

AT THE FEET OF

The Mother

AND

Sri Aurobindo

Sahana

A T T H E F E E T O F

THE MOTHER

AND

SRI AUROBINDO

SAHANA

Translated from the original Bengali

by NIRODBARAN

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Publishers' Note

This book is of reminiscences of Sahana who has been living in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for more than 56 years at the feet of the Mother and the Master. It was originally written in Bengali. Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) was eager to publish an English translation in the Ashram's Monthly Review of Culture, *Mother India*, edited by himself. At his request Nirodbaran kindly agreed to translate it. After everything had been arranged, the author sent to *Mother India* many more letters of Sri Aurobindo's in answer to questions asked by her, which were not in the original Bengali book.

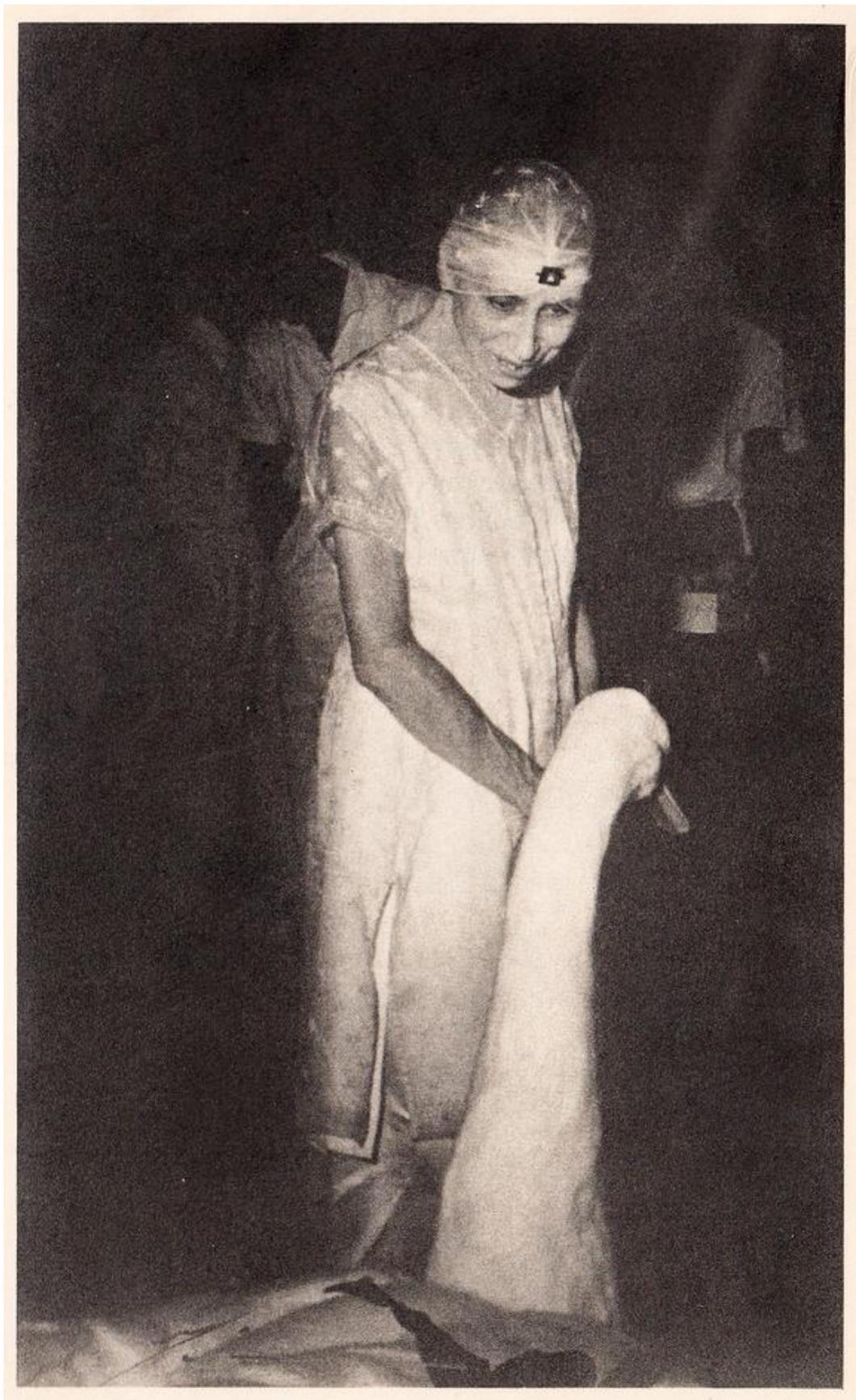
The translation came out in *Mother India* from February 1981 to May 1984. At the request of many readers it is now offered to the public in book-form.

FOREWORD

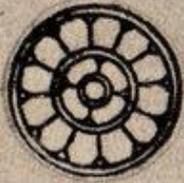
I offer my humble and deepest gratitude to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the constant downpour of their Divine Grace and Compassion, and the Help bestowed on me while working for the publication of this book. I am also grateful to them for making a number of friends come and give valuable assistance in various ways for this cause. I need not express my feelings for what I owe to them — I only pray, “May they be showered with the Blessings of the Divine Mother!”

23.10.84

Sahana







2-2-63

18

Sahana, my dear child,
What is this?
There is nothing
to fear - all
is the Lord - there
is nothing else
than the Lord;

19
the Lord alone
exists and all
that tries to fighten
us is only a
silly and meaningless
desquise of the
Lord.

Cheer up - The
way is open before you,

shake off this
obsession of illness
and bring down
the Divine Calm.

Then every thing
will be all right.

With love and
blessings



Sahana, 20 complete what I told you yesterday
about Radha's dance I have noted this down
as an indication of the thought and
feeling Radha must have within her
when she stands at the end in front
of Krishna:

"Every thought of my mind, each emotion
of my heart, every movement of my
being, every feeling and every sensation,
each cell of my body, each drop of my
blood, all, all is yours, yours absolutely,
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 the Divine Rapture."

Li

Sahana

(6) 51. 1482

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

I am exceedingly glad to hear that
you are all right. As for the trouble you speak of, we need
no trouble so long as you can carry you farther and farther on
the path of bhakti. Let the great consciousness, the
vision and the peace grow and the psychic liberated
from these veils flood you with the divine love and the
soul's happiness. We shall certainly concentrate our endeavors
to help you towards that.

Sri Anubandh

Sachana

It will take me a little time to
review what you have written in your
letters. There are several things I have to
explain to you about the sadhana and the
nature of the surrender in connection with
what you want us to do. It would be
too long for me to write tonight. But
remember that you have to get hold of
your psychic basis - the success of any method
really depends on that and not on the
method itself which is only a means for the
inner being to act on the outer nature
10-6-32. For iturobrudo



I

A story of long, long ago. It is half a century since I came to Sri Aurobindo, Pondicherry. Thenceforth I have been living in this hallowed place, the pilgrim-home of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Myself and Dilip arrived here on 22nd November 1928. Till then many warring thoughts and feelings had crowded into my mind. But when I stepped into the Ashram, I saw that the mind had become quiet, free from fears and anxieties and was prepared to accept. I found myself gradually at home in the sacred precincts of the Ashram, though everything was still unfamiliar and strange. But the distance soon vanished and by the Grace of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's touch, a new world came to light which was reflected in the lives of the inmates. I perceived that a new consciousness was seeking an opportunity to be born at every instant.

Inspired by the unique teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, my journey started leading through an unaccustomed path to an unknown world, gathering on the way various rich experiences and insights, as the consciousness opened itself to new horizons of mystic beauty and wonder. I could perceive clearly that many veils were being lifted, what had been obscure became lucid and an awareness of many things hidden before took shape.

On my arrival I thought there were altogether 60-70 inmates, the number of women being about 12 to 14. There were no children; but I noticed one or two teen-age girls, one of whom lived for some time in the same house where I had been given a room when I had first come. The great devotion I once saw in this small girl gave me a thrilled experience which I shall now narrate.

A few days after I had come, I obtained two photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in order to keep them in my room. I had a very beautiful photo frame with me; the Mother's picture did not fit it, while Sri Aurobindo's was all right in every way except that it was slightly taller. So without any qualms I cut off some portion of the lower part of it and fitted it into the frame. We often take such liberties in the case of friends and relatives and do not feel at all uneasy about it, but I did not realise that to

put these friends' and relatives' photos on the same level as those of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was a big error of inner perception. That is why I could pare off and throw into the dust-bin the image of the very feet we had come to adore! It was a photo, no doubt, but the photo of the Avatar's feet!

That small girl came one day to my room and was very pleased to see Sri Aurobindo's picture in that frame, but when she heard what I had done, she was startled and tears began to roll down her cheeks. With an anguished voice, she said, "How could you cut and throw away Sri Aurobindo's feet?" I was stunned, gazed at her face and saw what love and devotion were shining there. I fathomed the gulf of difference between her and me. She opened my eyes that day.

All the inmates seemed to be preoccupied with their sadhana. There was a sincere awakening in them to prepare themselves for practising Sri Aurobindo's yoga and an earnest effort was evident. Sadhana did not mean only meditation and concentration or the following of some special method. Work, activity, studies, etc., whatever one was doing, was done as a part of sadhana. Therefore each one pursued his own way in accord with his inner need and particular urge. There were no external rites and ceremonies to be observed in this sadhana and it did not depend on any fixed rules and methods. What it depended on was something else. When one came from outside, what one particularly felt at first was the atmosphere of the Ashram. It indicated the way in which the Ashram-life should proceed.

I had never before entered into such a concentrated hushed surrounding, nor had I experienced any touch of it. But it takes very little time to understand that the foundation of this life rests upon One who not only influences, penetrates and pervades the atmosphere, but even pulsates in the bosom of stillness. The entire rhythm of life flows in a single-pointed direction. All mind and life tend towards it: hardly any chatting or gossip, nor any sensational movement, no visits from people except on business. Silent consecration of oneself to the work in order to make it a flawless and harmonious achievement was evident in each one's sincere effort.

Each member's work was indeed a marvel. Could one work in this manner unless one deeply loved the Divine? The girl about whom I spoke was barely 14 years old and with what joy and ardour she was embroidering one sari after another for the Mother! Her perseverance was as endless as her fervour. Not only at saris did I see her doing this, but also at many other things. What she sewed with subtle artistry is a thing that even now is an object of admiration; even now people say, "No, it isn't work, it is adoration of the Divine."

As I am speaking of the early days of the Ashram, when I was a newcomer, and as I am painting the memory of those past days of my Ashram-life, let me first of all offer my heartfelt gratitude to one whose contact and companionship was at the root of my acceptance of the spiritual life. From him I received ever fresh inspiration, inner sympathy and encouragement to take up this life. Above all it was he who brought me to this life, and through him I got the supreme opportunity of accepting the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as my Gurus. To him, therefore, my whole life's sincere pranam.

By "Ashram" is meant the building in which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived. This building consisted of four small and big houses. They were at first separate; when the Ashram was formed they were one by one bought and, after they had been broken, repaired, their parts joined here and there or doors made, they were welded into one large building. These houses occupying the four corners in a rectangular fashion were constituted into one whole structure, which we call the Ashram. More correctly, it is the main building of the Ashram.

When one enters here through the main gate, the two-storey building that first catches the eye, was the origin of what we call the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In 1922 Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to this house with some disciples. The Mother founded the Ashram while living in this house. Sri Aurobindo used to live on the first floor in the south-west part. On 24th November 1926, he attained the Realisation known as the Descent of the

Overmind¹ and, leaving the entire charge to the Mother, he retired from that day into seclusion “obviously to work things out” as he wrote to Nirodbaran.

Later, when the house situated on the north-east corner of the Ashram was bought, they came to live there (somewhere at the beginning of February 1927). I saw them already installed there when I arrived. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor and they gave darshan from a small room on the south-east side. The interviews with the Mother used to take place in this room.

