self-giving. 24.6.1935

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The ego is a help as long as it helps to form the physical individuality, but when it is formed the ego ought to disappear. 26.6.1935

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Humanity such as it is actually, is still in the animal stage; one must, then, pass beyond this ordinary human state to become a true man capable of being conscious of the Divine. 1.7.1935

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Q: Is there a thing called hell?
A: Yes, there are hells formed by human thought and they exist in certain regions of the vital worlds. 6.1935

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Q: Does one suffer torments of hell after death?
A: Yes, if one believes in it. 24.6.1935

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It is during the physical life on earth that one has occasion to purify oneself and to make spiritual progress. 1.7.1935

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Q: How can one suffer after one is dead?
A: It is the vital that feels the suffering; and the vital being is not destroyed with the body. 10.7.1935

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Q: There seems to be something extraordinary in the atmosphere of the Ashram or at least in mine. But my depression continues in spite of all effort, aspiration and calm. I do not know which way to turn.

A: I do not believe that things are as you say; in any case, as far as you are concerned, the best for you is not to torment yourself and to aspire peacefully till your difficulties disappear.

It is always the resistance that creates the confusion.

8.7.1935

Q: Why has my condition become so dry? Have I lost my way or is it a test?

A: What do you mean by test? Surely it is not a thing arbitrarily imposed upon you. The state in which you find yourself is always the normal result of your way of thinking, feeling and acting.

Q: I anticipate something hostile coming to me.

A: To anticipate a bad thing is useful only if one uses that anticipation to repulse the bad thing.

11.7.1935

Q: Something bad is going to happen to me. I do not know how and when. How to repel it?

A: You can simply repulse the thought that something bad is going to come.

Q: Anyway I cannot leave this yoga. I prefer death to giving up yoga.

A: There is no question of your giving up yoga and I am pretty sure you will not do it. There is also no reason whatever for you to die. You will live and live for the Divine.

12.7.1935

Q: Surely I do not want to leave thee, but what shall I do? Someone takes me away from thee.

A: Do not obey this “someone”.

29.7.1935

Q: How to conquer ambition which continues in spite of the knowledge of the Truth?

A: Learn to see the vanity of these fugitive and hollow satisfactions.

Q: Is it possible for the psychic to control the being without coming to the front?

A: “To control the being” and “to come to the front” are two terms for the same thing.

Q: My mind says that in my previous life I failed in my effort for integral
transformation. What is the surety that it would not be the same this time also?
A: Because in the last birth the moment had not come when integral transformation was possible.

Q: You said that my mind, vital and physical beings are controlled in a certain measure by the psychic. Does it mean that the psychic has come to the front?
A: All depends upon the measure of control. However, I do not think I wrote that this control is over the vital and the physical, but only on a part of the mind.

Q: Will my integral transformation be accomplished in this very birth?
A: This is not the time to reply to this question.

Q: Was I always with you in my previous lives?
A: The same; this is not the moment to reply to this question either.

I meant to say this control is directly over a part of the mind and through the mind over other parts of the being in the measure of their receptivity.

Ghosts exist most often in the imagination of people.

As for vital beings, if we have no fear they can do no harm. And with the divine protection what fear can one have? None.

Love and peace have not left you; it is you who see them no more. Most probably it is again the same force you speak of that tries to blind you.

Q: What is that force?
A: An adverse will that sends the suggestions. You must not believe its suggestions. That is all.

Naturally the more you will be yourself pure, luminous and unselfish, the more your actions will become effective and certain. My blessings and my light are with you.

Q: You say that a hostile will sends suggestions. But I see neither that will nor am I conscious of these suggestions. Will you please explain to me?
A: How do you say you are not conscious when you yourself write: “But often someone makes me blind and I do not see thy light.” What you call “someone” is what I call the adverse suggestions.

5.7.1935
Q: I see only the result of those suggestions but not how they enter, how I receive them. I wish to know the process.

A: It makes a mental formation in affinity with the mentality of the person to be influenced. This formation remains in the mental atmosphere of the person in question and enters on the least occasion. If the person is not conscious enough or vigilant, he becomes conscious of that formation only when it has entered the brain and then he takes this formation for his own thought.

* 

I think there is nothing to be worried about. You are not farther away from me than you ever were. There are always the same parts of your being which refuse to participate in the divine life; formerly you were not conscious but now, on the contrary, you have become more and more conscious, and the consciousness is a real progress, it is the way leading you to mastery.

15.7.1935

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Q: Then what should I do so that the lower parts participate in the divine life?
A: Educate them as you would educate the child.

15.7.1935

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Q: I know that what you do is always for my good.
A: Yes, in my action upon you it is exclusively your good that I see.

7.1935

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Q: I will feel you so near, so near that...
A: All the victories will be easy for me.

17.7.1935

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Q: Without haste, without agitation, I aspire for this reign over me.
A: It is good, and my help and blessings are always with you in your aspiration.

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Q: Mother, what have I given to you this time?
A: Do you not know it yourself?

16.8.1935

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Q: Was it good for me to have gone for music at D’s?
A: It is not very useful to ask questions regarding things already done. If the effect has been bad, get over them; if good, keep them.

16.8.1935

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Q: P says she is afraid of you. I do not understand the reason.
A: Nor do I.
Q: When will I have the realisation of the Peace and Silence that I want so much?
A: Do not lose patience, it will come.

Q: If P has fear of you, how can she progress?
A: Certainly fear is a great obstacle on the path.

Q: All that I see around me surprises me. Where am I, O Mother?
A: On the earth.

Q: What kind of liberty does P seek? What does she find here as prison?
A: It is her vital that complains.
Q: Are we here to do yoga or to have full liberty to indulge in desires and ambitions?
A: This pretentious liberty which the vital claims is not at all liberty, it is slavery to desires and lower impulses.

Q: Mother, how can you like to stay here amidst this terrible obscurity and ignorance?
A: I am on earth because it is on earth that the Divine Work is to be done and not for any other reason.

Q: The whole world is suffering from ignorance and obscurity. When will the Light descend and remove all that?
A: Soon, I hope.

Q: Is it not true that barring a few exceptions, it is not easy for you to work as you wish in each person? There is always some resistance, some revolt.
A: Surely in almost all there is resistance and in many revolt.
Q: What should I do to let you work in me as you please? Do I not know it?
A: You know it, don’t you? All that remains is to do it.
Q: Let us advance, advance always without falling backwards.
A: Yes, one must always go ahead.

29.8.1935

Q: Formerly I used to have periods of happiness, peace and love. But I do not have them for some time past. Why is it so?
A: In the children the psychic is often very much on the surface and makes the child happy and peaceful. As one grows, and the vital and the mind develop and take more importance, there begin the miseries and sorrow.

30.8.1935

Q: This time I am not going to yield to the vital. I shall do my best to remain on your side.
A: Keep this attitude and we will be sure of imminent success.

30.8.1935

Q: Y believes that his depression has come with your consent.
A: That is completely absurd. My will is, on the contrary, that each may advance always peacefully and regularly without ever falling back into lower states.

24.8.1935

Q: P says she is here as if in prison; she has no freedom with you.
A: I never put anyone in prison.

24.8.1935

Q: P insists on going into solitude. She says Sri Aurobindo would approve (though Mother’s reply is different).
(To this Sri Aurobindo wrote:) I have always disapproved of sadhaks retiring entirely and shutting themselves up like that. It tends to bring about a morbid inner condition.

1.9.1935

Q: I write all this, but have you time to go through all these outpourings of restlessness?
A: I read them always.

3.9.1935

Q: Did you write that I would live for the Divine, merely to encourage me?
A: No, I wrote that to you because I thought so.
**11.9.1935**

*Q: Is it very necessary to feel the atmosphere of others?*

A: It is preferable not to feel it as long as one has not acquired the power to set right all adverse vibrations.

*11.9.1935*

*Q: Is it necessary to know the nature of the people with whom one may have to talk, in order to be on guard?*

A: Evidently, when one mixes with people, it is preferable to know what they are.

*11.9.1935*

*Q: I want you to lead me hand in hand. I know it is difficult, but I want it at any cost.*

A: In that case you are sure to have it, sooner or later.

*12.9.1935*

Do not torment yourself; all will come in its time.

*13.9.1935*

*Q: My condition grows from bad to worse. I cannot place a single step forward.*

A: At times, when one is not satisfied with oneself that is the moment when one makes the most progress.

*14.9.1935*

*Q: Would you tell me why my progress has stopped? Formerly I used to feel your Presence constantly.*

A: I have already explained to you that the first contact with the Force gives the psychic being the power to dominate the consciousness and govern the being. But little by little, the other parts (mental, vital and physical) resume their old activities and the good condition gets veiled. One must resolve, with persistence, to recover it.

*14.9.1935*

*Q: Tell me what I must do to become like a child.*

A: In the child the psychic life is not veiled by the mental life; being not formed he has great power to grow and progress in sufficient plasticity.

*14.9.1935*

*Q: What is “child path” in yoga?*
A: The child’s path is one of trust without discussion, complete dependence, surrender without reserve.

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Q: Did my psychic being ever have the power to control and govern my being and dominate the consciousness?
A: Yes, partially – from time to time.

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Q: Do you think much ego is expressed in my movements and also pride?
A: The physical consciousness is always full of pride and ego.

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Q: Do you think it good for me to take the path of the child?
A: The path of the child is always preferable, but it is not so easy because it should be taken spontaneously and in all sincerity.

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Q: My whole being offers resistance; there is nothing on the surface that can love and trust in thee.
A: I think you exaggerate; it is not as bad as that.

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Q: Is it not true that I live mostly in the physical consciousness?
A: Mostly, yes, but not always.

* 

Q: Is it from the subconscious that all this obscurity arises?
A: Yes.

* 

Q: I call thee, come and lift me up from this depression. I know it is the vital; it should not spread the depression.
A: I do not see any reasonable cause for this sadness; to me it appears an unreal thing, a kind of false imagination that has taken hold of you. Reject all – forthwith.

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Yes, it is the vital that delights in its depression.
Q: How to prevent the vital from this pastime? It does not listen.
A: Strengthen your will.