Below, on the ground floor, Nolini² lived in one room, by the side of which was the room of Amrita³. Ambalal Purani⁴ had a room on the left side of the outer courtyard. Purani was once leader of the Gujarat youth movement. Pavitra⁵ (name given by Sri Aurobindo) lived in the upper storey of a building which was joined with the western side of the main building. His French name was Philippe Barbier de Saint-Hilaire. In one room below lived the Ashram engineer Chandulal⁶. There was a gate on the northern side through which the Mother used to go out for a motor drive for about 1½

¹ “24th November 1926 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, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.” (29.10.35) (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, ed. 1953, p. 208)

² Nolini Kanta Gupta: from his eighteenth year since the time he was in Bengal, he has been Sri Aurobindo’s companion. He was arrested along with Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore bomb case.

³ Tamil Brahmin of Pondicherry. From the age of 14, even before seeing Sri Aurobindo, he became a great devotee and follower of Sri Aurobindo and began to frequent his house without meeting him. He first met Sri Aurobindo in 1914 and left his home to become his disciple in the same year. He departed from his body on 31st January 1969.

⁴ In 1914 Purani began to correspond with Sri Aurobindo. In 1918, he came to Pondicherry and had his first darshan of Sri Aurobindo. On October, 1923 he came away finally to settle in the Ashram. He left his body on 11th December 1965.

⁵ He joined the Ashram and became Sri Aurobindo’s disciple on 28th December 1925. In 1969 he passed away.

⁶ He came in 1928, 19th February and passed away on 5th November, 1945.

hours every evening. Pavitra was her driver. Most of the inmates used to gather at the gate to have the Mother's Darshan. That house was later demolished and the present new one erected.

The "Library House" was the name given to the building in front of the main gate. I saw Anilbaran living in the room which Sri Aurobindo had once occupied. The Mother's room on the north was now Champaklal's. Since then we have been seeing Champaklal as the most devoted servant of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The library was set up on the ground-floor, and in the adjacent room were kept newspapers spread on mats. It was named "Reading Room" and visited by the sadhaks in their leisure hours.

The front courtyard had a kind of shed where the milkmen brought their cows to be milked after the udders had been washed with potassium permanganate. The sadhak-supervisor of this work used, to filter this frothy milk through a clean piece of cloth (one cannot but wonder at the meticulous cleanliness and tidiness observed here in everything). The sadhak was named Dara by Sri Aurobindo. The affluent Mussulman family of Hyderabad to which he belonged had settled here a few months before me. There were three brothers, two sisters and their step-mother. They were very handsome people.

At the end of the large courtyard of the Library House was another house called by the Mother "Rosary House".

You crossed a small yard to enter this house and on its left side was a thatched cottage — the Ashram kitchen. The maid-servants did the cooking and the sadhaks served the dishes. The sadhikas took up the cooking job a year or two after my arrival and I used to cook twice a week. The entire cooking work had to be done by oneself. No servants were available to help us. As I was a little liberal in the use of oil and ghee, Sri Aurobindo once jokingly said, "If Sahana were to cook, the Ashram would turn insolvent in three months."

The sadhak who had the sole charge of the cooking and the Dining Room was named "Dyuman" by Sri Aurobindo, his former name having been Chunibhai. The marketing and other supplies were in his hand. He lived on

the top floor of the Rosary House from where began the building which lodged the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I had my first Darshan in this house and all the Darshans were given in the same room where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to take their seat side by side. It would be futile to describe to a layman what Darshan was — what the Two gave and what we received. The last joint Darshan was on the 24th November 1950.

At the end of many changes, the present picture of the Ashram is something like this — a huge building with a large courtyard. At the centre of the courtyard and serving as the luminous heart of it is the Samadhi of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the source of our very life-breath, a fountain of Shakti and inspiration. Their sacred relics, remnants of their earthly embodiments, are lying there.

There will they remain —

Soil one with the soil touching the earth
Bearing its burden as an act of benediction
So long as piercing the inmost armour
Of the darkest night,
Enters not the Light.

Years before the Mother was laid in the Samadhi, the nearby house in which she lived had one more storey erected for her own use.

At the time when I came, most of the houses were rented and very few bought. All of them were known by the names given by the Mother. The inmates lived distributed in them.

Three meals were served; in the morning, one big bowl of ‘phoscao’ — it tasted like ‘cocoa’ but more savoury, some pieces of toast and one banana. The Dining Room was a long thatched hall on the north-west of the Ashram building. Nolini was among those inmates who used to serve; he gave ‘phoscao’ and toast. At noon, we had rice, two curries or one curry and dal, sometimes khicheri with fritters, one big bowl of curd and two bananas, and bread, if wanted. For dinner, which was served early in the evening, we had bread, curry or dal and a big bowl of milk. Two or three days a week, a big

bowl of 'payesh' (a kind of pudding) was given. Those who did not eat in the Dining Room had their meals sent with maid-servants to their respective rooms in an enamel dish covered with another dish. All the sadhikas ate at home.

On the first of every month, the Mother would distribute the necessary requirements of the inmates, such as soap, towel, gamcha, etc. Of course, a quantity or quota was fixed for each individual. Things were distributed from the same hall as is done now. The Mother would come in the afternoon and, after she had seated herself, the function started. The requirements of each individual were prettily arranged in a cardboard box. The inmates, proceeding in a file towards the Mother, would stand before her and accept their boxes. She would give Rs. 2 as our pocket money. Thus we received whatever we needed from the Mother herself.

Flowers have a unique place in the Ashram and the way of dealing with them is something new and excites our wonder. There is deep intimacy between them and our life. We have almost forgotten their common names and what we know is the name given by the Mother to each flower according to its inner vibration — its spiritual meaning. For instance, the meaning of *tulsi* is "devotion" and we know it as such and have offered it to the Mother as "devotion"; we have forgotten the other name. Similarly with *shephali*. To the Mother it is "aspiration" and to us it is the same. Thus all flowers are known to us by their inner significances. In all countries the flower is a part of religious ceremonies and offered in worship to God. But here it is much more, it has been the language of our inner communication with the Mother. How often have we not intimated our heart's yearning through the flowers and received her blessings and directions through them!

Every morning our life began with pranam to the Mother and her blessings. She came down at about 6 a.m. to give blessings and took her seat in the room now occupied by Bula, head of the Electric Department. A slightly elevated wooden pedestal, covered with a velvet cushion formed her seat, and by her side stood a large dish containing various flowers. We waited outside and when she had sat down we entered one by one and bowed at her feet. She placed her right hand on our heads and then gave flowers, after which we came away. All this giving and receiving took place in utter

but eloquent silence. Some people meditated in the room as long as the Mother stayed there.

At that time we lived always in an atmosphere in which we felt as if life were an integral part of something which never allowed us to forget why we had come here. The taste, the touch it brought, opened as it were a new horizon, gave a new turn and changed our outlook on life. Everything was bathed in a new light. Life had awakened in a new dream, an inner springtide.

Every evening, at 8 p.m., what was called the Soup Distribution Ceremony took place. It was held daily in the present large Reception Hall facing the main entrance of the Ashram. The Mother used to distribute the soup to all inmates. She would come and sit in a chair situated on a low pedestal at the centre of the eastern wall. One dim light was kept burning and all others were put out. The Hall was bathed in an atmosphere as pure as it was deep and intense. A large vessel containing the soup was put on a wooden stool in front of her. She would stretch out her two hands over the vessel and concentrate awhile, invoking Sri Aurobindo's force. Then the distribution would begin. Each sadhak meditating in his place allotted by the Mother would now get up in turn and approach her, carrying a cup in his hand. She would fill the cup offered to her with soup, take a sip from it and give it back to him. Then he would slowly come out of the Hall. The ceremony would last more than an hour and a profound silence charged with an intense inner glow was maintained all through.

In that dim light it felt as if a glimpse of a new world, the reflection of a higher being, had fallen upon the consciousness and was spreading itself. Some other influence than the earthly became dense and perceptible. The inner and outer parts seemed to get crystallised in that condensed stillness and one's identity started fading away. I could not perceive where I was or where I had entered — unknown, unheard-of perceptions of the inner world would become distinct. Amidst all these things the Mother looked wonderfully charming and manifested divine moods. Her eyes did not appear at all like human eyes. And what a look. Piercing the bodily armour it could reach the innermost part, and see its very core. And her smile had no parallel, it cannot be compared either. She very often kept holding in her

hand the soup-cup in a state of immobile trance. Then, as she returned to her physical consciousness, the distribution would begin again in an easy natural manner — as if nothing had happened in the interval.

Soon after my arrival I was permitted to see the Mother once a week, and once a week she came to my room and sanctified it with the touch of her feet. My book of life was filled with her instructions during this time. With what care she taught us how to take every step, to observe, and to look within! She gave me the force to know myself, to choose the right thing from among a confused heap of falsehoods. Our whole life she cast into a new mould to prepare it for a divine life, a new birth of consciousness, an inner life. Nolini had written to me before I came to the Ashram, “Here the resources of ordinary life will be of no use at all.” Its meaning became gradually clear to me.

The Mother visited our house on her way to her evening-drive. We used to see her in the morning. On Sunday evenings she went to Dilip’s house where an English lady from London, named Miss Maitland, was also accommodated. She had come to spend six months in the Ashram — she used to attend the Sunday meetings and ask the Mother whatever questions she had and get replies from her. Besides Maitland the group was made up of Nolini, Doraiswamy Iyyer (a Madras-advocate then visiting the Ashram every week-end), the American Vaun Macpheeters and his wife Jeanette (renamed Shantimayi here), Pavitra, Dilip and myself. The Mother started with a meditation, sometimes on a particular topic, and enquired at the end of the meditation what its result was in each individual. Then followed questions and answers, which were recorded in shorthand by Shantimayi. This phase began on 7th April 1929 and lasted fifteen weeks. All the questions and answers running into fifteen chapters were published in 1931 in book-form under the title *Conversations with the Mother*. It was not meant for sale but for free distribution by the Mother to the sadhaks. Later, it was available for sale. Since then many conversations of the Mother have come out in parts known as *Talks of the Mother*. In Dilip’s house was the origin of such conversations. One was lost in wonder at the incandescent touch of the Mother’s fathomless wisdom.

The Mother used to take some of us by turns once a week for a motor-drive in the afternoon. The lucky ones were Doraiswamy, Nolini, Chadwick, Dilip and myself. Chadwick, an Englishman, came to India as a professor of Mathematical Logic in Lucknow University. Subsequently he became Sri Aurobindo's disciple and came away to Pondicherry after I had arrived. Sri Aurobindo gave him the name 'Arjavananda' — in short, Arjava. The Mother's car was driven by Pavitra, Doraiswamy sat by his side while we followed this car in a small Fiat. We visited many places far away. Pavitra seemed to know where to go, where to stop, which direction to take. A great experience it was to be with the Mother, the atmosphere changing everywhere as it were by itself.

When the car stopped, the Mother got down first, then the others. As she walked on, we followed her. It seemed all the paths and byways were familiar to her. After we had walked some distance, she would sit in a place of her choice and we took our places around, very close to her. To sit so near to her in an open space where nature was so charmingly beautiful was an unimaginable delight. She had brought with her some French lozenges and gave one to each of us.

One day a villager brought, wrapped in banana leaves, some palm fruits plucked and peeled from a nearby tree and offered them to the Mother. She asked us if we would take them. Dilip and myself picked up two fruits. Another day, when we had comfortably seated ourselves in a place, we noticed a hideous insect crawling towards us. We felt naturally very uneasy and fidgety. Our attention and gaze were glued on it and all were ready to get up at the least sign. But Mother remained unperturbed and slowly moved the insect out of the way. She was not pleased at all with our being so easily disturbed. She and Sri Aurobindo never approved of fear of any kind. It was very harmful to our sadhana, they maintained. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me, "All fear ought to be cast out."

On 18 October 1931 the Mother fell seriously ill and for one month we could not see her. We were extremely dejected. The day when she came down to give us blessings again was a most happy one; we felt the same as on seeing Sri Aurobindo on darshan days. This delight is beyond description; its nature, its stuff is of a special order. Such things belong to

another domain than the earth and come from there. The Ashram-life went through a lot of change after this illness. The Mother used to come a little late in the morning for our pranam which was now held in the hall in front of Amrita's room. The pranam continued till 12. Her evening drive, her visit to sadhaks' houses, the soup-distribution, etc. — all these stopped for good. Once or twice, however, we had a glimpse of her when she passed from one house to another within the main Ashram block. In 1946, the Mother again began to come out where exercises and games had started in the Ashram. She used to visit regularly the Playground to make the activities run smoothly. After her illness in 1931, we visited her only when we were called. There was no hard and fast rule about it. The Mother's illness was quite a different thing from what we call illness. Sri Aurobindo wrote about it in answer to a sadhak's query: "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 at 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 experience. I suppose it is to be written but I have not yet found the necessary form or the necessary leisure." (19.12.31)

One can have some rough idea of the true nature of the Mother's illness when one reads her Prayer of 24 November of the same year from her book, *Prayers and Meditations*, in the light of this illness. Let me quote it:

November 24, 1931

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 a supreme obscurity. But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive to 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 to prevail, 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.”

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.”

A few days after my arrival, I got permission to cook for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. There was then no separate kitchen for them. With the Mother’s permission the inmates would cook something at their homes, some every day, others on two days or once a week and so on, again without any rigidly fixed rules. Neither was there any direction given to us how to cook (of course, it was all vegetarian diet).

Whatever was prepared with devotion was acceptable to them, they ate very little. However, I used to cook twice a week. What a joy it was! I would also now and then go to the Mother to learn something about cooking and she would tell me quite readily, especially when I wanted to prepare some French dish. We knew their usual meal-time and we would accordingly carry our food-offerings on a tray and leave them at a particular place meant for them or give them into Champaklal’s hands. In the evening we brought back the dishes and partook of the prasad left for us.

Another English lady, Dorothy Hodgson, known as “Datta” (the name given by Sri Aurobindo), occasionally carried the dishes. She was said to have lived with the Mother in Europe for some time and had travelled to many places with her. She gave us the impression of a pure white flower dedicated at the feet of the Divine.

All the sadhaks and sadhikas lived in separate rooms in small houses. Each one had a cot, a table, a chair and a clothes-rack, and each had a servant

for an hour or two. That was sufficient, for nobody cooked at home except for tea which they prepared on their stoves. The tea leaves were supplied according to the fixed quota, as was done with all other things.

The life in the Ashram often made me feel how few were our real needs and to what proportions had we swollen them. The inconvenience that we feel is indeed of the mind not of the body and, when we want to ignore it, it is usually the mind that protests. I did find at the beginning some difficulty in adjusting myself to the limited measure allowed but the Mother's Grace soon made me see from where came the so-called objections. Much had I thought of hard austerities regarding sadhana before coming here, but found that the way of sadhana here was not at all one of that type. No one needed to follow that difficult path.

In order that we might give ourselves fully to the Divine, the Mother had provided for all our needs and we had not to worry about anything. I realised after a few days' stay that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo did not of themselves speak to the sadhaks about sadhana nor did they give any direction. For, instead of an outer explanation, they relied more upon an inner help by virtue of which the sadhak could develop a power of understanding from within. Sri Aurobindo emphasises more an inner growth, a development of consciousness. When, however, the sadhaks under trying situations wanted to know something definite, the answers were given according to the urgency or importance of the inner demand. Sri Aurobindo would answer in letters, the Mother in various subtle ways.

One could see the Mother whenever there was a need. She spent about four hours daily for the interviews. Some she would call every day, or once or twice a week, once in two weeks or even a month. During those days one could talk about one's sadhana or work and get the Mother's answers. Many a time she made her meaning clear through her looks and not through any speech. Sometimes, though one had gone to her with a problem the Mother started meditating with one, keeping her hand on one's head; the question was now totally forgotten and the being was brimmed to the full with an unearthly reward. The Mother wrote letters too to a few. But our Gurus' ways of communication was specially through silence, and their help and guidance, their abundant grace were constantly with us, whether we knew it

or not. Our rhythm and view of life had therefore changed considerably. We could see things from a different angle, in a different perspective. A radical change of man's consciousness and its transformation by the descent of the Supermind was the mission the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had come to fulfil. That is the purpose of the Yoga. They took us forward almost by holding our hands not counting any difficulty, however colossal it might be, or avoiding any struggle and suffering, however painful. When they had to deal with the three dimensions of heaven, earth and the abyss, even a grain of sand was not too small for them. It is for this reason that they have accepted us, insignificant as we are, and spared no pains. Otherwise who will consider our life worth so much? Once Sri Aurobindo wrote to me:

“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.”

I had a bent towards meditation. I was not attracted by the gospel of work nor did I understand its place or need in Sadhana. But gradually the necessity of work made itself felt and I came to see that the radical change and transformation of Nature which was the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's primary aim could not be achieved except through work. What I found on my arrival was that everyone was busy with his appointed work. I too took my plunge and the spiritual result, I perceived, was no less from work than from meditation. Of course the work had to be the Gita's dedicated work. As I proceeded with quite an inner joy, a trouble surfaced. It brought a mood of meditation which interrupted the course of the work and I could not but meditate. Not only so, I dived so deep inside that the work was forgotten. But that was not a true attitude, I felt. So I wrote to the Mother to clear my doubt. She wrote: “...when you are at work, it is always better to remain fully aware of your body and its action. With my love and blessings”.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo say that all depends on the attitude. I understood my mistake. Afterwards they made me feel in various ways what is the attitude with which I should do work. Even while working, every

moment should be an act of worship, a meditation on the Mother, and from it will come knowledge — fine, flawless, well-organised and desirable work dedicated to the Mother should be our sadhana of self-offering. This was the object of work.

I remember an instance. I had brought a sewing machine with me; whatever little sewing-work was done I did on it. The Mother wanted occasionally the machine to be used for some special work. I had a mental fear that perhaps I would be asked to take charge of sewing in the Ashram. And that was what actually happened. A new department to deal with the dresses of women-disciples was opened and I was given charge of it. What a joke! I knew nothing of cutting, measuring, etc. I somehow had managed to get through odd jobs at home and that too purely for fun. When now the work had seriously fallen upon me, I began to ponder how to do it. Well, in spite of my lack of skill, the work proceeded smoothly. A few young sadhikas joined the department. As the work began to multiply so did the workers. And not only did I find a *rasa* (joy) in it, but I also developed gradually an attraction to it. When the work I did not fancy came from the Mother herself, it changed its aspect. Now it was no longer a question of like or dislike and it grew into a thing after my own heart.

Since 1931 I had quite often written letters to Sri Aurobindo. The correspondence started from 1930 and became regular from 1932 till 1938, the year of his accident. I expressed in these letters in detail all about my inner condition and movement of Sadhana, since he wanted it so. He wrote, “It is absolutely necessary to write everything freely and write daily.” So everything good and bad had to be written. The mind was not always willing to do so, it looked for many pretexts and means by which it could avoid telling the whole truth and let him know just what was convenient to me: in short, only a partial truth. I wondered at the way the mind played no end of tricks and ruses with itself in my being. The letters were addressed to the Mother in both Bengali and English. But it was Sri Aurobindo who replied to them in English. Very rarely he wrote a few lines in Bengali. Most interesting it was to observe that, though the mind was reluctant to write, yet when I finished, whatever I had to write had come through, nothing was kept back. It was as if someone had propelled me from behind. One day, I

was extremely unwilling to write and I knew that I should not encourage this reluctance, still I simply wrote: “Today I feel no inclination to write.” Sri Aurobindo sent back not a word in reply except simply three big signs of exclamation (!!!) in the margin of my letter. I did not know what to make of it — to laugh or to weep. Another amusing incident: I had a strong desire to eat one or two things — it was uncontrollable. The mind was actively working as to how to satisfy the desire. Finally I wrote: “Mother, today I am feeling somewhat greedy. Do you know what it is about? Eggs, lobster and tin-sardine. Terribly greedy, Mother. Either remove this desire or give me permission to eat and protection at the same time.” Next day, the reply came from Sri Aurobindo:

“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.”

Satire, enlivened with laughter! But, strangely enough, I noticed that just after writing my letter, my desire had vanished and in its place reigned a pure joy and contentment. I got the first taste of joy that comes when one abstains from indulging a desire. I had read somewhere some lines written by Nolini to the same effect. They now glowed intensely in my mind: “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 (low into me, by this sign I feel I am ready for the Delight that is yours.”

While writing to Sri Aurobindo, I felt very often that I could not express myself precisely in English. I would then use Bengali terms at places and ask him their English equivalents. Sri Aurobindo would put their English renderings on the top of the Bengali expressions. I give here some tokens of his exquisite translations — rather to demonstrate his love and grace flowing through these 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...” Then I continued in Bengali which Sri

Aurobindo translated thus: “a-gleam 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 self-revelation.”

Another of Sri Aurobindo’s English translations: “I feel now the inexpressible sweetness of that which is beyond description forming between you and me. It is such a satisfying experience.”

I wrote the following in English: except for the words which Sri Aurobindo translated by “hushed and solitary” and after which he continued with a further expression: “Today also I cherish the same feeling within myself. I am feeling as quiet inwardly as if the main gate of a passage which was always busy with a crowd of all sorts of demands and cravings, etc., is closed, or the passage has become hushed and solitary without the excited crowd, that is to say the footsteps of the crowd are heard no more.”

At one time the Mother climbed daily to the terrace and spent some time there. I wrote to her one day’s incident:

“Recently I notice that before you go down from the terrace in the evenings you stand for a longer time and I feel just at the time that you give us something especially, 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 it! Then again in a few seconds your figure reappeared.” The last portion of my letter was in Bengali. It began with “I felt at that moment...” Sri Aurobindo translated the rest: “You mixed with the sky (ether) and became one with all things.”

Apropos of a letter of mine on 28.8.1932, 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 body and it is perhaps this that made you see in that way.”

When there were mistakes in English in my letters Sri Aurobindo used to correct them on my own insistence. Though he was so short of time, he yet did it without the least murmur of annoyance or unwillingness. In an unstinted measure he poured his grace. Now I cannot but repent for the unnecessary trouble people like me gave him just to get some selfish satisfaction.

In September 1930 my eldest sister Amiya came from Burma to visit the Ashram with her two sons Bula and Kunal. A house was hired for them for three months on the sea-shore. I recollect the Mother's going to see the house, walking by the sea-shore from Dilip's house. We were with her. When my other elder sister arrived, the Mother went there twice at their request. After three months, when she heard that they had to go back she said: "It is a pity that they are going."

When the date for their departure was fixed, the Mother went one day to their house and, standing before a window, looked for a while towards the sea and said, "It is better not to be on the sea now."

Amiya was in a fix. Then the Mother herself asked her to go back after 18th January, but on learning that their house's three months' lease was at an end, she arranged to shift them to an Ashram house. Amiya shared my room. I was then living on the first floor of what is at the present 'Huta House'. Bula and Kunal were kept upstairs in the 'Guest House' (now called 'Dortoir').

I remember what a terribly stormy sea (in fact, due to a cyclone) it was on the day when, according to the previous decision, they should have been on the sea! And the Mother's prevision! It was a frightful experience: trees were crashing, houses were tumbling down, their roofs blown away, doors and windows flung open by the blast and we were struggling in vain to shut them. What a calamity! I had not seen such a wild storm before. When it stopped Nolini and Amrita came to Amiya's house on the sea-side (they were still there), wrapped up in blankets. I was at Dilip's house when the storm threatened. I had just come out into the street to reach home in time and was caught as I tried to advance, the fury of the air-currents swept and hurled me back towards the sea as if my body was a piece of straw. I narrowly escaped a watery grave. As I reached home, I felt I had passed through a crisis. Later on, we heard that during that fierce upheaval Sri Aurobindo's windows were all open and he was absorbed in doing his own work. Not a drop of rain had come inside!