10.9.1935

Q: Can you not, please, pacify my vital and make it understand the truth?
A: So often it has been pacified, but each time it has shaken off the peace as a cloak of ennui.

10.9.1935

Q: How to strengthen my love so as to conquer all desires and impulses that hinder my progress?
A: Concentrate on the psychic consciousness.

Q: Is it a want of confidence that delays the conversion of the vital?
A: Yes, undoubtedly.

10.9.1935

Q: May I forget myself and become a simple, humble, plastic being who can be easily led! When will that be?
A: Soon, if your will to be that is persistent.

10.9.1935

Q: Today I have understood that there are two Wills: one the divine Will and the other, the will as the human individual mother.
A: Absurd.
Q: The latter permits desires and satisfactions; the divine Will permits only such activities as are based on the divine Presence. Thus you have two wills.
A: It is absolutely false.

21.9.1935

Q: All passes like a dream which ought to happen for a happier future.
A: Yes, you are right. This is how things pass here.

22.9.1935

Q: Who observes that all passes like a dream?
A: The mental witness.

24.9.1935

Q: Is it true that I have an ego to be a guru?
A: There is something of it somewhere in the vital mind.
24.9.1935

Q: Do I understand whether my actions are according to thy will or contrary to it?
A: At times you discern correctly, at times you mistake.

25.9.1935

Q: Where is your presence which I want so much? Once you were in my heart but now, in my blindness, I see you not. But you are there no doubt, when will the veil disappear? I look for you, but I do not find you.
A: Yes, you are right. I am there in your heart always but something in the external consciousness is too active, makes too much noise for you to be conscious of this presence. It is only in silence and tranquility that you can become aware of it.

25.9.1935

Q: Is there any path on which one does not have to make effort at all?
A: I do not think so; but there are persons who make effort in a natural way without attaching much importance to it.

28.9.1935

Q: By whom do you think I have been influenced?
A: By nobody in particular, but by all kinds of movements and passing forces.

30.9.1935

I did not say persons, I said movements and forces and in order to free yourself from them you must enter into the consciousness where these forces are perfectible.

1.10.1935

Q: May I do embroidery in my free time? It interests me.
A: No, it is not a men’s job.

2.10.1935

Q: Though it is veiled now, the fact remains that I am your child and you are my mother. My heart has to open. Is it not so?
A: Surely, I am always there to help you and to lead you on the path.

3.10.1935

Q: My mind refuses to believe unless it understands well.
A: That is the trouble – that it does not understand.
11.10.1935

Q: Some part of my being refuses to believe blindly; it wants to understand. That is why I ask so many questions.

A: Very often, on the contrary, your questions are entirely unreasonable and if you were to reflect a little, you would not need to ask them.

12.10.1935

Q: To will and to aspire, how to do both at the same time?

A: If you cannot do both things at a time, do only one.

14.10.1935

You can write to me always whatever you think, but you must know that I answer when it is useful; you should not feel annoyed if at times I do not answer.

16.10.1935

Q: I do not understand what is called intellectual faith. Faith has no reason and intellect is always reasoning.

A: It is not intellectual but mental. The mental being has a faith, and the vital being also can have its faith as well as the physical being. As for the psychic being, its faith is natural and spontaneous; faith is the very essence of the psychic being.

18.10.1935

There is only one faith, but it manifests in the different parts of the being. I suppose what the person you speak of means by the name blind faith is the faith in the heart, the one that does not need reasons for its existence. But there is also a faith in the mind which can be based on reasoning. In order to be certain of an unshakable faith one must have it in all the parts of the being.

19.10.1935

Faith is an expression of a spiritual quality.

21.10.1935

Q: Is self-confidence a low thing?

A: All depends upon the person who has the self-confidence.

21.10.1935

Q: I shall make an effort to raise myself; you are there and hence I could succeed.

A: Yes, with a calm and regular effort, you are sure to succeed.
Q: Sri Aurobindo has written in a letter: “Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence.” What does existence mean? Sat? Or material existence?
A: Existence is existence – there is no need to put in adjectives. (Sri Aurobindo)

Q: What obscurity! Everything goes wrong. But what is the use of shrinking? There must be an inner change; failing that, a calm, an aspiration.
A: Yes, exactly. You must constantly aspire for the inner change; you must will that the obscure physical mind gets enlightened; you must await with calm the result of this aspiration and will.

I once wrote to Sri Aurobindo that I wished to get replies from him just as I was getting from the Mother. He wrote:
Mother’s writing is equivalent to mine. There is no difference.

Q: It looks my vital and physical will never resolve to turn towards thee.
A: That, however, is what ought to be.
Q: I have tried for long but nothing succeeds.
A: You must try again till it succeeds.

A few letters answered by Sri Aurobindo
Q: How were the Sastras written? By whom? Did yogis write them from their imagination? How did they calculate the several lakhs of years of the Kaliyuga, the Satyayuga to follow and so on.
A: I don’t know that it was any yogi who made that calculation.
Q: After how many years do you expect the reign of Satyayuga on earth?
A: I don’t bother my head about it.
Q: Do you think there was ever a Satyayuga upon earth?
A: Perhaps – or upon some earth.
Q: Is it desirable, Mother, that I write all these?
A: It is not very necessary.

Q: When can faith manifest in the vital and the physical?
A: When they are converted, that is when they turn towards the Divine.
Q: Is your action always in the subconscious?
A: Not necessarily; that depends upon the receptivity of each. 25.10.1935

Q: My consciousness is always in the vital and the physical, rarely on the mental domain, never in the psychic.
A: The picture is a little sombre, but there is some truth in what you say. 25.10.1935

Q: When can the mind, vital and physical turn towards thee?
A: Tomorrow, even today, if they take the resolution. 26.10.1935

Q: You said that the picture is a little sombre; does it mean I have not expressed well, that what I said is not clear?
A: No, I mean to say that you are a little pessimistic. 26.10.1935

Q: How to come out of this gross inertia?
A: There is only one way, to concentrate on the psychic. 31.10.1935

What you call “affection” is only a movement of vital attraction having no deeper basis in the psychic. And when the vital sees that it is not going to get what it desires, it is no more interested in the undertaking. 1.11.1935

To open to me, you must have great sincerity in the aspiration for it to be effective. 16.12.1935

At present your aspiration is only in a part of your mind and that is why it is not effective enough. To be effective it must come from the quiet depths of the heart. 17.12.1935

The heart of which I speak is not the surface heart; it is the seat of deep sentiments. It is true there was a time when you were in contact with it and at that time you felt the love and the aspiration that are always present in it. It is
not the love that has dried up; it is your consciousness that has moved to the surface.
   Go within yourself and light up there the sacred flame. 18.12.1935

* 19.12.1935

My help is always with you; you must learn to receive it and utilise it.

* 21.12.1935

Q: My nature looks like becoming more and more complex, less sincere. Why is it so?
   A: As the mind develops, the simple and pure sincerity of the child disappears. One must replace it by a sincerity more conscious, more spiritual – the psychic sincerity.

23.12.1935

* 28.12.1935

Patience is one of the most necessary conditions for spiritual life. One must learn to wait in order to receive.

* 30.12.1935

Q: Would you tell me how my consciousness got shifted to the most material and subconscient domain?
   A: It is not shifted, it is there in a most natural way as that of most human beings. It is when the consciousness rises above the material plane that it becomes exceptional.

2.1.1936

* 10.1.1936

My dear child; be assured of my help and my force; they always accompany you on the path which leads to your soul. With my Blessings.

* 18.12.1935

My dear child, it is within yourself that you ought to find the peace, the silence and the solitude; and in that solitude you will become conscious of my presence. My Blessings are with you.
Q: O my Mother, where art thou?
A: Always in the depths of your heart.

Q: How can I recover thee, thy presence?
A: Yes, if you let burn in you the fire of aspiration.

It is by throwing in the fire all one’s difficulties, all desires, all imperfections that one keeps it burning. Morning and evening when you come to see me you should pray in your heart, “Keep the fire burning”, and offer to me all these things like combustibles. My blessings are with you, dear child.

Q: Sweet Mother, I offer all my imperfections, desires and difficulties; pray accept them. I surrender all to thee.
A: My dear child, I accept your offering and use it to light in you the flame of progress.

Q: I think I need to retire into some solitude so that the flame could burn more intensely.
A: It is in activity that the fire ought to burn in order that it may rectify all movements.

Q: Keep the fire burning, Mother, I offer to thee all my movements.
A: As long as you aspire to keep the fire burning, I shall watch so that it does not get extinguished at all.

Q: When shall I get the solitude in which I may find thee? Where is the peace and silence by which I can get detached?
A: This solitude is to be found within yourself.

Q: Light up the fire, O Mother, light up the fire so that it may burn out all that is false.
A: My Blessings are like a flame in your heart.
Q: It looks the flame is extinct. Thy Blessings are indeed always there but I am blind to receive them.

A: Certainly, if you constantly do things I do not want, how can you remain open and how can the flame burn?

23.1.1936

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Be according to your heart and your aspiration; but take care to see that your vital does not react with dissatisfaction and revolt.

It is not for you to light the flame. As I have told you, I light it always; you have only open yourself to receive it and maintain it with your good will.

24.1.1936

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Q: How to get rid of this attachment?

A: Do not attach too much importance to it, it will pass by itself if your eyes are fixed on the Divine Consciousness you want to attain.

26.1.1936

*  

Q: All desires, attachments, impurities are to be thrown in the fire like fuel.

A: Yes, it is good that way. One must repeat this movement constantly. My help and blessings are with you.

27.1.1936

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I am always there before you, open your eyes and you will see.

27.1.1936

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A moment of true good will on the part of the vital and all will become very much easy.

29.1.1936

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It is impossible to mix with someone without at least an exchange of influence taking place.

30.1.1936

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To cut off brusquely a relation and to want to react too violently against attachment, with a mental will that is not fully supported by the vital consent, always brings grievous reaction. One must leave it to time to do its work.

31.1.1936

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Yes, you can stop going there. But you must not again change your mind tomorrow for all these incertitudes weaken the will.