Amiya and her children returned to Burma after receiving the Mother's blessings on 18th January, as had been suggested by her. They came back

the next January along with my second sister Nolina. This time too the Mother accommodated them in an Ashram-rented house (next to our press) called “Budi House” by the sea-side. In April my third sister Aruna came with her sons Ashok and Deval and was put up in the same house. After a few months all of them were transferred to another rented house very near the Ashram, which is now the Jhunjhun Boarding. A very remarkable feature of this time was the occasional visits of Nolini and Amrita at the special request of my sisters. We used to hear from them stories of the early Ashram life, about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and about themselves, where they had stayed at first, how they had come to the Ashram and what relation was theirs with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and many anecdotes and humorous incidents.

It was Nolini who first told us about Sri Aurobindo’s departure from the Ganges’ ferry at Calcutta for Chandannagore. How we laughed when he narrated the story of how the pigtail of Amrita who was a Brahmin’s son had been sheared off. Then the incident of the mischief caused by evil spirits in the Guest House (where Sri Aurobindo lived). Some stones were thrown into the courtyard, they fell even inside the rooms though all doors and windows were shut. So sensational were these stories that we listened with almost bated breath. At times Nolini would talk about the fiery old days — the historical event in the Muraripukur house, the search by the Police, the trial-episode in the court, the famous revolver episode, the assassination of the approver Noren Goswami in the jail, the jail-life in Sri Aurobindo’s company and many stories connected with it. All these were new to us and we heard them as if they were extracts from a novel.

Another small incident is still fresh in my mind. I was sitting in my room; someone came and delivered an envelope. It was a tiny letter of a few lines from the Mother. Though small, the letter contained a treasure which could not be measured by any human standard. I was lost in wonder: to think that amidst her thousand occupations she could remember my sister’s children and find time to send a letter though they had come only for a temporary stay. She wrote:

“Sahana,

Pavitra is taking out the car this afternoon. I thought that Aruna and her two children might like to go for a drive. It seems to me that Kunal can go also; he is quite strong enough now for the drive to do him good.

Will you inform them that Pavitra will be at their house with the car at 4.30?” (21.5.32)

How happy the children were and the sisters were almost in tears. They had tasted a joy which was divine!

When I had arrived at the Ashram I had seen the Mother giving the New-Year blessings at midnight. It was a unique experience to go and see her during that hour. The quiet, still and meditative night created the same inner mood in us and our little human form would get merged in the limitless expanse of the living darkness. The Infinite, the Eternal would become a more and more vivid contact. In due time we climbed up the steps very slowly and softly, aware of the new birth the Mother would confer on us at our auspicious meeting. On the last step, as we turned to the right, the Mother’s figure came into view sitting upright in a chair. Only the profile of her face could be seen in the light of the single dim reddish lamp and we felt as if we had stepped into a dream-world. The intense silence of the night had become more intense there and the Mother’s face shone like the first glimmering of dawn. Words fail to express the extraordinary impression our souls received from the divine beauty of that inscrutable face and, when after receiving her blessings, we would get up, her victorious smile would fill our hearts with a joy beyond any comparison. Some fruit like an orange or a piece of chocolate she would put into our hands. Whatever she gave carried with it an inner means for going forward, and a touch that broke the spell of ignorance. Her look, her smile, her touch — everything brought to us our souls’ nourishment. For three years we were blest with this New-Year gift.

Then in 1931 she fell ill, after which she started giving the New-Year blessing in another way. That was also a unique experience and it evokes a thrill in our being in the very cells even when we think of it. We used to gather before Nolani’s courtyard at midnight to receive the Mother’s

blessings, all of us in a meditative mood which was then quite usual. We had gone deep within when suddenly the sound of her organ-music pealed through the dark night and reached us like a burst of sparkling light, awaking all senses. Along with it, came floating her own song. Words are mute before the enchanting spell created by her wonderful voice and its power. One felt as if the full-throated solemn voice was rising from a deep bass and its vibration carried aloft our consciousness somewhere and drew out the inner being to the surface. Nothing can express the strange ecstasy of that experience. When the song and music had stopped, we went to her one by one and returned with her blessings and some fruits or sweets. We saw her sitting in the same way as before in the dim light, keeping open the gates of another world.

We heard her sing once or twice, but several times her organ-music. Whoever heard this music played at night knows what it is. We used to wait on tiptoe for that night. She never played from music-books or other composers' pieces. She used to sit with closed eyes before the organ and played whatever came through. Nobody would believe that it was her own improvisation and not a copy from other musicians. There was never the slightest flaw in the harmony. After 1938, the year of Sri Aurobindo's accident, she used to play in Pavitra's room and the night-ceremony had stopped, for what reason I don't remember now except that at 6 a.m. she would stand in the small passage at the top of the main staircase and many of us would go to see her. She wished us "Bonne annee" in French and we repeated the same in reply. She gave us some green leaves called 'New Birth' by way of blessings. This "New Birth" and special blessings were also given by her on 24th December, for Christmas Day.

I took up embroidery work and started making a screen for the big door of the Mother's room. Sanjiban, a fine artist of the Ashram, had prepared the design according to her instructions. All the houses of the French Regime had very large doors and windows. For one of those doors I was preparing a huge screen which would hang down to the floor as we find in drawing-rooms. Since some embroidery work had to be done upon the screen, I went to see the Mother to receive instructions about it. She, after a moment's silence, asked, "Maurice Magre will be paying a visit to the

Ashram. Can you finish the screen before he comes? You have still three months.” I replied with gusto, “Certainly, Mother, I can.” She was pleased and blessed me. With much joy I did pranam at her feet and received, along with her blessing, a big red rose, signifying “All human passion turned into love for the Divine.” I returned with the firm resolve that I must fulfil my promise. I surmised that if I had to do it I must work eleven to twelve hours a day. I started in right earnest. It was a great surprise that I never felt tired in the least after working at a stretch for many hours. Since the mind dwelt in the Mother’s consciousness it brought deep concentration, and joy in the work, especially because I was fulfilling the Mother’s wish.

Let me give a little description of the detailed work upon the screen, so that one may appreciate it fully. First, one sees a part of a huge trunk of a tree against the body of the screen; thick branches stem out of it, mounting upwards, and on the top of one of the branches a white peacock is seated and looks downwards, while another white peacock perched below gazes at the upper one, stretching his neck. Each peacock is as big as a well-developed Bengali girl. Sanjiban’s design was superb. I felt distinctly during the work where the flow of energy came from, abolishing all sense of fatigue. Not only so, I had spiritual perceptions of many kinds. I finished the screen in time and went to see the Mother. With close scrutiny and visible pleasure she examined all the details of the work. Her joy seemed to be much more than mine. Here was a new experience for me. I do not remember to have seen anyone who took so much interest, appraise the value and appreciate in this manner. I spread the whole screen on the floor and the Mother looked and looked, her face beaming, and then she said in French, “Oh, ça, c’est magnifique!” I felt my cup was full. Even now that screen is hung in Sri Aurobindo’s room on each November-Darshan day. One has to see it in order to believe that something made fifty years ago could be preserved with so much care. What should have worn out fold by fold remains intact in all its splendour. This is how, I thought in wonder, the Mother transmutes our offering of brass into gold.

Now I shall relate two strange dreams of mine. They were so clear and distinct that I took them to be more than dreams. Whatever significance they had for me, I communicated it to the Mother. The first dream:

“I saw from inside a room the sea coming near the house and then beginning to swell into huge mountains. If these terrifying surges broke, I felt the entire town, at least myself, would be swept away. But death being so near could not frighten or disturb me at all. I felt somewhere quite secure and well-protected by an armour. Even if the waves surged in a flood, they would pass over my house and I would remain unhurt — that was my feeling. So I could quietly watch the waves from inside my closed windows. Now they came in rapid succession and burst into a vast sheet of water and then the flood rushed far beyond my house. I saw this deluge like a witness and was in no way involved in it. And what I called my house was not really so. When the flood had stopped and the water had drawn back, I began to inspect the outside and noticed that some portion of the house had crumbled down and a new building was coming up from within. I reflected, amazed, ‘Oh, I did not know that a new house was being built from inside the old one. As the wall is broken down in parts, I can see the new foundation.’

“I was observing closely and found it very strange and could not but admire the new method of construction. I went inside the house and when I came out, the entire old house seemed to have tumbled down and in its place stood a house with a different design, made of quite other materials.

“I have interpreted the dream in this way. In the first part, I felt completely safe in the midst of danger, because I lived under your protection. The danger, not being able to make any dent on the fort, has passed over. I remained safe and sound. Would it mean that the flood of desires comes to carry us away, but if we live in our true being, guarded by the Divine, it passes without touching us and we can witness the dance of the stormy surges in a detached manner? This was the meaning I could gather from the first part of the dream. About the second part it was like this: the old house in which I lived was my external being with its old nature. From the very bottom of this old nature you had started building a new nature. We do not notice the new construction because we are not sufficiently conscious of the Divine’s work, so that when the veil of darkness is partly dropped (corresponding to the partial collapse of the house), we become conscious of it. And with the growth of the consciousness, the light increases and finally is revealed the transformed

being in the true light of the developed awareness. The new house is the symbol of the radical transformation of human nature.”

Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“It was a good symbolic dream and your interpretation seems to me correct except for one detail. The sea cannot be the tide of vital desires; it must be the flood of the world forces.” (9.1.32)

The second dream:

A few of us were walking along a sea-shore. The sea was not at all like the one normally known. The very sight of it was fearful and terrible; its water was jet-black and crammed with frightful sea-creatures — each one of them most hideous and all pullulating in the dark water. The body felt terribly uneasy. Most of these beings were like huge snakes: long, thick and black. There were no waves. As far as one could see, it was a dreadful vast and dark expanse of water stretched, as it were, like a gigantic snake, giving a sense of terror. Far away could be seen a very exquisite island where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived. I had to go there, but no way could be found. One could not even think of swimming across; the sea was so packed with those strange animals. In trying to swim one would have to brush against them. But, strangely enough, when my companions had gone forward, I plunged into that sea and began to swim along with those pullulating beasts. Pushing them aside with both hands I made my way through them more than through the water, but my gaze was fixed towards the island where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were. I felt I must reach there. Nothing else mattered. As I neared the island my feet touched the bottom and with a great joy I walked to the shore. Suddenly I saw Sri Aurobindo with his two hands outstretched and, lifting me up, he said, “You have crossed.” I was so happy to hear it that even after waking up from the dream, I said again and again to myself, “When Sri Aurobindo has uttered these words, cross I must.”

I understood from this dream what Sri Aurobindo meant by the word “plunge”. Looking no other way, thinking of nothing else, if one could take the plunge for the Divine alone, the Divine himself would come and land us on the shore. Otherwise one could go on cogitating and no way would be

found and the plunge remain untaken. Once the plunge is taken, considerations of duty or danger have no place. This was revealed in the dream. Daunted by nothing, with eyes fixed upon the island, I advanced and Sri Aurobindo delivered me. Though a dream it was, it brought an inexpressible taste of delight not to be affected by anything.

I was to see the Mother the next morning. So I told her orally the dream. She heard intently and placed her hand for a long while on my head and said sweetly, "It is not a mere dream." She said many other things besides, which cannot be told.

Now let me narrate the story of my experiences while I was singing. Here is my letter to the Mother:

"Mother mine,

"I had a wonderful experience. I cannot but write to you about it at once. There is a song of Kabir, 'Conquering my heart, Sri Rama was seated within it.' I was singing it, sitting alone on the terrace at about 7 p.m. I wished to sing it to you on Friday. I had often had my good experiences during singing. I had felt then the descent of a being and its presence, and that I was just an instrument. All the movements of my songs were led by it. Sometimes it gave me the perception of a wide opening of my inner self, and an aspiration rising from a deep source lifted my entire being to a summit height. But what happened today was unique. It was like this.

"When I had sung a part of Kabir's song, I could feel a power coming down and the volume of my voice increasing. The inner self opened entirely, and strange tunes and rhythms began to pour out spontaneously with such speed that I wondered how it was possible. There was a clear feeling that they owed nothing to me, that I was just a channel and they came tumbling down eager to express themselves. Suddenly I heard my voice gaining twice its volume — so much force was there. And I heard distinctly another voice expressing itself through my voice. When I experienced this, I felt it was no longer myself or my own desire that was singing. I could not stop, it did not depend on me. I had never sung a single song at such length, I was simply charmed and overwhelmed by these exceptional manifestations of sound, voice and tune."