4.2.1936
In all effort that you make to progress, you can always be assured of my help and blessings.

* 6.2.1936

Keep to your resolution with calm and all the difficulties will disappear.

* 8.2.1936

Your subconscious identifies itself particularly with that of the persons you mix with and that is why they have so much influence over you. The only remedy is to increase your consciousness and turn it more and more towards the Divine.

* 12.2.1936

Q: Is it a fact that there is a period when the good parts of the being recede and only the lower ones remain on the surface making one feel fallen, obscure and forgetful of good experiences?
A: There are people in whom such a thing takes place, but it is not inevitable and certainly not desirable.

* 18.2.1936

You are right, my dear child, those who are not happy here cannot be happy anywhere.

* 7.3.1936

Q: When will I regain thy presence? I cry from my heart.
A: Do not torment yourself, it will surely come back.

* 7.3.1936

It is perhaps wise not to give such advices because people do not listen to them.

* 12.3.1936

Q: What attitude should I have when I come to you?
A: When you come to me, you must be peaceful and open.

* 12.3.1936

Q: How to detach myself from the melancholy that comes from inside?
A: Not to attach importance to it.

* 12.3.1936

Q: Is suffering inevitable in yoga?
A: Surely, suffering is not indispensable, not even necessary. It is in fact ignorance which makes one suffer.
Yes, this yoga is built upon peace and joy, not on suffering.

Ignorance always lacks humility. The more the mind is ignorant, more it judges and more it revolts.

Q: You did not find in me the love and calm you had hoped for?
A: I believe truly that there is still much to be done so that you become truly calm and quiet; but I do not say that you have not made progress towards this realisation.

At the core of all revolts by people who revolt, there is a fall in obscurity and falsehood.

Q: I saw you in dream embracing me. Was it an imagination?
A: In spirit I always hold you in my arms like a little child, to help you and protect you.

Q: When will you hold me actually in thy arms, so that I may rest wholly outside foreign influence?
A: I do not think you expect me to hold you in my arms physically. If I were to hold all my children in my arms (to begin with the 140 in the Ashram), truly my body would have to be much larger than it is!
However, to an awakened consciousness my presence is absolutely concrete.

Q: What should be my aspiration at present?
A: To be more and more sincere and pure.

Q: What do you think of my faith? I believe I have very little and that too in a part of the mind.
A: I do not think it necessary to dissert on these things. One must live them more and more sincerely in a constant aspiration.
Q: Would you give me some advice for concentration?
A: Will to concentrate and strengthen your will.

* 3.4.1936

Q: I want to rise above this ordinary consciousness and soar towards thee.
A: Keep this aspiration and you will always find my help on the path.

* 3.4.1936

It may be that I do not say all that I think, but all that I say I do think.

* 6.4.1936

As for cure, it can come only by the growth of consciousness and will. It will be done in its own time.

* 11.4.1936

I am always with you in the silence of your heart.

* 14.3.1936

Q: I am conscious of things, but have not the force to surmount them.
A: That is because in you the consciousness is more developed than the will.

* 16.4.1936

You will always do well to write to me what you feel.

* 17.4.1936

If one were to mix only with those who are perfectly sincere, one’s relations would be very limited.

* 20.4.1936

I do not wish to intervene because I am not sure that you will have the strength and constancy to do continually what I ask you to do. And for the spiritual life it is preferable to act in ignorance rather than act in disobedience to the order of one’s guru.

* 20.4.1936

Do not torment yourself. That will come to be one day, for you aspire for it so much. Meanwhile my help and blessings are with you.

* 20.4.1936

As you say very well, each must mind his own things and his relations with me
and not at all what others do or do not do, for the affairs of others concern none.

24.4.1936

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Q: How to come out of this chaos?  
A: Make your aspiration more and more sincere and integral.

27.4.1936

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Everything will come in its time.

30.4.1936

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Q: May this month of my birthday be for me....  
A: The beginning of a life truly sincere.

1.5.1936

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Q: What do you mean by a life truly sincere?  
A: To conform all actions to one’s highest aspiration and purest will.

2.5.1936

* 

Q: Free, free, free. Today I feel less tied to my nature; I do not know what is going on. Would you please explain?  
A: It is always better to let the experience establish itself in silence and tranquillity.

4.5.1936

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Q: Why do hostile suggestions have so strong an effect on me?  
A: They have the same effect on all who receive them.

8.5.1936

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The very tone of what you write shows that you are making a vital effort big enough. But I do not see any inconvenience in your making the effort and my force is always with you to help you to do it with success.

13.5.1936

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A sentimental attachment is an affective attachment – a vital attachment is a sensual attachment. By this expression I mean: to exchange tender words or sensual gestures, like holding the hand, caressing etc.

14.5.1936

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Q: May my consciousness turn inward.  
A: That is indeed, quite indispensable.
15.5.1936

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Q: Do you trust that what I would say to you is without hypocrisy? 
A: I truly wish that you are not hypocrite, for hypocrisy is a big obstacle on the spiritual path.

16.5.1936

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I do not think it good to give up effort. It resembles very much a defeat. What one cannot do today one is sure to be able to do one day, if one persists in the effort.

18.5.1936

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The first condition is to keep the mind calm and peaceful. It is in calm that the light can descend.

19.5.1936

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Don’t you believe there is a great deal of imagination in all this? For, truth to tell, I do not feel you more distant today than on other days.

20.5.1936

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Q: It looks to me that I should become a little more selfish. 
A: Not more selfish but more strong - less influencable by the will of others. These ladies wanted to go there and you did what they wished; you ought to have asked yourself: “Is it the will of the Mother that I should obey thus?”

21.5.1936

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Q: I admit it is my mistake that has brought about this ill-turn. I beg pardon. 
A: It is not a big calamity and on your part it was rather a thoughtlessness than a fault. Do not be “too sad”. That is not a good preparation to see me on the occasion of your birthday. On the contrary you must be full of energy to discard from your life hereafter all that hinders you in approaching the Divine. My special blessings for this day, – May 22, 1936.

22.5.1936

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Q: You will strengthen my will? 
A: Indeed, your will must become more and more consecrated and firm.

22.5.1936

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Q: I am still ignorant, I am nothing, I know nothing. 
A: My help is always with you and also the force to surmount the weaknesses and difficulties. But you must know how to receive and utilise that.
24.5.1936

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Q: Where am I? How changed am I? Is life this?  
A: It is not a question of life but a question of yoga and for that the indispensable basis is calm and tranquillity in the mind and the vital. It is to that you must work hard.

25.5.1936

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Q: I am going to try my best to achieve detachment.  
A: Certainly that looks to me indispensable enough if you wish to be able to do yoga.

27.5.1936

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Q: Each day I make the effort, I see that unfortunately there is opposition to that effort.  
A: If there were no reactions, you would not need to make effort.

28.5.1936

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I do not see any reason why all this procession of miseries should accompany you and I think it preferable not to dramatise an incident, which, after all, has nothing dramatic in itself.

29.5.1936

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Q: How to lift up my lower consciousness towards the higher?  
A: I have already told you that the first condition is to quiet the mind and to make effort for the vital also to be peaceful.

30.5.1936

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In any case it is always wiser to discard from oneself all that pulls the consciousness downward.

30.5.1936

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Q: May I receive your help?  
A: Yes, may you receive it and utilise it as one must.

1.6.1936

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Q: I aspire to receive your help.  
A: My help is always with you, but to receive and profit by it, there must be sincerity and stability in the will.

2.6.1936
Q: I am unhappy, I cannot control my movements, what shall I do?
A: Be sincere, always more sincere.

6.6.1936

Q: Would you make me conscious of my insincerities?
A: Sincerity exacts that you confess immediately without my needing to question you.

8.6.1936

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Yes, in continuing to do what you know very well ought not to be done, you harden yourself and more and more veil your consciousness.

8.6.1936

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Q: I believe that the will to uplift myself is persistent, I must be patient.
A: It is of utmost importance that this will should assert itself and triumph. It is absolutely necessary.

8.6.1936

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Q: Make me free, free. Uplift me above all impulse and all desire and give me the psychic consciousness.
A: I want, as you do, that you come out of this confusion and that you make the inner discovery of your psychic being.

9.6.1936

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It is necessary, indeed, that the consciousness turns towards spiritual life in an exclusive way.

6.1936

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Q: Yesterday morning while reading this notebook there was a depression in a part of the being. Would you tell me why and in which part?
A: Perhaps your physical mind was not satisfied with my answer.

12.6.1936

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Q: I am not sure if the passion has been chased out from the vital or it is hiding somewhere below to surge up at any moment.
A: It is always wiser to be on guard.

12.6.1936

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As long as the vital is not converted and at least partially transformed, there will always be struggles.

13.6.1936
Q: Do you think my central being is acting according to the suggestions of the vital?
A: The central being does not act, it is the external physical that does.

Q: Is the psychic influence no more in the mind?
A: Undoubtedly, the psychic influence is there, but it is not strong enough to control your movements and actions.

Q: Do you think that the mental purusha which had once opened is now closed due to lowering in consciousness?
A: Let us hope not.

Q: Tell me frankly if my mental purusha is not veiled.
A: I think that in constantly yielding to vital impulsions you have veiled your consciousness much. But it is not irredeemable and with a persistent goodwill and persevering effort you will come out of this obscurity.

Q: I think my mental being was at one time under the influence of the psychic. But now there is not a single psychic action.
A: This kind of inquest is not of much use. What must be done is to react against the bad movement and put oneself again in contact with the psychic.

Q: Why is it easier to love a human being than the divine?
A: I do not see that it is easier. It depends upon the persons. The difference is that what men call “love” when it concerns another human being is not love at all but a frightful mixture of sentimentality, egoism, weakness, ignorance and sensuality. Evidently such a sentiment cannot be addressed to the divine.

Every effort to remove the veil is sure to yield result and little by little the consciousness will awake if the effort is continued.

Certainly you are very much weak in the presence of vital movements. You ought to detach yourself from them, look upon them from above and impose upon them the will of your higher consciousness.
Q: My nights are almost blank and even a little noise wakes me up completely and I have fear.
A: It is ridiculous to have fear, you are not a baby.

Q: Today I thought: Why am I on earth?
A: All these are absurdities you have to reject far from you without giving them the least importance.

Q: I must recover sincerity, fidelity, obedience and psychic influence.
A: Yes, it is a very good and very useful resolution. My force is with you to realise it.

Q: I want to rise to my higher consciousness and lift myself above the lower nature.
A: Persist in this attitude which is good and more and more you will be able to receive my force and help and to utilise them. My blessings are with you.

Q: Is it possible to receive your help and yet utilise it ill or not at all?
A: Yes, even that happens very often.

Q: Would you explain?
A: One receives the force and the power that I give and uses it to satisfy one’s own desires instead of utilising them in service of the Divine.

There must be great vigilance in order not to fall into movements of the lower consciousness; and there must be a will still greater in order to come out of it. Hence arm yourself with patience and will.

Q: It is too painful. Do a miracle so that I may completely detach myself from the vital movements, may receive none of the impulsions of that nature.
A: Do not make a mountain of such a little trifle; later you will laugh at this.
adventure – which you take so tragically at the moment – when a little more light and consciousness will have penetrated your lower vital.

6.7.1936

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Q: *Yesterday I was mad, nothing interested me; it was not imagination. Was it all a mental formation?*  
A: I find all that completely ridiculous and quite out of proportion to the circumstances. 
Q: *Then why all these reactions?*  
A: Because the vital has the fancy of contradiction. If I had said to it: You ought not to and never can leave P it would have only thought of one thing – to flee far from P.

* 

Q: *Is there nothing wrong in such terrible reactions taking place by forcing me to detach myself?*  
A: Do not exaggerate like that. These reactions are terrible only if you think them to be such. Correct your thought, see up to what point all this is childish and unimportant, and all those “terrible” reactions will disappear at once.

7.7.1936

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Q: *How do you say that all this is completely ridiculous while I felt it absolutely real?*  
A: It was the pretended folly that was ridiculous not the fact that you were conscious of it.

8.7.1936

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Q: *Would you tell me why the vital produced this physical sickness, fever?*  
A: It had no intention, the illness was simply a consequence of the vital depression.

* 

Q: *You wish that I do not frequent P. So if the vital flees from P so much the better, instead of attachment there will be detachment.*  
A: No, the flight is the reverse of attachment, not its cure.

8.7.1936

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Q: *I can neither go to P nor detach myself from P nor be without thought of P.*  
A: You have done well to score this paragraph, for it was all stupid. If your attempt to detach adds to your attachment, it shows that the effort is badly done, in a false way and without sincerity, and you have only to learn to do it better.

9.7.1936

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Sincerity: One can be perfectly so only when one is completely conscious. But
keep up your will to be more and more perfectly sincere – and all will be well.

10.7.1936

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Q: Could you tell me what thought you had when you received my report?
A: I thought that your physical mind is terribly stupid and impertinent.

Q: Has it been always so or it has become like that?
A: No, it has always been so.

One must have a great detachment and much discernment to know that one’s physical mind is stupid.

14.7.1936

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Q: It has become very difficult not to yield to the vital. You alone can save me. It is dangerous.
A: No, no and no.

These are adverse suggestions to which you shall not listen.

14.7.1936

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Q: You see well how these suggestions have taken place in me and to undo them and rise above these movements has become a big problem.
A: That also is an illusion. If you think the contrary (“I am free, I have no attachments”) with enough persistence, the problem would be soon solved.

15.7.1936

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Q: Do you believe I have become inferior? Or rather all these things were already in me but I was not aware of them?
A: One always carries in oneself the germ of all that one is and does. But this germ can die before it is hatched and that is what ought to happen to undesirable things.

15.7.1936

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Q: Is it that all the higher parts are veiled by the lower and what one has gained is not lost but is always there behind?
A: Yes, exactly.

15.7.1936

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Q: O Mama, open my heart closed for long and make the peace, the love, the happiness flow and the force necessary to accomplish your divine will.
A: The great secret is to think correctly according to the deep truth.

15.7.1936

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Q: I aspire for thy grace to come and uplift me from the ordinary consciousness
towards spirituality.

A: For the Grace to help you, you must fulfil the conditions and the first of them is to reject all doubt, however small it be. I repeat to you again you will do well to read again, with care and attention, the first two chapters of The Mother.

16.7.1936

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Q: Now I understand the surrender I have to make, but something in me refuses to surrender:

A: Remain firm in your will, use persuasion and, little by little, the revolting part will yield. It is by ignorance that it refuses to submit. This ignorance must be dissolved.

17.7.1936

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Q: Would you tell me which are the parts that have not yet surrendered or perhaps none has done so.

A: No, there are parts which have begun their surrender and that will go on increasing in every way.

18.7.1936

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Q: Would you tell me what still remains to be done to regain the right attitude so that the Grace may come again?

A: Be quiet and have confidence in the Grace. It is always there ready to help those who call it with a sincere heart.

18.7.1936

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Q: As long as I am in my room I am calm; but once I go out for work my mind gets agitated.

A: When you do your work you must attend your work only and not the people; you have no need to talk to them or busy yourself with them.

21.7.1936

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Q: I embrace you dear mama, before I go to bed.

A: I bless you, my dear child.

20.7.1936

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Q: O Divine Grace, come and help me, make me strong.

A: Yes, my help is with you and I want you to be strong and calm.

21.7.1936

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Q: Since morning I see that my consciousness is turned outwards. May thy Grace come lift me above ignorance and falsehood.
A: Do not worry yourself, persist in your effort to turn inward and you are sure to succeed.  

22.7.1936

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**Q:** It looks to me that this time the physical consciousness does not turn towards Thee. I tried to remain calm. May thy Grace come and uplift me from the ordinary consciousness towards the psychic.  

A: Yes, remain calm with perseverance and with a quiet aspiration towards the true Consciousness, you are sure to succeed if you keep this attitude.  

23.7.1936

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**Q:** I want only one thing: the consciousness and the accomplishment of thy will. O Mother, I am yours and you will do what you choose of this being who aspires to be yours.  

A: Very good – persist in this attitude and you are sure of victory.  

24.7.1936

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**Q:** Does the universal justice hamper us when we try to rise above the universe?  

A: In a certain manner, yes. Certainly to rise above the universe one must be entirely freed from this justice for it forms part of the universe.  

25.7.1936

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**Q:** Can it be that kindness is received ill?  

A: Yes, that is exactly what happens most often with human beings.  

27.7.1936

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**Q:** By what forces is the universal justice supported?  

A: By the universal nature.  

27.7.1936

*  

**Q:** Enlighten my physical consciousness so that it obeys thy will.  

A: That you have begun to be a little more conscious is already a sign that the Light can transmit its influence on the external consciousness.  

27.7.1936

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**Q:** Several parts are in revolt, but my effort continues, one day I will have the victory.  

A: Certainly, you must persist in the effort and the victory cannot fail to come.  

29.7.1936

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Q: May the heart unfold itself and the soul become visible. Would you do that?
A: My force is on you so that it may be granted.  

20.8.1936

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Q: O Mother, I call Thee. May Thy force come and uplift me from the ordinary consciousness towards the higher. I await Thy grace for, it seems to me, that alone can lift me up.
A: It is good to count on the Grace but the aspiration has to be intense and constant. 

31.8.1936

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Q: O Mother, when shall I see thee in my heart?
A: Keep this aspiration very living and, surely, it will not delay. 

3.9.1936

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Q: O my beloved, teach me to love Thee truly.
A: True love is to forget oneself. 

5.9.1936

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Q: Sweet Mother, here are my ideas: He who tries to help others without being Thy worthy instrument insults Thee.
A: Yes.

Q: He who before loving Thee truly tries to love others deceives himself.
A: Yes.

Q: Is it true there is no harm in one’s taking help from another if he cannot approach you directly?
A: I cannot answer in a general way, it depends entirely on cases.

Q: Is it not that one should try to approach you and wait till you are reached instead of seeking help elsewhere?
A: Evidently that is wiser.

Q: Now I have come to believe that our idea of love for human beings must be got rid of; for at present it is not possible to have true and pure love and also it is not necessary.
A: Exactly.

Q: Mother, now I think neither of helping nor loving others.
A: That, indeed, is more prudent.

Q: I will do my best to be true to you in my words.
A: In your thoughts and actions also, I hope. 

8.9.1936
Q: Would you tell me why my inner vision does not grow further? As before, I see only forces in movement, in form of vibrations.
A: This kind of growth is not always constant. Surely that will come later on.

10.9.1936

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Q: I do not feel you within my heart but I see you above me. If my feeling is not imagination, would you tell me the difference between feeling you within the heart and above oneself?
A: No, it is not false.
In the heart it is a psychic contact, above the head, it is mental.

10.9.1936

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Q: Would you tell me in what part of the mind is your presence? What is the difference in the effect of your presence in the heart and above the body?
A: The higher mind – no difference in its effect.

11.9.1936

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Q: Am I not wrong in thinking I am far away from thy Grace? Am I not already under it? Without thy grace how could I feel thy presence?
A: Certainly you are wrong in thinking that you are far from the Grace.

11.9.1936

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The external consciousness has difficulty in keeping up the fire of aspiration burning always, with the same intensity. But, with will, one must watch over the purifying fire and reawaken it when it slumbers.

14.9.1936

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Q: Is it not true, O Mother, that I love you? I know that my love is neither pure, nor perfect, nor integral.
A: Yes, it is true, you love me; and you learn to love me better and better, more and more. It is this love that will open for you the door of identification.

15.9.1936

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Q: Is there room for reason in true love?
A: They can be together in some but generally they do not have much to do with each other.

18.9.1936

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Q: Mother, do you believe I have emotion?
A: Everyone has more or less.

19.9.1936
Q: Is love like the tide and ebb of the sea, like emotion?
A: Vital love, yes, but not the psychic love which is invariable.

Q: Is it not true that one can feel thy presence even before having psychic love for thee?
A: It is the psychic above all that feels the Presence. But at times also the mind and the vital and even the physical perceive it.

To develop a philosophic mind you must methodically study philosophy, the different schools, their theories etc.