Sri Aurobindo answered:

“Yes, it was quite right and a very high experience.”

After this experience, I observed that the atmosphere, when I sang on the terrace to the Mother alone, was quite different from the one when I sang at other places. I wrote to the Mother:

“Oh Mother,

“I have observed that when I sing to you on your terrace, the voice becomes very forceful, which is not so elsewhere. So I wrote to you that a special force works from behind, making me sing differently. It must be your force, isn't it, Mother? I feel it must be your force that makes me sing and makes the singing so intense. The difference is too obvious! But why should it be so? If it is your force acting I should sing equally well everywhere. If I have a psychic connection with you, such difference as regards time and space should not be there. Is it not then my inability to remain in the true consciousness, the true condition, that makes the difference?”

Sri Aurobindo wrote in reply:

“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.”
(19.3.32)

The first time I became nervous in my life was when I had to sing before Sri Aurobindo on 15th August 1929 (the day of his Darshan).

I had come to the Ashram the previous year in November. The Darshan was finished in the morning. At 4 p.m., when the Mother was to distribute the Darshan-garlands from the Darshan-room, Dilip and I were supposed to sing in the Meditation Hall, sitting near the third door on the right side. That door would remain closed and just behind it, from the adjacent room, Sri Aurobindo would hear our song. I had sung in many big gatherings, had danced before Rabindranath on the stage without ever knowing what nervousness was. I first started singing D. L. Roy's “Shall I worship you in the form of an idol?” — Dilip was playing on the harmonium. I found that

my voice had turned absolutely wooden, hard like the bamboo, no suppleness, no flexibility at all. This had never happened before. I sang all right but it was by no means singing. Then, when Dilip sang, it was not bad, though it was not in his usual style. At the end, we sang a duet, a song by Mirabai “Keep me as thy servant.” Now we could sing a little better and more freely. How strange! I asked the Mother, “What can be the reason, Mother? I have never become nervous wherever I have sung before!”

The Mother replied, “You forget in whose Presence you were singing. Your vital being became nervous before that Divine Presence.”

Once in one or two months the Mother used to hear our music in the hall before Amrita’s room — Dilip and myself, either of us alone, or together. Those inmates who could sing were sometimes trained by Dilip and they also sang. The Mother would sit in front and our music was intensely felt as an offering at her feet. What a difference between singing before her and elsewhere! Those who were present at these soirees had various experiences which they wrote to the Mother. There were choruses too in which my sisters took part. A South Indian sadhak also joined us. He used sometimes to sing Hindi classical songs.

Singing to the Mother was enough of an inner plenitude: when, besides, the next morning Sri Aurobindo sent his opinions written in his own hand, it was a double joy, not possible to express in words. There used to be instrumental music also. Doraiswamy played on the Veena. Sometimes, Doraiswamy, his daughter Kausiki and I used to play together — they played on the Veena and I on the Sitar. I either practised old tunes in a new way or played an entirely new one. Once all of us together played an old tune called ‘Kalengra’, with many new things added to it. The Mother liked it very much. Whenever something especially pleased her, she wanted it to be repeated in the next soiree.

Lalita, a Parsi sadhika, used to play on the piano. She joined our chorus. Then there was an English lady named by Sri Aurobindo Nandini, who was an exquisite cello-player. The Mother liked her music immensely. Sri Aurobindo considered her a born musician. When, however, she played in our chorus, it was simply splendid. She also accompanied Dilip’s European

music. Dilip's voice was marvellous, and the Mother liked to hear his European music very much. Her power of inspiration cut a new way for him in his world of songs.

On 24th April, 1932, we arranged a musical soiree, very probably to celebrate the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry on that day twelve years earlier. The next day, she sent this written message-*cum*-blessing:

“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 exterior point of view of execution, but in the greater aim of the concentration behind it and in the inner attitude.

May the day bring its benediction to all.” (24.4.32)

I was cherishing a hope to show my dancing to the Mother, but as I did not know dancing very well, there was some hesitation lest I should waste her time. At last I expressed my desire. She consented to see my dance. When I came to the Ashram, I had thought I would have to give up all art for the sake of sadhana, but such sacrifice was not needed. Sri Aurobindo's yoga includes all. He wrote afterwards:

“The development of capacities is not only permissible but right when it can be made part of Yoga; one can give not only one's soul, but all one's powers to the Divine.” (29.6.31)

I was preparing joyfully the dance I wanted to show to the Mother. Dancing and music had been my passions from childhood. But since dancing was taboo in respectable families, I had to suppress my liking for it. As I grew up and became independent, I did what I could in my own way. I had not seen dancing of any kind anywhere except on the Bengali stage. Still, I felt a magnetic pull towards it.

I started preparing a dance tuned to Rabindranath Tagore's song, “Along with the rhythm of the dancing”. The Mother saw it in the Meditation Hall upstairs. This was the first time she saw my performance. It was in 1931.

After it, she drew up a plan for us to compose the song-part of the dance. While my part was to dance, her plan had four parts expressing four moods:

1. A measureless void in Radha's mind and body. She is groping in the dark.
2. She is seeking all around, but does not find him whom she seeks. Unbearable is the anguish. At times, she hears as it were the almost forgotten anklet bells come floating from afar. She becomes impatient — a restless mood. Then all of a sudden she hears the sound of the flute. Depression vanishes. The sound comes nearer and Radha experiences ecstasy.
3. Krishna appears.
4. Radha's surrender at his feet.

These are the four moods. Dilip composed wonderful dance-music for them. Its rich artistry of tune and striking variety of rhythm appealed very much to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I practised my dances in a large hall at Dilip's place. When previously I had wanted to practise my dance to the tune of Rabindranath's song in the same room, Sri Aurobindo had replied (referring to a sadhak who lived just under that hail downstairs,): "He is too serious to be danced over." Now, Sri Aurobindo gave permission. I was puzzled and asked him: "You wrote differently before, and now this change?" He replied:

"Perhaps before long he will cease to be too serious."

I could not contain my laughter. In everything there was his touch of humour. I began my practice but the dance fell short of the expected height. I worked hard. Meanwhile something happened. Dilip composed another beautiful piece of music — for a Dawn-dance. I tried both the dances in my own house. This Dawn-dance came off very easily and I made a discovery from it about which I wrote to the Mother: "I perceived, as I was dancing, something in a new way. Please tell me if there is any truth in it. When I started the Radha's dance, my purpose was to execute the mood of the song in the poses of the dance. As Radha's feelings are usually very intense to the Indians, especially to the Bengalis, there was nothing very new in this mood. Whatever mood the song expressed, I tried to feel it first and then give it a form. But when I started the Dawn-dance, no clear form of the mood had emerged beforehand. What appeared was the feeling of the

vibration of the mood in the singing before I had understood how the language or the feeling of the song was expressed. Following that vibration the movements and various poses began to be formed. I did not remember the words of the song, only followed its inner movements. Thus, it was felt to be a new experience, having a truth in it. All things seem to have a vibration. These are, however, big words for me. What I want to say is that the ‘Radha’s song’ was much easier than the Dawn-dance song even with regard to composition. We were not so familiar with the mood and form of the Dawn-dance; the composition too was difficult. In these respects it was a new creation. So I said that I did not try to get at any definite form at first; nevertheless everything came down very easily and naturally and I understood the inner movements. Am I right in my analysis? Is there any truth here?”

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 out with the mind only or mainly is the mental way; it is laborious and difficult and has not got the same spontaneous inspiration.”
(29.4.32)

I was working upon the Radha’s dance but the result was not satisfactory; the true thing eluded me, though I felt at times as if I was on the verge of it when the dancing took different turns giving me a feeling of contentment. I wondered then how a person who knew very little of dance could do it. It did not take long to realise that it was not due to my power. But whenever I tried to do it by my own power, I failed. It was understood that I was following the second method mentioned by Sri Aurobindo — my mind was working, so it could not open itself. There was more labour in consequence and more time. At times I went to the Mother to show her my dance; she encouraged me a lot and expressed sympathy. One day she said, “You have to bring in more variety in your dance. See, how rich is Dilip’s song in variety of movement.”

In this manner I proceeded somehow to the stage of Krishna’s appearance and was thinking of beginning Radha’s surrender when the Mother called

and told me many things. To her nothing has an end, she has an inexhaustible store from which she can fill up our scanty hoarding. What happened next day was a big surprise — her trust in one who could do nothing, and her encouraging words to a novice were beyond imagination. 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 at the end in front of Krishna — ‘Every thought of my mind, each emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all is yours, yours absolutely, 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.’”

What can I say about my inner feeling when I received from her this supreme boon! What did she reveal to me through this prayer of Radha, what tone of complete surrender did she make me hear? This was my constant thought. Her every word was aglow with the signature of heavenly love. What was she teaching me through this dance as a pretext, where was she leading me and to follow which rhythm in life? My whole being was hushed to fullness and tears began to flow. I could clearly understand what was meant by accepting everything as a part of yoga.

Clear it was that the Radha-dance was the sadhana of a complete surrender to the Divine and we had come to do that sadhana. We can well understand from this letter of the Mother the way in which she and Sri Aurobindo want always to lift us to what they hold up before our consciousness.

I am speaking of the time when our sadhana took a particular turn, when we were not going out or seeing anyone without the Mother’s permission. She knew all about our sadhana. She created such an atmosphere around us that we felt we were living within her. Nothing could come near or violate it. There was a kind of *cordon sanitaire*, within which we were moving with great care. Wherever a strong attachment was found, blow after blow fell upon it. The Divine and the undivine forces were at play. Sri Aurobindo and

the Mother explained to us what was unintelligible and showed mistakes or defects in what we were supposed to have understood. Self-introspection became very important. Whenever they saw something good in us, they encouraged and awakened a true interest in it, and if there was anything unseemly, they corrected it and lighted a flame of hope and faith. Even their reproach was couched in terms of tender sympathy. How many times and in how many ways they told and taught us the necessity of turning inward and the way to do it, how to bring about total sincerity! To study oneself at every step on the way to the transformation of consciousness, this unique training opened before us a new world, and what a number of worlds seemed to be there in oneself!

Sri Aurobindo had told us to surrender ourselves to the Mother, and one could clearly perceive that working in all of us. He also insisted many times that we must tell her everything not only in general but even in detail. We felt indeed that these yogic movements were becoming the natural rhythm of our lives. It was well understood by us that the Mother knew everything, yet the fact of telling everything and opening ourselves to her bound us intimately to her and set her force working in us far more easily in the way she wanted so that our psychic being might awake and come to the front. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me:

“When the psychic being is in front, the sadhana becomes natural and easy and it is a question of time and natural development. When the mind or the vital or the physical consciousness is on the top the sadhana is a tapasya and a struggle.” (10.7.34)

To lead us like blind men by the hand was not the method followed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They wanted that we should be conscious of all our movements and tread the path accordingly. Many a time I observed that whenever we took a wrong step, they came forward with outstretched hands to help and lift us up, but at the same time they moved us to find out what had led us to act wrongly and they wanted us to profit by that discovery. As a result we got the insight which helped us to grow from within. Thus through all our mistakes and rise and fall, success and failure, we could go forward.

Once a relative wanted to come here. When I asked for some directions about it, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“As for your inner attitude it must remain the same. Not to be excited or drawn outwards by these ‘incidents’ of the outward life or 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.

“Your present attitude and condition is all that it should be — only 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 his vigilance, then they slowly begin to rise or draw nearer, most often unseen, and when he is quite off his guard, surge up suddenly or make a sudden irruption. That 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.” (26.5.32)

Many things, which had often appeared to us meaningless trifles, did not seem so to the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s eyes, and when they made us aware of the inner movements behind them, we could detect them appearing in many forms. Nothing happens, nothing in life is without reason, there is always a hidden meaning or a true cause — this is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taught us again and again, removing the veil of our outer consciousness. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo:

“You have written that my physical consciousness has the habit of responding to illness. But I am not at all aware of it. How to become so? Whatever little perception I do have, makes me feel that I don’t want these things at any cost, for they do a lot of harm to me. So, I would like to know how to become conscious of them.”