One must not do good in order to get a reward but for the pleasure of doing it. Then one is happy always whatever may happen.

It is not impossible to feel the Presence without having the psychic love. But that must be a rare case.

The extent to which you have love for me, it can only be the psychic love, but it is mixed in the external consciousness with mental and vital movements.

Q: Do you think my psychic love is never manifest without mixture?
A: The psychic being would have to become the absolute master of the entire being; when that comes to be, the consciousness can no more be veiled.

Q: What is that part in me that does not love you and appears indifferent to you?
A: It is the superficial consciousness which is generally occupied only with itself and hence closed to all that is not itself.

Q: My ideal of faith: to arrive at such a point that if you were to say it is midnight when it is midday it believes.
A: Evidently that is faith.
30.9.1936

Q: What is it that has exhausted my love, happiness and peace?
A: The vital.

* 

Q: What does the vital want? Why does it strike at my happiness?
A: The vital has no reason, it is absolutely unreasonable.

1.10.1936

Q: Is it that all love and happiness that one has before the absolute mastery of the psychic being is always vital?
A: In any case always mixed.

* 

Q: How can the vital be made reasonable?
A: In the same way as a child, by education.

* 

Q: Is it good that I only study, and do not concentrate?
A: Yes, that is good. If you concentrate in the morning at pranam, in the evening during meditation, that is sufficient.

* 

Complete and pure faith in the Truth is the best of all protections.

9.10.1936

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Q: Do you think there is in me a part that has complete and pure faith in the Truth?
A: Let us hope so.
Q: Which is that?
A: That can only be psychic.

10.10.1936

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Q: At times it appears that we have known you for ages, at times as if you were a stranger.
A: They are two different consciousnesses, one deep, the other superficial.

10.10.1936

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Q: Explanation of the flower “disinterested work”?
13.10.1936

Q: Is it not true that one must not think of one’s progress?
A: Certainly one must not worry oneself about it, but one must want to progress.

Q: What must I do to find out that you love me?
A: To give more importance to love than to being loved.

3.10.1936

Q: Today you gave me the flower “psychic flame”. I do not fully follow what you want to tell me by it.
A: “Agni” is the will to progress, the flame of purification that burns away all obstacles and all difficulties. In giving you the flower I encourage you to let this burn in you.

15.10.1936

Q: Today you gave me the flower “psychic centre”. What did you want to convey?
A: It is to encourage you to make an effort for awakening the contact with the psychic being.

16.10.1936

Q: Today you gave the flower “psychic centre” but at present I aspire only for the Divine Grace. How to do both the things at the same time?
A: To follow the sadhana, one must do, if necessary, a dozen things at a time.

19.10.1936

Q: Today you gave the flower “supramental light in the subconscient”. What do you mean to tell me?
A: The conscious light must penetrate into the subconscient.

20.10.1936

Q: Mother, do not leave me and see that I do not leave you. From where do these prayers come?
A: The first prayer comes from an emotional part of the mind, the second (which is truer) comes from a part of the mind open to the psychic light.

20.10.1936

Q: What did you mean to tell me in giving me the flower “protection”?
A: The protection is there. It is therefore for you to know how to profit by it.

Q: Mother, is there truly suffering in our yoga? Those who suffer, do they suffer because of difficulties in yoga?
A: No. They suffer, generally, because of want of sincerity.
Q: Or perhaps, they suffer because they invent suffering. They want to satisfy something by suffering.
A: Yes, that also happens.
Q: All suffering in this yoga looks to me imaginary.
A: Yes.

Q: What is it that suffers? The vital? Because one does not satisfy desires?
A: Most often. But it manages to suffer even when desires are satisfied.
Q: If one understands the cause of suffering, suffering is no more.
A: Exactly.
Q: It is by our stupidity that we suffer.
A: Generally, it is so.

Q: Do I not always approach you with desires?
A: You come to me thinking almost exclusively of yourself.

Q: Is it natural or do I think of myself because I am too egoistic?
A: In the ordinary life, that is perfectly natural, it is extremely rare to be otherwise.

Q: Does my whole external being think of itself only?
A: Relates all to itself, and ego-centric. Does not deal with things in themselves but with them as related to itself.

Q: I had believed that I was not so egoistic.
A: The whole physical nature everywhere and in all, is thoroughly egoistic till it is spiritualised - that is rare.
Q: I thank you very much for telling this to me. And I believe it is for this reason that I see you indifferent, that I do not see your love.
A: Surely, instead of thinking of the love I give you or which you would like me to give you, if you were to think of the love you wish to have for me, you would be more open and receptive.

Q: I think it is only your grace that can teach me to forget myself and think only of you.
A: You must also exert your will.

24.10.1936

Q: Today I feel fatigued though I have slept well.
A: Probably it is because you have done fatiguing things during the sleep.
Q: Would you say what kind of fatiguing things?
A: Fatigue in the body is a physical transcription that comes from certain activities and contact in the vital. One can, during one’s sleep go to the worst places of the vital and meet very bad beings.

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Q: Then, what should be my aspiration at present?
A: That the consciousness may grow, that you will affirm and that your consecration to the Divine become more and more sincere.

On the Prayers and Meditations

Q: I do not follow the construction: “But certain that Thy will alone exists”. (Prayers and Meditations, 11.12.1912)
A: But as I am certain that Thy will alone exists.

30.7.1934

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“Behind the veil is already heard the wordless symphony of gladness revealing Thy sublime presence.” (ibid., 11.12.1912)
Q: What does it signify?
A: Behind the appearances there exists a harmony of forces and movements which resembles an accord of all the diverse instruments in a perfect symphony.

30.7.1934

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“And all leads towards Me, who am endless Peace, shadowless Light, perfect Harmony, Certitude, Rest and supreme Blessedness.” (ibid., 5.2.1913)
Q: What does Certitude mean?
A: Faith confirmed by spiritual experience of that in which one has the faith.

31.7.1934
“In this simplicity lies the greatest power, the power which is least mixed and least gives rise to harmful reactions.” (ibid., 12.2.1913).

Q: This simplicity cannot be good since it is mixed somewhat.
A: What can there be without mixture in the world such as it is presently? Nothing, nothing, nothing.

* 

“The power of the vital should be mistrusted for it gives you the taste of immediate results.” (ibid., 12.2.1913)

Q: How?
A: It is because we like immediate and visible results that we allow ourselves to be deceived by the vital.

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Q: I think it is only by consciousness that one can come to understand the play of the vital and reject it by control and divine help.
A: Certainly.

* 

“As soon as I have no longer any material responsibilities, all thoughts about these things flee far away from me, and I am solely and entirely occupied with Thee and Thy service.” (ibid., 11.5.1913)

Q: What is ‘Thy service’ when ‘material responsibilities’ are no longer there?
A: I wrote that because, for a time, I was not living at mine but at my mother’s and thus I had no more the responsibility of the mistress of the house who should see that all is well materially.

* 

Then in that perfect peace and serenity, I unite my will to Thine, and in that integral silence I listen to thy truth and hear its expression.”

Q: I understand this to mean that only when one has perfect peace and serenity can he unite his will with Thine. And it is only in integral silence that one can hear the expression of Thy truth.
A: Yes, that is it.

* 

“It is by becoming conscious of Thy will and identifying ours with Thine that there is found the secret of true liberty and all-puissance the secret of the regeneration of forces and the transfiguration of the being.”

Q: What is the meaning of ‘the secret of the regeneration of forces’?
A: The vital and material forces are perverted. They must be regenerated so that they may be capable of expressing the divine will.

Q: ‘secret of the all-puissance’: does it mean the secret of the force that is all-puissant?
A: Yes.
“To be constantly and integrally at one with Thee is to have the assurance that we shall overcome every obstacle and triumph over all difficulties, both within and without.”

Q: The inner difficulties are those concerning the mind, vital and physical – is that right?
A: Yes.

Q: External difficulties are those caused by material things.
A: Yes.

Q: To be at one with Thee integrally means consent of all the being.
A: In harmony.

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“Thou fillest my being, Thou animatest it, Thou settest in motion its hidden springs.”

Q: What are the hidden springs?
A: The springs mean the dynamic forces that give the impulsion of movement.

*  

Q: Is there a difference between losing the “sense of separativity” and “identification”? (ibid., 19.11.1912)
A: To lose the sense of separativity is the last stage before the identification and even in identification there are several stages.

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“When it is needful that something should be known, one knows it, and the more passive the mind to Thy illumination, the clearer and the more adequate is its expression.” (ibid., 3.12.1912)

Q: Mother, when will it be possible? It will be a wonderful thing when that happens.
A: It can take place only when one has given up all personal preference.

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“For now I should not be able to repeat what was said” (ibid., 3.12.1912)

Q: Why does it happen so?
A: Because the memory belongs to the mind and it is not the mind which spoke, it was a consciousness coming from beyond.

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“Yes, we should not put too much intensity, too much effort into our seeking for Thee.... We must not desire to see Thee.” (ibid., 5.12.1912)

Q: Is this meant for all? I had thought all this must be done.
A: Certainly not.
However, generally one must never try to reproduce my experiences. I started noting them after having attained communion with the Divine, a state to which you are far from having arrived.

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“And on earth now I am the joyful [joyeux] child at play.” (ibid., 17.5.1914)
Q: I think the “I” refers to you. Then why have you not said “joyeuse” (feminine)?
A: You ought to know the Hindu tradition that the world is the result of “the play of the divine Child”. It is with this One that I was identified.

“I await, without haste, without inquietude, the tearing of another veil, the Union made more complete.” (ibid., 11.12.1912)

Q: Union between whom? Between you and the Lord of whom you speak?
A: Certainly it is the union with the Supreme that I spoke of.

“I know that the veil is formed of a whole mass of imperfections, of attachments without number.”

Q: I believe this is the veil that exists between the Supreme and the obscure material world, but it has nothing to do with you.
A: To do my work I have been obliged to identify myself with the material world and its imperfections.

Q: In the Prayer of 26.11.1912 you speak of having “almost entirely lost the gross illusion of ‘me’ and ‘mine’”. Even after this identification, the attitude does not completely let the divine act as He wishes!
A: In everything there are degrees and the perfection of one day does not any more seem a perfection the next day.

“How many times a day still, I act without my action being consecrated to Thee.” (ibid., 2.11.1912)

Q: Can one act without consecration even after communion with the Divine?
A: Certainly, communion and consecration are very different things.

Q: But is it possible to have communion before consecration?
A: The part of being which has the communion is not the same that has no consecration.

“Thou art there wherever there is need of Thee, and if they could have the supreme faith to give up seeking for Thee, but rather to await Thee Thou wouldst be there whenever there was need of Thee.” (ibid., 10.2.1913)

Q: Is that not for me?
A: It is for all - for you as for others - who are capable of taking the attitude with an integral sincerity; but I must say that it is still more difficult than to make the effort.

“More and more I fail to make a distinction between Thy work and my life, between my personality and the whole earth.” (ibid., 17.6.1913)

Q: Does it mean that the whole of your life had become a supreme work and
that you had become the whole earth – one with the earth?
A: Yes.

* 

“Thy voice is so modest, impartial, sublime in its patience and its mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any potency of will; it is like a cool, soft and pure breeze, it is like a crystalline murmur that imparts a note of harmony to discordant concert.” (ibid., 27.6.1913)

Q: I do not understand what is this voice. And how to listen to it.
A: It is the voice of the Divine; by becoming silent.

Q: Is this the same voice that comes from the depths of the heart and guides men, shows the right path, prevents men from blinding themselves?
A: When the voice comes from the heart it can have the same divine origin, but it expresses through the psychic.

Q: Then does the voice of the Divine come directly to the being?
A: That can happen under certain conditions.

* 

“Although my whole being is in theory consecrated to Thee, O Sublime, Master... I still find it hard to carry out this consecration in detail. It has taken me several weeks to learn that the reason for this written meditation, its justification, lies in the very fact of addressing it to Thee. In this way I shall put into material shape each day a little of the conversation I have so often with Thee.” (ibid., 2.11.1912)

Q: How to have conversation with the Divine even when one has not consecrated practically one’s being to the Divine?
A: Well! You will understand when that happens to you.

* 

“Then are they ready to participate in the contemplation, and to identify themselves with Thee in the supreme concentration.” (ibid., 28.11.1912)

Q: What is this contemplation and supreme concentration?
A: You will understand it when you will have had the experience.

* 

“Thou art ourselves in our real being.” (ibid., 15.8.1913)

Q: I do not understand what ‘our’ reality signifies? I thought there is only one Reality.
A: I use the word ‘Reality’ in the sense of the truth of the being.

Q: I believe it is in this truth that there is no division whatever between the Lord and ourselves.
A: That is exactly what I have said.

* 

“In truth, the essence of the impression that is felt in the presence of the most sweet, the most calm, the most compassionate smile, has a feeble analogy with what I feel when I so perceive Thee.” (ibid., 8.8.1913)
Q: What is this smile? I think only the Divine can have such a smile.
A: Not the Divine but those who have a divine consciousness.

Q: What is the difference between having a divine consciousness and becoming one with the Divine?
A: I have not mentioned someone who becomes one with the Divine; I have spoken of the Divine himself because it is that which your sentence seemed to mean.

*“Thou who ever teachest me the lesson of love” (ibid., 17.8.1913)

Q: Teach the lesson of love – does it mean how to love?
A: What is the true nature of love.

*“Is that not enough to cure us of all personal thoughts and to make us unfurl our wings and soar above the contingencies of the material life so that we can fly up into Thy divine atmosphere with the power to return as messengers to the earth and announce the glorious tidings of thy Advent which is near?” (ibid., 17.8.1913)

Q: It is not clear to me to cure all personal thoughts one must soar into the divine atmosphere and immediately return – the idea is not clear.
A: It will become clear later with the beginning of experience.

*“It was necessary that all pride should be broken, crushed, trampled down definitively, so that I may at last be capable of understanding, seeing and feeling things as they are.” (ibid., 7.10.1913)

Q: Is that sufficient (only the breaking up of pride)?
A: In this case it was sufficient.

*“I am on visit here as everywhere else.”

Q: Visit of the Divine?
A: A visit of the Divine, yes...

*“Thy messenger and thy servant upon earth, a stranger among men, and yet the very soul of their lives and the love in their hearts.” (ibid.)

Q: I do not understand the underlined words.
A: You will understand later when you will be more conscious.

Q: How is the soul stranger in the life of men and to the love in their hearts?
A: I have not said such a stupidity.

*“In the unchanging solitude of the desert there is something of thy majestic presence, and I understand why one of the best means of finding thee has always been to retire into these immense plains of sand.” (ibid., 14.3.1914)
Q: You understand; would you make me understand?
A: In perceiving the “majestic presence”, I understood.

“This marvellous silence manifests Thee, in spite of the folly of human agitation, - the immutable and constant silence so living in everything that one has only to listen in order to hear it.” (ibid., 2.1.1914)

Q: I do not understand this.
A: When you will have the experience of silence, you will understand.

“I know that a day will come when thou willst transform all those who approach us.” (ibid., 11.1.1914)

Q: What does ‘us’ signify?
A: If someone asks you you will say you know nothing.

“All the individual faculties slumber and the consciousness is not awakened in the transcendental states; that is to say, its awakening in them is intermittent and in between it is asleep.” (ibid., 19.5.1914)

Q: Does it mean before the consciousness is awake in the transcendent state there is a period when it sleeps? How long does it sleep like this?
A: The consciousness sleeps in all till it is awakened – for a second or for eternity.

Q: Then I do not think you meant this. How could your consciousness have been asleep in 1914?
A: Evidently not.

Q: Then what does it exactly mean?
A: There are experiences of universal order which can be revealed only to those who have had them.

Those who recognise thee not, those who know thee not, Those who...
(ibid., 1.6.1914)

Q: Why is the third Those in capitals?
A: It is a misprint; it ought to be small t.

“How many and different are the degrees of consciousness! This world should be reserved for that which, in a being, is illumined by thy Presence, identifies itself with thee and participates in thy absolute Consciousness, for that which has knowledge, which is ‘perfectly awakened’, as says the Buddha.” (ibid., 13.3.1914)

Q: Does it mean that when one is illumined by thy presence and identifies with thee, there are no more degrees of consciousness for him?
A: I mean that the word consciousness must be reserved for one who is conscious of the divine Presence.
Q: “In a being” – Which being?
A: Does not matter which.

* 

“Outside this state, there are infinite degrees of consciousness descending down to the complete darkness, the veritable inconscience which may be a domain not yet touched by the light of thy divine love (but that appears improbable in physical substance), or which is, by reason of some ignorance, outside our individual region of perception.”

Q: What is this “veritable inconscience” you speak of?
A: The subconscient of the subconscient.

* 

“But the fugitive duration of this supreme consciousness can be explained only by the complexity of the elements of the being, by their inequality in the illumination and by the fact that they enter successively into activity.”

Q: I do not follow.
A: Later when your brain will have formed a little more and you have a little more knowledge, you will understand what I mean to say.

* 

“Undoubtedly we must learn how to control our subconscient as we control our conscious thought. The means of arriving at it are numerous.... But there is certainly something more rapidly effective.” (ibid., 25.11.1913)

Q: What is that?
A: The descent of the supramental.

* 

“Thou hast sent me the struggle... I welcome it.... One of the best means of bringing back to light some element of the work which might otherwise have been forgotten.” (ibid., 22.6.1920)

Q: I do not follow.
A: It does not concern personally but the universal movements.

* 

“A few days back I had known, I had heard: 'If thou weepest frankly and without constraint before me, many things will change, a great victory will be won.'” (ibid., 12.7.1918)

Q: Weeping here does not have the usual meaning, is it not?
A: Evidently.

* 

“The world is divided into two contrary forces which struggle for supremacy and both are equally opposed to thy law.” (ibid., 9.9.1914)

Q: Which are these forces?
A: If you had read the Meditations carefully you would not need to pose this question. The two forces are those of construction and destruction.
“And if I always show myself to be at the height of what thou expectest from me, a day will come O Lord, when thou wilt be upon the earth, and the whole earth will rise against thee. But thou wilt take the earth in thy arms and it will be transformed.” (ibid., 17.1.1915)

Q: I do not understand.
A: Yes, it needs some more years of spiritual progress for you before you are able to understand.

*  

“May my consciousness be identified with thy consciousness so that thou alone mayst be the will acting through this fragile and transient instrument.” (ibid., 9.5.1914)

Q: Why do you call the instrument fragile and transient?
A: The instrument in question here is the earth which has a fugitive life in regard to the eternal consciousness.

*  

“All rules have vanished, the regularity of the discipline has disappeared, all effort has ceased; not by my own will, not, I think by negligence either, but because the circumstances conspire to make it so.” (ibid., 23.4.1914)

Q: How does this happen? Because the Divine has taken possession and there is no more effort to be made?
A: Yes.

Q: Does the Divine draw away from us?
A: No, it is we who draw away from Him.

*  

Q: When you write “O Divine Force, Supreme Illuminator, listen to our prayers, do not draw away, do not retire, help us to combat...” What do you mean to say?
A: I spoke not to the Divine himself but to a Force, emanation of the Divine, descended to do a certain work on the earth and could have receded if it had seen that the work which it had come to do was impossible.
As I look back

- by Shivabhai Amin

It was during my school days (1916-1920) that I came to know of Sri Aurobindo, as a national leader who believed in Yoga. To see his photograph was to convince oneself for ever. Earlier I had been reading Vaishnava literature under the guidance of my grandfather and was of course drawn to Shri Krishna. Then came the works of Rama Tirtha, Ramakrishna Kathamrita and sadhana of sorts, asanas, pranayama, concentration, meditation observing chakras etc. Through Puraniji and under his care, I began turning to Sri Aurobindo and his books like Yoga and Its Objects and biographical sketches appearing in magazines, especially Uttarpada Vyakhyana and Letters to Mrinalini.

In 1924 I went to Hrishikesh and stayed at Ramashrama on the Ganges following a certain system of concentration and japa of OM according to Swami Rama Tirtha, also reading Ramakrishna Kathamrita, but with Sri Aurobindo as the guiding star.