One day I was suddenly drawn into a discussion. It was about the mind. Those present wanted to say that the mind is such an instrument that it can understand everything. It can consider, discern and differentiate; it alone has the power to know the truth and make one recognise it. The importance of mind, reflection, thoughtfulness — these were the topic of discussion. I

could not quite accept their view, for my mind followed what it had learnt from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo what I thought and asked what his view was. This is just a part of what I wrote:

“I don’t believe that it is our mind that helps us to know the Truth from 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 be done, otherwise if the physical mind is left alone, however great it may be, it always confuses things *and prevents them from being seen in the true way.*”

Sri Aurobindo’s reply:

“To see the Truth does not depend on a big intellect or 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 the worst kind and confuse Truth and falsehood if they have not the contact with the Truth or the direct experience.” (1.8.32)

Another time I wrote in search of knowledge:

“Mother, something I have been waiting to know from you very clearly and openly. When someone is broken down by mental distress or depression, does it not truly help him if a person visits him and, sitting by his side like a friend, talks or converses with him? My own experience testifies to its good effect. Of course I am speaking of doing it with a non-egoistic attitude. I mean that if one has a true attitude and feels that through the discussions one was doing your work — would that be fruitless? Many hold that during such times discussions are baseless. My belief is that it all depends on one’s attitude. If, of course, the person himself wants no interference, it is different. Otherwise I have seen that a single word at time produces a striking effect so much so that everything changes, and the inner being takes the right bend and all becomes safe — this has often happened. It was so in the case of my mother. Does it then mean nothing? My wrong belief? Please let me know the truth.”

Sri Aurobindo replied:

“It is very often extremely useful to speak in these circumstances if the one who speaks is known or felt by the other to have sympathy with him and if he speaks in the right way.” (24.4.35)

I asked the Mother and Sri Aurobindo a lot of questions, not for the sake of asking them, but in order to understand rightly and clear up any doubt. As long as I did not get the clarification the mind remained disturbed. While answering my points, Sri Aurobindo explained in detail so that I might grasp them well. Once I wanted to know the difference between song and poetry — I had often felt the difference, while singing, that poetry had to be understood by the mind (so had said somebody long ago) and song was a matter of feeling. “Is that so?” was the question. How beautifully he explained the difference! Here is the letter:

“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 the 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 soul-experience, a 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, that 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 be set to musical rhythm and a poem is written with a view to poetic rhythm or word-music. The 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 rhythm or else happens to have (without especially intending it) a movement which makes it easy or at least possible to set 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)

I was faced by the question: “If we find someone standing against a truth and attacking it by using falsehood as his means, what in that case should be the mental attitude of a sadhak? Should he, practising his yogic equality, be indifferent to it or lift his sword against the falsehood?” The question came up because some person wrote a letter attacking the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We were much excited by it and hotly discussed what our attitude should be towards such persons — should we at all keep any contact with them? I was in two minds — perhaps there should not be so strong a feeling of hostility or contempt. One of us asserted very forcefully that far from keeping no contact with such persons, even conciliation was never out of the question. So I wrote to Sri Aurobindo about it, fully supporting that speaker’s view.

This is what Sri Aurobindo answered:

“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 judgement is a quite proper yogic attitude. A condition of perfect 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

samatā 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 *samatā* 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, one has 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 *samatā*, strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted on his fighting the adversary, ‘Have *samatā*,’ 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 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 hostiles 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 Asram, 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 crush 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 ‘K’ 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 questions. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportion.” (13.9.36)

I wanted to know the difference between consciousness and transformation in detail and I got this reply:

“Your statement of the different parts of the being as you experience them is perfectly correct and well-observed, and it shows too that your experience of these things is not merely mental but genuine and living. 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 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 awareness 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 in the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as awareness and will-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, Force are always one movement and automatically effective.”

Once I approached two respected and thoughtful sadhaks who had a considerable knowledge and whose views carried a special weight and wanted to know from them where was the true difference between intellect, intellectual and intelligence. They explained it very well, but I found that they held two different views while I was quite ignorant. Therefore, though the difference was clear, the matter as a whole remained indistinct. I had to write to Sri Aurobindo. From his reply I could make out where precisely was my mistake. He wrote:

“X 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 financier is not, unless he theorises on his own subject or is a thinker on another.

“Y’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 — except a certain class of them. Intellectual or 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 and 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 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 intellectual as well as successful in their profession, 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 intellectual.”

I was then suffering from insomnia. For nights and days together I could not get a wink of sleep. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had done a lot, thought about it and written many letters full of love and affection. One day, I went to see the Mother. Oh, that day is still fresh in mind — she went on looking at me in a manner that baffles description — there was so much

tenderness, softness, and deep compassion in that incomparable look! Keeping her eyes fixed on mine, with the sweetest voice, slowly she said, “I want you to sleep.” My eyes kept gazing at her eyes till they were filled with tears. Nor did it end here. Next day Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“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.”
(15.3.35)

Even after such letters replete with solicitude and sweetness, when the insomnia was once again on the increase, Sri Aurobindo wanted me to have some medical treatment. But I misunderstood his well-meant advice and refused it; I thought he was pushing me away from him. His reply given below will speak of the reaction of my mind born of that misunderstanding.

“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 lift. 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 every day without fail, even on those days you feel relieved, till all trace of the attack is over!”
(1.9.36)

Many moods and forms have I seen of my clouded mind. There is a letter from Sri Aurobindo in reply to one such sample:

“I see that you have not sent your book, nor any letter and I am told 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 help are there as before and I hope you will feel them behind these few lines.” (9.11.33)

The day I received this letter, everything in me melted along with the tears that poured from my eyes.

There was a proposal to translate into Bengali Sri Aurobindo’s small Book, *Six Poems*, and to dedicate the translation in a printed form as an offering at his feet on 15th August, 1934 on the occasion of his birthday. Six sadhaks would translate these six poems. Nolini asked me to translate one of them. The five others were Nolini Kanta Gupta himself, Suresh Chakravarty, Anilbaran Roy, Dilip Kumar Roy and Behari Barua. The one I was to translate was “In Horis Aeternum” — a very difficult poem. I had much doubt if I could cope with it.

Still, when such a great opportunity had arrived I didn’t want it to go by easily. I consented, knowing that I could draw upon the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s force. Sri Aurobindo gave his consent and I started with great

zeal. Often I had to seek his help regarding many points. I quote here a few instances of the verbal exchanges.

“Your ‘In Horis Aeternum’,” I wrote, “has put me to a lot of trouble. Many people are discouraging me saying that this poem is very difficult, almost impossible to translate. Dilip holds the same opinion. Quite a few seem to have tried and failed. Only Nolini gives some hope. ‘To make an effort is good in every way,’ he says. We are all aware that the poem is truly difficult. Even so, I am emboldened to undertake its translation, relying entirely on your help and inspiration, not on my own capacity. When I am depending on One whose force makes the impossible a possibility, then — who knows? — I may also succeed. With this ray of ‘who knows?’ I have advanced. Besides, to feel what you have written and try to give it a form has a great value and delight. However, I have made a rough attempt of four lines. Dilip has seen them, and did not seem to have been impressed. He said, ‘It won’t do as it is, you have to change a lot.’ I don’t mind doing so but I can’t quite understand what I should do. Do you also think that the poem can’t be translated? Please tell me frankly — so that I may not stick on to something which is impossible.”

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 half-success. To try sometimes even impossible things can be a very good training for the capacity.”

MYSELF: “Translation of Mother’s writing and of yours can never be equivalent to the original, nobody expects it. But whatever approximation is possible, whatever inspiration can be received should be enough so long as the thought and movement are preserved.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Yes. A complete equivalent is not likely — but something approximative can be done.”

MYSELF: “One thing: I am doing my translation in blank verse. Dilip objects strongly to it. He says that without rhyme it won’t do. Do you have the same view?”

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.”

MYSELF: “I am rewriting it, in rhyme. It appears very difficult, but very attractive too. A great urge is pressing me and I am trying hard. The first four lines are not yet done well. The ‘movement’ can be felt, but the adequate expression has yet to come. So I remain unsatisfied. I tried one long line in blank verse. As Nolini found ‘it somewhat heavy’, I am changing it. The expression ‘unchangeable monotone’ I can’t echo in Bengali to my satisfaction. Please give me light, inspiration. Whether I can do it or not, the very attempt to do your things gives me great joy. I feel as if I am always in contact with you. The consciousness remains turned upward, and there is a strange feeling of some inner change. That is why I want to continue and can’t give up though I can’t do it well. And I am troubling you for nothing. Again, I want to know more clearly if in these two lines

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

the second ‘its’ refers to the sun.”

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

MYSELF: “I have done some parts. May I send them to you as samples so that you may decide if it will do?”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Yes, you can send.”

I sent the samples. On seeing them, Sri Aurobindo wrote: “You have made an excellent start.”

MYSELF: “Please explain to me this line I have marked. I can’t get the full sense of it:

‘Something that waits, something that *wanders and settles not, a Nothing that was all and is found*’.”

Sri Aurobindo replied in Bengali, which may be translated thus: “The sense is: something ineffable — as if it is nothing *asat*, yet it is everything,

contains everything — it was not, yet it can be obtained, and once obtained, everything is obtained. I don't know if I have made it clear.”

MYSELF: “The last line as I have translated it doesn't satisfy me at all. Something is missing. I have made changes; Dilip wants further changes and is helping me too. He has changed the last three words, I am sending them. If you think that Dilip's version is better, that will be kept.”

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

However, finally after many changes the poem took shape. Dilip worked hard at it. Nolini and Dilip encouraged and helped to make possible what was really impossible. Dilip himself wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo after the completion. It will be seen from Sri Aurobindo's reply how patiently he saw our work and taught and helped us.

Dilip wrote:

“I feel the last verse makes very 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 as I took it to mean that the passing moment reflects the Eternal when ‘Caught by the spirit in sense’. Tell me therefore — O Lord, I must stop.”

Sri Aurobindo's reply:

“Dilip,

I think it is a very fine rendering. In 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 the 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 নাস্তিরূপে ছিল যে সৰ্ব্বাস্তি is very good.

One point more. ‘Caught by the 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 time I used to write a lot of poems. That was one of the brightest periods as regards writing poetry. Nolini Kanta Gupta and Suresh Chakravarty had of course started long ago, Anilbaran also, Dilip, Nishikanta were going on with great speed. Behari Barua, Jatin Das of Chittagong were also on the list. Nirod’s niece Jyotirmala (formerly Jyotirmoyee) started writing here and was doing it remarkably. Nirod too put his hand to it and was faring well. I used to compose from childhood, but not regularly. My writing was intermittent, following the pressure of inspiration. Anil Kumar Bhatta was another novice. Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) was already a poet, but here his poetry took a different colour. Arjava (John Chadwick) started writing here and became a fine poet. His poems, which were many, were published by the Ashram after his death. Romen, a mere boy, began writing poems in English and was doing well. Besides Nolini, Dilip, Nirod and Anilbaran were writing in both English and Bengali. Nishikanta brought out a book of English poems — Nolini was writing in French also. Harin came, as a great genius, and went on writing in huge quantity. He composed directly on the typewriter. He was already known as a fine poet. Sri Aurobindo had written a glorious review of his first book, *The Feast of Youth*, in the *Arya*. Nishikanta’s genius had flowered in Shantiniketan, but here it took a different turn and his poems earned high praise from Sri Aurobindo.