During college days, I had been giving up studies off and on and joining as a volunteer in the National Movement first in Anand Taluka and later in Borsad Taluka. It was about this time I went to see Vishnu Bhaskar Lele at Anand and Paul Richard at Patan. I was getting restive with Gandhiji’s insistence on Spinning-wheel as a cure-all for India’s ills and I felt a strong need to get away from the rut in which the national movement and its workers, among whom I lived, had bogged down. Thus I decided to go overseas for further studies and before going out came to Pondicherry and had Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan and blessings in the beginning of 1926.

On the approved day, going up the staircase all thoughts seemed to have been wiped out of my consciousness except a feeling that it was being opened out by some unseen power fold by fold, petal by petal and was being searched inside out. I went up to Sri Aurobindo, put the rose garland round his neck and bowed down at his feet. He looked steadily on. I spoke about my plans to go overseas and asked for his blessings for spiritual progress and he indicated a minor looking programme which has not yet been satisfactorily completed though 45 years have since elapsed.

It was 12 years later (in 1938) that I came again to Pondicherry. In the interval I had been to Kenya for a year, where I was assured of financial help for further studies, then in London for nearly four years studying law, started practising as a barrister in 1932, and took to Kenya politics in the East African Indian National Congress as a Member of the Executive, then as a General Secretary and led a delegation to India on Indians’ Rights.

In England I had come into contact with political Radicals of all kinds and Pacifists and Vegetarians and Theosophists and Revolutionaries and of course
the Communists who showed interest in and all but took me into their fold except that they could not take in a confirmed theist.

It was in 1934 that I had further experience of the Grace. I had an attack of pneumonia. Medical treatment did not help much. The illness continued for weeks. Then I started pranayama and concentration, repeating OM and remembering Sri Aurobindo. One day I had a vivid vision. There was the Divine Mother smiling and assuring protection with Purani standing in the background. As I saw this I clearly felt some obstruction in the chest dissolving. And from that moment I started recovering. This incident had an interesting sequel. As I continued to get temperature in the evenings, a heart specialist, a renowned English doctor was called in. On examining me he asked how I had managed to keep the lungs clean. By pranayama, perhaps, I answered. He expressed his pleasure and said that I was lucky that my own doctor had not diagnosed the disease. For, he added, there had been a patch on the lung which had cleaned up as the lungs were clean.

*  

Another experience in which inner help by Sri Aurobindo played a decisive part relates to my political life.

In 1938 the Government of Kenya was putting pressure on the Wakamba tribe to sell away their cattle on a false plea that the land in their reserve could not support their increasing stock. The truth was that the British Authorities were starting a meat factory in that area in order to build up meat reserves for the army should war break out in Europe, as expected. They had planned to slaughter the cattle compulsorily acquired from Wakamba tribe for this purpose. Naturally the tribe refused. And some six to seven thousand of them came and camped on the outskirts of Nairobi asking to meet the Governor. The Governor declined to accede. The Wakamba would not return home. There was much tension and their camp being adjacent to the Indian part of the town, Indians were naturally exercised about it. But no Indian leader would think of taking any kind of action. As Secretary of the Indian Association, I felt I could not shirk responsibility and sought guidance from Sri Aurobindo in silent concentration and on a clear indication, I set out to meet the leader of the tribesmen. This step was fraught with grave consequences but on the strength of the inner light I proceeded. I assured the leader of our active interest and set in motion a series of events which ultimately led to the Governor agreeing to meet the Wakamba tribe in their own reservation. A new chapter was thus opened between the Indian settlers and the tribesmen.

I may add that one of the follow-up actions of this turn was the joint movement launched by Indians and the Kikuyu people against the reservation of Highlands for Europeans, in which Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was to figure much later along with Maharaj Singh, H.S.L. Pollock and Malcolm MacDonald.

Another notable incident that I must record is my visit to a waterfall in 1941. While moving half way along the narrow ledge of the rock behind the falling cascade, I began losing my balance and was about to fall down the ravine. I closed my eyes and thought of the Supreme Being and Sri Aurobindo. Instantly I regained balance and moved further along to safety.

I came for a long stay at Pondicherry in 1942. While staying in the Ashram I received telegrams from friends in Kenya asking me to contest the election for a
seat to the State Legislature which had fallen vacant. In fact they had already proposed my name and they were only asking me for a formal confirmation. I was not inclined to accept and had once refused the offer but thought it better to seek Sri Aurobindo’s advice on the point when the offer was repeated. He sent word of advice that I should accept it. That decided the issue and I was elected while I was still in India.

It was in the third week of November that year that I started from Pondicherry to return to Nairobi. When I sought the Mother’s permission to leave through Nolini, she asked him whether there was any particular hurry. I explained matters to him and asked if there was any spiritual reason for Mother to say so. He said that Mother saw some danger in that area. However, I left and reached Bombay on the day the steamer was to sail. Imagine my surprise to find that one of the vaccination certificates required was missing. Someone offered to get me the needed certificate by improper means. But I declined; it was 18th November and Darshan day being so near, I travelled back to Pondicherry. I had Darshan on the 24th and left for Bombay on the 25th reaching there on the 27th. I went straight to the offices of the Passenger Agent and there I learnt that the steamer by which I was to have sailed had been sunk in the ocean.

I was saved from certain disaster. I did not know how to swim and more than two-thirds of passengers and crew of that steamer had lost their lives.

One or two political events come to my mind for the part the Mother’s Grace played in the developments.

It was in 1962 that the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya gathered force. It was a kind of armed revolt by the Africans against the British Rule. Many of the leaders were clapped in jail. Many escaped abroad and the rest went underground. When things were rather bleak some followers of one of the leaders, who on his return from England in 1937 had brought a letter for me from Pandit Nehru asking the Indian Congress to render whatever help was possible to the Africans, came to my house when I was away at Mombasa in the middle of the night. When my wife opened the door she was greeted by four African men and a daughter of Kenyatta who is presently the President of Kenya. They asked to see me and on being told by my wife that I was away they asked for food. They were given what was available. A message was left for me to be sent to me and on my return the party again called on us. They said they were helpless and did not know what to do. They had come to me as their leader Mbiyn Koinange’e who was away in London, had told them to come to me when help or advice was needed. I thought for a moment and then took them to our prayer room. I asked them to sit before the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and suggested they might pray to them for help. They all broke into sobs and stayed for quite some time praying.

As this was going on a feeling – almost a certainty – rose in me that now that they had submitted their prayer to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, their cause would not fail. They prepared a letter there and then praying to the Mother for help in their dire need which was sent to the Mother.

And I was not surprised at all later on at the turn of history when the very same leaders who were then imprisoned came to power.

One afternoon in Pondicherry, in January 1938, as a swarm of mosquitoes had as usual set up humming and buzzing almost like a live orchestra of their own all
around the mosquito net, I was fidgeting more and more inside, in unbearable heat. I threw over the net in desperation inviting them as it were to do their worst. And lo! their music stopped. The army of mosquitoes seemed to have received orders to move out; they disappeared; never to trouble me again.

One night in Golconde, the first time I was there in 1942, I had a dream in which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother appeared in surgeon’s garb around me on an operation table where I was lain out and performed some surgery in the area of my stomach and intestines. Since then the chronic constipation and its brood I suffered from my childhood seemed to have left me for ever.

In passing I may mention that in 1957 a false case was foisted on me at the instance of one of the unsuccessful parties whom I had sought to help in a family feud. Political elements in the Government were ranged against me and wanted to make capital out of the case. However, I had firm faith in the Divine Grace and it happened that I was totally innocent in the matter. The judge held there was no case to answer; he refused again when a further charge was brought and the chapter ended. Of course, we had informed the Mother of the episode.

It was in 1958 that there was an impasse in the political situation in Kenya. The British Government had announced their intention to transfer power to the Africans gradually but they were faced with opposition from the European settlers on the one hand and the African leadership on the other. The African leaders had taken an extreme position and refused to enter into negotiations. Kenyatta was in detention and the other leaders had to take an uncompromising position for fear of losing their leadership. Odinga had ranged himself firmly on the side of die extremist section and Tom Mboya was known to have been more moderate, though in appearance he gave a different impression. As the President of the Kenya Indian Congress, I was approached by the British authorities to persuade the Africans to enter into negotiations without conditions. It was difficult. I waited for guidance from within. And wonder of wonders one day Tom Mboya himself walked into my office. He was tense and did not know which way to proceed. The national movement was showing signs of cracking and the extremists were trying to isolate him and he had no one else to consult. He agreed to enter into discussion with the Government unconditionally. And when it was announced that the African leadership was willing to join the discussion, it was considered nothing short of a miracle.

I should recall another episode which occurred towards the end of 1959. As the time for the transfer of power came nearer, there was a worked up tension among the European population regarding the safety of the citizens. Rumour was spread that the moment the Africans came into power they would simply wipe out the unwanted elements which meant the European settlers.

To disabuse the public of this fear, myself and a few of my colleagues contacted Kenyatta and explained to him the position. He was bitter and told us how cruelly he had been treated while in detention. We heard him patiently and sympathetically. But he accepted our suggestion to issue a statement assuring safety to all. In fact he asked us to draft the statement and he put his signature thereto. When this statement was splashed in the press the effect was electric.

During these talks Kenyatta took me aside and asked me what was the main teaching on the theory of non-violence and violence in the Gita. I explained that
it was not nonviolence on all occasions but use of violence also to resist evil when the occasion demanded.

Throughout these talks I was aware of the Presence and Grace within my heart.

During the days of transition from colonial rule to freedom of Kenya, I had learnt from some of my British friends that in order to ensure that the transfer of power was orderly and peaceful and the period thereafter free from upheaval, the British authorities were planning to start new industries in Kenya. Their idea was to create a middle class of Africans who could be absorbed in these industries and hence would be interested in maintaining a peaceful transition even when the British left ultimately. For otherwise troubles were sure to follow, there being practically no African middle class in the political set up. They honestly wanted to create a substantial element which would be interested in safeguarding law and order. But they were afraid that Pandit Nehru might condemn this move of the British as imperialism by the back-door; and thus destroy whatever prospects the project had. It was in this frame of mind that I came to Pondicherry in 1960. It was the year when Chou-en Lai had finally broken with Pandit Nehru and things were dark indeed. When I mentioned to Mother that I had to go to Delhi to see Nehru she asked me why. I explained the whole position and my mission to acquaint Nehru with the background of the situation in East Africa and to plead, with him not to hustle the British and the French unduly. The Mother nodded and said, “all success”. She also mentioned the World Union movement which she had launched and asked me to speak of it to Nehru.

My appointment had been fixed and accordingly I went to Pandit Nehru’s Office to meet him. But the atmosphere there was totally different from what it used to be before, during my previous visit. The tension with China had made deep indent everywhere and the Prime Minister had cancelled most of his appointments, especially as he was due to leave for London for a conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers within a few days. When the Secretary told me that the interview had to be cancelled, I naturally demurred that it could not be so and told him that I had come all the way from Africa only for that interview. He asked me to wait and take a chance. As I was waiting, the Prime Minister arrived. He was walking alone to his room. I was struck by the sudden change in his gait and his sad aspect. He swayed from side to side and carried himself with effort. No one dared to go near him. Slowly he entered as one weighed down by his burdens.

After some time I was called in. It was depressing to see him. I opened the interview saying: Indians overseas rejoiced in India’s success and shared her sorrows also, and that I had brought to him their love and admiration and best wishes. His face changed. He brightened up and began to take interest. I explained to him the purpose of my visit and was to impress on him that there was no further need to hustle England and France in regard to African stand on the transfer of Political Power and that industrial development was necessary. He promised not to do anything at the Prime Ministers’ conference that might unduly push the British and the French in Africa or obstruct industrial developments.

Then I mentioned to him the launching of the World Union movement and that
the Mother had desired him to take interest in its work. At the mention of the Mother’s name his whole face lit up and he sat up, as it were. He looked happy and told me although he might not be able to take active interest in the World Union, he was certainly interested in it. On this happy note the meeting terminated.
August 13

Recently S. Doraiswamy gave a copy of *Uma Sahasram* for Sri Aurobindo’s perusal who seemed to have deeply appreciated it. And the Mother expressed on her own: "If Ganapati Sastri is inclined to come for the August 15th Darshan he is welcome." It was communicated to Nayana**** at Tiruvannamalai. Sri Ramana seems to have said ‘When this suggestion by the Mother came unsought by Nayana, it must be a *Daiva Sankalpam.*’

August 15

Sri Aurobindo’s birthday celebration on the Ashram – and all of us had the privilege of Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Nayana, though pessimistic at first, after he had the actual Darshan, expressed “O, *divya murtulu* – O, Divine Personalities!” so much so, he stayed on till September 1st.

August 16

Nayana’s interview with the Mother for 30 minutes. They meditated together; Nayana felt spiritual current passing into him from all directions. Later on the Mother said to S. Doraiswamy: “He is the one man who immediately entered into my spiritual Consciousness and stuck to it to the end.”

August 19

Nayana’s second interview with the Mother for 45 minutes. He recited verses composed on the Mother. Talked of present Avatara. The Mother got into trance. Nayana perceived light passing through her toe and then a glowing halo around her entire being, the whole atmosphere surcharged with divine current.

October 6

Interview with the Mother – 4 to 4.30 p.m.

Spoke about my restlessness at soup time for at least 3 days.

Mother: It is due to the power operating.

*I: Lot of colour visions.*

Mother: It is very interesting.

*I: Occasional sensation between the eyebrows.*

Mother: I see that centre is opening.

November 8

Received a copy of Sri Aurobindo’s message to the sadhaks. Went to bed at 12 midnight after copying out the message. Felt a wonderful tremor in the entire being, every atom of it, as if several batteries were at once operating.
1929

June 6
Wonderful experience while doing pranam to the Mother at soup time: flashes of light exactly circular like sun were seen between the eyebrows.

August 9
Fell from the Champak tree in my garden when trying to pluck moon flower creeping on the tree. Bedridden.

August 15
Missed the great Darshan. The Mother was kind enough to visit me twice while in bed with bad leg.

1930

March 29
The Mother sent word through Nolini at 9 p.m. after soup and meditation: While pouring me soup at 8.15 p.m. she saw in her vision a snake between my room and the garden – “Ask Venkataraman to be careful, it is a nasty creature, it may be real or symbolic”.

July 22
Mother communicates through Sahana: “Venkataraman has a very beautiful voice.”

1931

January 16
The Mother’s most interesting conversation with Dilip on Nirvikalpa Samadhi and her going out of the body experiencing actual death once as a consequence – which it seems was necessary for her own fulfilment – and as prophesied by sages – her resuscitation and revival etc.

March 7
On a motor car drive with the Mother - self, Nolini, Pavitra, Chadwick, Dilip, Sahana - after 6 miles, walked into a mango garden. Sat. The subject for meditation was “Pre-destination”. The Mother explained what it means in a few words: Those that are predestined, however ordinary and common they may appear for the time being, are sure of Divine Realisation and so the contrary.

March 15
Evening drive with the Mother. Sat on the bank of a beautiful pond for nearly an hour. Meditated long. The Mother gave her first impression on landing in India as to how even the poor, the lowly and the uncultured man in India was nearer Divinity in nature unlike those of similar class in Europe who were positively ugly and repulsive (with reference to their inner being). She related one of her early experiences at Pondicherry when she was residing in a house in Rue Dupleix. As she was walking in meditation, suddenly through a cut piece of blue glass, stuck on the walls, she actually saw the Himalayas with all its greenness and grandeur, nay, experienced even its coolness.

April 10
Extraordinary and celestial charm and beauty shone in the Mother’s face as she was distributing flowers after soup – such youth, such grace, such that I never saw before. Such perfection! It is indescribable. I drank of the cup of ambrosia which her face presented, to my fill – not content yet. O Mother, who art Thou?

June 7

Evening drive with the Mother to the mango garden. She gave us an extremely interesting and inspiring talk of her life since as a child of 5 or 6. Born in a rich family, surrounded by wealth and luxury, she used to sit on a very low chair, observe something almost touching the entire head (hovering about it, so to speak). Light and Force powerfully seen and felt. It continued all the time increasing in strength and size. She very much wished the thing to descend on her and she tried to have it by specialising in music – vocal and piano – by painting and by science – but all these did not help much to the purpose. She studied in what is called a ‘Cours’ in France, meant for the rich only – not more than 20 in number where eminent professors came and in all the examinations she was always first in the class. One day in 1906 when she went to paint in the room of a comrade N. this comrade in the course of a talk of his brother (by the way he was a Cosmic and a disciple of Theon of Algeria) related of things occult, and this accident put her at once into communion with the Universal and she realised herself, was able to know all her past births, that she had descended into this world for bringing down a Higher Light. She had communion with numberless beings of the Higher Worlds and she knew of the Supreme and that in India. However, she could not be absolutely sure until she came to India and saw Sri Aurobindo. The moment she saw him she at once recognised him for what he was and that he was the incarnation.

1933

July 23

Long interview with the Mother. When I asked about my progress, she said: “Cease this asking about progress – feel the Divine everywhere and in everything – first feel it within yourself, i.e. whatever you do, you think, you talk, you act is all from the Divine – that you are an integral part of the Divine – strengthen your consecration to the Divine and perfect it and there will be no need for concerning yourself about progress. Establish equanimity and don’t feel insulted, for who can insult the Divine?”

December 19

The unexpected blow caused by my indiscretion. Obviously it was so serious that it upset me very seriously and I almost felt like committing suicide. I wrote to the Mother my wretched state of mind and begged her to take up my soul afresh after suicide and shape it to higher life from the start.

December 21

Sri Aurobindo’s reply to the above:

“IT seems to me an excessive reaction considering that all that is in question is some habitual movements of the external being which do not affect the inner realisation.
These external habits have to be changed, but you can do it quietly without allowing their presence to throw you into despondency and despair. It is best done by detaching yourself from them and calling in the Mother’s Force to act there and spread the deeper realisation into the outward parts. Your reasoning about violently getting rid of the body in order to get a better one hereafter is entirely wrong. For when one throws away the present life in that way instead of facing its difficulties one not only gets into blacker difficulties after death but in the next life all becomes not better but worse – an inferior embodiment with all the former difficulty from which you fled renewed with less favourable circumstances. There is no way out there. Instead of indulging such feelings, you should put them away from you and turn to the Mother’s Grace which has not failed and which is not going to fail you for strength and succour. Recover your balance and develop the psychic progress you were already making so rapidly up to now.”

1936

January 28

Interview with the Mother. The main advice she gave me was to use my tongue carefully, that is, not to be indiscreet. She finds my progress satisfactory – is not in favour of my practising Hatha Yoga which I was seriously attempting.

May 31

Evening went to sea bath with Nirod and Purani – got into great danger due to terrible waves and treacherous undercurrent. Almost gave up hopes, cried to the Mother, all of us escaped from fatal end.

‘Nayana’ means father in Telugu. That is how Vasishtha Ganapati Muni was addressed by his devotees and admirers.
Contents

Preface 3

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as I saw Them
- by V. Chidanandam 4

How I came to Sri Aurobindo
- by Ganpatram 15

Grace Comes to the Seeker
- as narrated by “K” 19

As I Remember
- by Kanailal Ganguly 26

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother as I saw Them Fifty Years Back
- by T. Kodandarama Rao 33

The Grace of the Mother
- by Maganbhai Desai 38

A Look Behind
(Some Early Recollections of the Ashram)
- by Mrityunjoy 42

A Few Reminiscences
- by Pujalal 58

Long Back
- by Dr. Rajangam 61

How I came to the Ashram
- by Rakhal Das Bose 64

The Grace
(Some Reminiscences)
- by Romen Palit 67

Forty Years Ago
- by Sahana Devi 78

Their Deep Compassion
- by S.T. 126

My World: The Mother
- by Shanti Doshi 146

As I look back
- by Shivabhai Amin 251

My Diary-Leaves
- by K.S. Venkataraman 257