Jyotirmala, Nirod, Anil Bhatta, Amiya and myself learnt Bengali and Sanskrit laghu-guru chhanda from Dilip for some time. Dilip had then become a master in chhanda. He and Nishikanta were making various experiments in laghu-guru and were trying to introduce it in Bengali poetry and song, not without success. Laghu-guru seems to create a deep feeling and a fine sound-vibration. It has not only a mantric effect, it carries great power too. To know its rules is not sufficient. One must know how to read

it as well. Then alone its nature, beauty and special delight can be grasped. The Bengali ear is not used to the swing of this chhanda, but with a little practice one can catch and enjoy it.

Among us, Jyotirmala had made a good progress. Nirod and myself were also doing well. We three and Anil Bhatta used to write daily at a fixed hour and invoke Sri Aurobindo's inspiration before doing it. It was done as a part of our Sadhana. What we wanted was that our poetry should be cast and shaped from its very roots by his inspiration. A new zeal and taste carried us forward. When a poem was finished, how eagerly we sent it to Sri Aurobindo and how expectantly we waited for his reply which Nolini used to bring the next morning! It was his duty to deliver letters at every house by 7 a.m. With Sri Aurobindo's touch and his remarks the poems would come back filling our beings with an uncommon exhilaration. Sometimes he would say "Good", "Fine" or even "Very beautiful" about my poems. As his appreciation increased, so did my joy. Only those who received something from the Mother or Sri Aurobindo can appreciate their full impact. I would invite his suggestions at times when particularly some alternatives had to be chosen. For instance, I asked: "Which one is better — 'নবাকুণ সাথে', 'ঊষসীর সাথে' না 'অহনার সাথে'?"

He replied: "On the whole নবাকুণ seems to me better."

One can almost say he led us onward, holding us by the hand. We were making various experiments with poetry, not regarding the poetic beauty alone, but regarding the rhythm too. The more we entered into the rhythmic varieties the more was the enjoyment... We realised that the knowledge of rhythm intensifies this delight.

Feeling and beauty of words apart, the swing of chhanda, which was something unknown before, gave a new taste, an increased pleasure in poetry. I had loved poetry always but I did not know it had so many aspects to delight us. As I proceeded onward, a door suddenly opened, as it were, of an unknown house and lines of English poetry began to come. Most incredible! I was astonished. I knew very little of English, yet the lines were coming in that tongue. I set them down in this form:

Mother, in my deep heart I find
A jewel shines amidst the night,
When all the mortals senses are blind
It speaks to the stars of unknown height.

Mother, a flame of love so sweet
Sways along the path of gold
And rises to touch your heavenly feet
Where sun and moon and stars you mould.

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.

Nirod took my poem to Sri Aurobindo, since by then all correspondence had come to a stop. Sri Aurobindo corrected it like this:

Mother! deep in my heart I find
A jewel glimmering 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 goal.

Mother! in a lonely secret spot
I am cradled on your breast alone
Where all of me is gathered, brought
Into your dream of opening-Dawn.

Another incident to note. I was working in the Building Department, supervising the repair and construction of houses, and dealing with workers. One day when I was inspecting the repair of a house called Nanteuil House, one line in English began to hover around me:

Travels from height to height unseen.

Well, I was puzzled; neither could I drive it away, it would insist on coming back. So I started jotting down lines just as they flowed in. Here they are after Sri Aurobindo's correction:

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 foot-falls 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.

After a few days, as I sat down to write, I found that like the English poem some lines in Bengali were coming whose meaning was unintelligible

to me. It seemed very strange and intricate since Bengali was my own native tongue. However, I went on writing and tearing up as things seemed to have no head or tail. For six days I continued in this way till I met Nirod and said to him, “What is all this happening to me? Can you tell me?” He said, “Can you recite some lines?” I did that quite easily, for they had become so natural after so many days of repetition. He heard them and said, “They are oceans of mystic lines. Don’t throw away. Finish them as they come and give them to me. I shall show them to Sri Aurobindo.”

With a wild fervour, I finished the poem. Though it was all Greek, it read well and I felt something, as if there was some stuff in it. Nirod showed it to Sri Aurobindo and, before I had time to ask him, he said: “Sri Aurobindo read your poem and said, ‘If Sahana throws away such inspiration, then what’s the use of giving her inspiration?’” And when Nirod reported the meaning of the poem as explained by Sri Aurobindo I was not only astonished, I became speechless and wondered how the mysteries of the unseen world could pass through my pen.

Warmly encouraging me Nirod said, “Go on writing even if you don’t understand.” So I continued for some days writing mystic poems. Sometimes words dropped into me, whose meaning was unknown to me and I had to consult people or the dictionary if any such words actually existed. A poem came in this manner, whose language was simply majestic and would give an impression that I was a master of Bengali.

Then I felt that, though it was all a puzzle, far behind my consciousness, the image of Shiva appeared again and again. The lines gave me a thrill, the reading of them was accompanied by an inner satisfaction. After writing some new lines, my heart was full — how wonderful are the lines and the picture they evoke, I said to myself....

I took the poem after completing it to Nolini. He is very fond of mystic poems and understands them well. He read and said that the poem was about Shiva. Nirod then showed it to Sri Aurobindo. The meaning he made out was also beyond my grasp, relating to higher worlds. It was about Shiva all right, and many other things he said which made me gape with wonder.

After practising for some days, I had an insight into a few features of these mystic poems. They cannot be written nor corrected by one's own effort, both their coming and their correction follow the same method. Mind's intervention is not possible, since what the poems are going to say and how they will say it are entirely unknown to the writer. The planes from which they come are beyond the reach of the mind. So the only thing to do is to make oneself an instrument and let the inspiration flow. Very often I tried to change by the mind and the result was a marked discord, incongruous with the original inspiration and stood out glaringly. Mystic poems create their own atmosphere and their language is veiled with a mystery. Besides, they don't express all that they want to say and what they say suggests an infinite meaning lying concealed behind the words. Just as knowledge has no end, and the more one enters within the more is the new light discovered, so are the mystic poems. A touch unfathomed is felt which suggests much more than it reveals.

Nolini rendered one of my mystic poems into English. I quote it here and close the chapter on mystic poetry.

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 awakens in the lotus-scented senses.

On the far shore where moves the Fiery Wheel
Rose, unheeded, the cry of the Space, —
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

on a sudden:

Eyes once closed open to the Lightning's flare.

When I arrived here, we had three darshans of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in a year. Following a severe accident to Sri Aurobindo, another 'darshan' was added on and from 24th April 1939 onwards. This was the date when the Mother had come permanently to the Ashram nineteen years earlier. So we had four darshans altogether.

Let me relate here the story of the shocking accident and what a terrible experience it was for all of us! It happened on the eve of the November Darshan. Since we could see Sri Aurobindo only on Darshan days, the Darshan to us was something ineffable and we waited for each Darshan with an ardour that went on increasing Darshan after Darshan. It was a thirst that remained ever unsatisfied and it was never a simple Darshan. Each occasion was for us a supreme moment of experience and realisation. It carried a golden opportunity to obtain what was unobtainable and Sri Aurobindo alone could give it, nobody else. Hence as the day approached, our being collected itself and became more and more concentrated on a single aim. How should we receive best what Sri Aurobindo had to give? This thought occupied our whole consciousness.

The Darshan began at 7 a.m. I lived alone in a small one-storeyed house just opposite the Mother's on the other side of the road. The darshan room was next to the Mother's room. I could see it clearly through my windows in front of me. On the eve of darshan the room was being decorated and I could hear the come-and-go of the people, their murmurings and could watch them carrying flowers, garlands and various outfits. I was also filled with an inner surge of joy — all because I would see the Great One very soon with dawn-break. To go to him to receive his touch — a wonderful moment of life. So when the wistful night ended and many got ready, I was on the way to the Darshan, somebody suddenly said, "There is no Darshan."

Startled, I at once exclaimed in an acerb tone, “What is this nonsense you are talking?”

The shock I received shot forth these words. His face turned pale and grieved. He said, “Well, you can find out”, and departed with a bowed head.

I had recovered by that time and realised that I had been rude for nothing. As I was going to Nolini for the news, everybody I met wore a dark sad face. The Darshan visitors were struck dumb on hearing the news. I heard that when after finishing all the correspondence at midnight Sri Aurobindo had been going to the bathroom, he had stumbled against the tiger-skin lying spread out in his room and broken the bone of his right leg above the knee-joint. One can imagine the consternation and anxiety the Ashram inmates felt when they learnt the fact. A pall of darkness extinguished, as it were, the light of day. The whole day passed in a daze. In the evening the Mother alone gave us the Darshan, in the hall before Amrita’s room.

Her compassion flowing in a thousand streams washed away the worry and depression of our broken hearts. Her matchless bewitching smile filled the deep void with heavenly sweetness! Giving strength and inspiration, she lifted us up. Still, I must say that I could not bear for long the sight of her giving Darshan all alone in this manner. The next Darshan was to be on the 21st February 1939, but it was postponed till 24th April when we had Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan once more. From then this April Darshan continued.

The Ashram turned a new page and began a new chapter. All correspondence stopped as well as interviews with the Mother. She had to give up using her sitting room and her interview-room and move to another chamber on the other side where, due to lack of sufficient space, private interviews were not possible. One had to speak to her about various matters in the presence of other people. A little area was spaced off for her to have some rest and a short sleep at night.

Here I shall quote in translation a small letter of Sri Aurobindo written in Bengali in the margin of a letter by me:

“Ego doesn’t go all at once, but it can be gradually diminished and made weaker — especially as more and more the inner feeling increases, thinner and thinner becomes the small self.”

Now Dr. Manilal of Baroda, Becharlal, Nirodbaran, Purani, Satyendra and Mulshankar were kept in attendance on Sri Aurobindo. Champaklal had already been in his personal service. So he was automatically there. Later on, Dr. Prabhat Sanyal, when he used to pay occasional visits from Calcutta, had the opportunity to see Sri Aurobindo. Nirod, each time he came down from Sri Aurobindo's room, would present himself at Dilip's breakfast table and a number of people would crowd around him to hear of Sri Aurobindo's talks with his attendants. We would wait eagerly for his arrival. So many things they talked with Sri Aurobindo, so many questions they asked and Sri Aurobindo freely gave them answers which now form a very precious and illuminating body of knowledge. They have recorded these talks and published them in book-form. Purani has named them *Evening Talks*, and Nirodbaran *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*. There are Bengali translations of some of them. What we enjoyed most in these talks was Sri Aurobindo's exceptional sense of humour and wit. Stories, anecdotes, unknown incidents of his life with his brothers in England, etc. — a rich and delectable fund of conversation giving us a new experience of many aspects of the Master. Sri Aurobindo's attendants also helped us by bringing oral answers from Sri Aurobindo whenever we had some difficulties.

I do not recollect in which year the 'Balcony' Darshan started. Very probably, it began after Sri Aurobindo's accident. The Mother used to come out in the early mornings and, standing on Pavitra's balcony, look steadily at the sky or towards the sea in a mood of concentration. A few sadhaks noticed her first and stood in the street watching her. Gradually others came to know about it, and a crowd began to gather which led to the regular Darshan. The Mother used to meditate for about ten minutes, and take in everybody with a sweeping glance. At the break of dawn we would mend our way to the balcony and wait for her Darshan and blessings. We had this gracious boon for years till it stopped on 16th March 1962 when she fell ill. She would also come down at night for collective meditation. Sitting in a straight posture in a chair near the staircase in the Meditation Hall in front of Amrita's room, she meditated for nearly half an hour. We never saw her leaning her back except when she was resting. However, making a line, one

by one we went to receive her blessings after the meditation. Very often she was in a trance and people stood before her after their pranam, waiting for blessings, or else she kept her hand upon that of the disciple in front of her and went into a trance, the person standing still until she woke up. This meditation ended sometimes at midnight or even after. For some days she continued giving Darshan through the window-shutters, which was called “Window Darshan”. There was also a “Terrace Darshan” when at about 10 a.m. she went to the terrace.

In this way at various times we had the Mother’s Darshan in her different moods. I cannot now recollect when these darshans started or when they stopped. Very probably they ceased after Sri Aurobindo’s accident. There was another interesting incident which I liked much. On the eve of the Darshan at 9.30 p.m. and on the morning of it at 5 a.m., the Mother used to come down to the meditation hall, where she took her seat on a low platform and gave us her blessings. It was a wonderful moment of the morning to come to her when everything was so quiet and soothing. What ecstatic days these were and how all of us lived wrapped in one consciousness — that of the Mother!

Dilip’s book on music — *Gitashri* Part One — was getting published. He asked me to compose and prepare musical notations of some of the classical songs. I agreed. I knew little of the laws and methods that are the technique of classical music. I had heard much but had no training in them, though I might recognise perhaps the different tunes when I heard them. But which scale was needed, which tune was to be left out of different ones and what were their various technical terms — all this was unknown to me. I had heard many of these things but not to the extent of remembering them. I could even sing some of them but all through the sense of hearing without any knowledge of the technique.

I started the work. I approached Dilip in difficulties and the notations I had prepared got confirmed by him. He always encouraged me and said, “Go ahead. Everything is all right.” Some common tunes like Bilawal and Alhaiya were unfamiliar. Dilip would sing them, and then I would sit down with books on classical music such as *Gitasutrasar* by K. D. Banerji and Pandit Bhatkhande’s manual of notations. Of course I kept the Mother and

Sri Aurobindo informed of my work. The result came gradually, the technique was getting to be less difficult and more and more confidence followed.

The joy of creation and the help of the Mother gave the feeling that an inner work was going on. When the entire work was coming to an end, I saw that there was clear evidence of my ignorance of it. After some time, one day I began to sing some of my compositions to see how they had fared. I was astonished to find that these songs appeared very unfamiliar to me, as if they had been composed by another person. I felt very uneasy. It seemed like someone singing new songs following recorded notations and not quite sure of himself. What I knew was no longer a thing known. The composition I had started with was not there. What was very clear and distinct when I had started the notations ended not only in obscurity; there was no sign even of the original composition. I wondered how a known thing could become so strangely unknown. So I wrote about it to Sri Aurobindo and he replied:

“...As you have opened yourself to the Force and made yourself a channel for the energy of work, it is quite natural that when you wanted 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 own ordinary moments of doing such good work; but also it may by its action set the instrument right, accustom it to the necessary intuitive knowledge and movements 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, 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 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 and 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, or the perfection that is being created. How far one feels it depends on the condition of the consciousness at that time, the thrill of being possessed and used by it, the *āvesś*, the exultation of the uplifting of the consciousness, its illumination and its heightened action and also the joy of the beauty, power or perfection that is being created.

“How far one feels it depends on the condition of the consciousness at that time, the temperature, the activity of the vital. The yogi of course (even certain strong and calm minds) is not carried away by the Ananda he holds and watches it and there is no more excitement mixed with the flow of it through the mind, vital or body. Naturally the Ananda of *samarpaṇ* or spiritual realisation or divine love is something far greater, but the Ananda of creation has its place.”

As the consciousness gets gradually awakened because of our stay here, all of us can to a certain extent understand, if we are sincere, why we can do some things, why we cannot do other things and why, where and when we fail, though the help and force given by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are always standing behind all our effort and work like wakeful sentinels.

When one can throw oneself in the stream which the force of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo has set going in order to take us in a certain direction and is constantly striving to do so, strange things are found to take place. Firstly, life moves in another rhythm, it has another taste and one enters into another kind of existence. Falling in that current, one loses one's

identity. All that is to be done, shunned or accepted is achieved spontaneously. No effort, no question troubles and no pain is felt in rejection nor even joy in becoming something. One has grown a different person, is living in another world and seeing things in a new way from a new place. Everything holds an endless interest and towards all one feels an affection, a love is born whose very character and quality are different. All this is a natural movement and law and aspect of that consciousness which has been received from the original source of Consciousness. And what is most wonderful is that the 'I' no longer stalks about with a superior air. One perceives clearly the truth that when the trial comes the mind cannot keep to the right attitude, and the result is failure and confusion. We realise that we have in fact lost our inner connection with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Hence we fall down into the bottomless waters from the bridge we had come to cross. The intensity, alertness and awareness are forgotten; everything gets clouded and we slip back into that domain where the ego is the lord, where the vision is muddy and from where starts all pain and suffering.

Regarding this condition, Sri Aurobindo wrote to me the following letter:

“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 changes.

“The attitude you describe (in regard to your going to X's) is quite the right one, — also in regard to Y's affair.

“As you say, it is the failure of the right attitude that comes in the way of passing through 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 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 the experience. 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 experiences and transferred to the framework of the Ashram instead of that of the world outside. It is not enough and there is great need that it should change.

“No, what I have written should not be sent to Z; for it was not meant for her. I am not her Guru and she has a right to her ignorance. I objected only to her trying to force it on one who has taken up the spiritual life.”
(9.9.36)

From all these letters and their answers one can have some idea of our mode of life; some aspects of it may also be grasped. What we usually write about are the events of the outer existence which may not give any true picture of the basic character of our life. Still, many hints regarding the inner life can be seen in the incidents of the outer existence. However, to write about sadhana is not my object. What I want to do is to write about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. So let me present them through their own letters which will give a better knowledge of our sadhana. Our hearts get filled up when we write about those blessed events — in them we feel their touch, their presence; we get an opportunity, while writing about their measureless grace, to recognise our gratitude to them and feel a new taste in it.

Now I shall speak about the Mother through some of her letters. She writes:

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 continue.

With my love and blessings.

Sahana,

I fully approve of your singing in your room and see no necessity to stop it.

As for the change in the vital, it will come by itself when you will take the habit of remaining in your higher consciousness where all these petty things and movements are tasteless.

With love and blessings. (17.4.39)

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, my dear child,

For your own sake, I must tell you that you are bound to receive shocks and hard blows too so long as you indulge in such false ideas as “my taking sides” with one or another etc. This is completely wrong and baseless and you must get rid of this way of thinking altogether if you wish to be close to the Divine.

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.

Sahana,

I shall be waiting for you at 9:30 and expect you to come. I accept none of your excuses which surely do not come from any psychic source. (17.5.33)

Love and special blessings to my dear child Sahana.

Let this day be for you the day of a new birth and a new start in your sadhana. (17.5.39)

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. (19.4.60)

It was perhaps in 1940 that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo decided to turn our sadhana into a distinctly collective activity. I am quoting here a portion of a letter of the Mother in which she has spoken in general about collective sadhana:

“Truly speaking, this is the first question that arose when I met Sri Aurobindo. Should we do an intensive individual sadhana withdrawing from the world, that is to say, having no contact with others any more, and arrive at the goal: then, thereafter, deal with others. Or should one allow all those others to come who have the same aspiration, let the group form itself in a natural and spontaneous way and march all together towards the goal? The two possibilities were there.

“The decision was not a mental choice, not at all. Quite naturally, spontaneously the group formed and asserted itself as an imperative necessity. There was no choice to be made.

“And once you start that way, it is done, you have to go right through to the end.

“If you want to do the work all alone, it is absolutely impossible to do it in a total way, for the entire physical being, however complete it may be, even if it is of an altogether higher quality, even if it had been created for a very special work, can never be but partial and limited. It represents only one truth, one law of the world; it may be a very complex law, but it is only one law — what is called Dharma in India — and the totality of transformation cannot be done through that alone, through one single body.

“That is why spontaneously the multiplicity has been created.

“You can attain all alone your own perfection. You can become in your consciousness infinite and perfect. The inner realisation has no limits. But the external realisation, on the contrary, is necessarily limited and therefore if you want to have a general action a minimum number of persons are required.”¹

Although collective sadhana had been there in principle, 1940 began a special new chapter in our Ashram life. Before this, we were a small group of sadhaks, occupied with our individual sadhana in a quiet and comparatively secluded manner. Now, we began to move forward hand in hand along with all others on the wide open royal road. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, after they had taken this decision, flung open the door of the Ashram to all seekers, and the number of pilgrims went on increasing. I could perceive very clearly that a vast and varied new world was being created, a new life with a new consciousness.

“Whatever you have said, will happen, because it is
true – it will be realised in time,
Every word of it will come true, the whole world
Will see on that day – your promise is not a mere
word,
A vain utterance; Time will prove its prophetic truth.”

¹ Published in the February 1960 *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*.

The life that we lead here is not for seeing the truth; it is a life of becoming the truth. So one has to become to some extent in order to be able to see.

After paying my homage and pranam at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo let me now conclude the reminiscence-part of the old days of my Ashram life with a description of my first Darshan-experience of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo when I arrived in Pondicherry.

I started by the noon-train from Bangalore to Pondicherry on 21st November, 1928. At Bangalore I met Dilip who was also coming on the same day and he accompanied me. Reaching Madras, I passed the remaining few hours at the Egmore Station. My mind was in a terrible turmoil. On the one hand it was ecstatic, swayed by the buoyant hope of having the Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo; on the other hand a sense of mixed excitement and anxiety in the extreme eagerness to come in close contact with such a great Power; on the one hand the dream of taking up an entirely unknown life, on the other the anxiety of falling into a quite different milieu. All these created a kind of pressure under which I found myself living. At 9:30 p.m. the train left for Pondicherry. Somehow my being became collected and the night passed in a sort of meditative trance. Next morning at 5 a.m. we arrived at the Pondicherry station. It was still dark — the morning star was shining bright. Some few lights were dimly burning in the station.

The way to Pondicherry came to an end — leaving behind the past life. I got down. It was 22nd November. In tune with the first awakening steps of the dawn, my dawning life too in Pondicherry stepped forward towards the Ashram. Two sadhaks from the Ashram had come to receive me; one of them had long hair running down his back. Putting me in an unusual-looking carriage, they themselves walked by my side. Such carriages were called “Push-push” (French “Pousse-pousse”) because they were pushed from behind by the driver. They had some resemblance to the old phaeton carriages of Calcutta, which were perhaps a little higher and wider. The Push-push rode on two wheels under it and had one smaller wheel in front, connected with an iron rod which extended into a handle for the passenger to turn according to the direction he wanted to follow.

The two sadhaks left me at my lodging and said that Nolini would come to see me at 7:30 a.m. I was given the front room facing the street in the present Embroidery department of the Mother. On the other side, was the “Main Building” where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to live. I could see the windows of the Mother’s house through my window. The house gave me a great surprise, for I had expected that I would have to live in a thatched cottage and practise severe austerities. Instead, I found a fine *pucca* building open on all sides, a room furnished with a cot, table, chair and glass-almirah and a carpet spread on the cot. It seemed the Mother had sent that carpet from her own place. I was deeply touched by this unusual consideration on her part and I felt I had received something indefinable from her. I was quietly thinking of her when Nolini came with another person having long hair, a moustache and beard, a cheerful face and kind sweet eyes. His talk at once gave me the impression of a witty person — humour was as it were his natural manner of expression. There was not much talk, but it was very pleasant. He was introduced to me as “Amrita”. I had already heard of Nolini, especially as a famous writer of essays. But his appearance was quite unlike what I had imagined. I had thought he would be a man of impressive appearance with a well-developed body and a grave poise, but what I saw was a slim and quiet man; his forehead was broad, eyes deep and uncommon. He said at once, “Mother will see you at 9:30 a.m. Come a little earlier, I shall wait for you at the main gate.” I perceived that he was a man of few words.

“The Mother had called me, she would see me and I would go and see her.” I was entirely possessed by this thought. Within I was as quiet as a cloudless sky. I was sitting with my doors closed and did not want to see anyone. But there was a knock and I opened. It was about 8:30 a.m. A female servant had brought my breakfast in a covered enamel dish. The quantity of food was staggering. A large bowl of “phoscao” — a kind of French beverage, more tasty than cocoa — 6 or 7 slices of toasted bread and one banana. It seemed too much for one person’s breakfast. There was a water-jug and a tumbler in the room — everything appeared to be well-ordered. The servant left after doing her work of sweeping and cleaning.

It had never occurred to my mind that I would have to do my sadhana in such comfort and ease. There was a deep satisfaction in seeing everything neat and clean. Even the brass knob of the door was shining.

As soon as I stepped into the Ashram, I felt that the atmosphere there was pervaded with some other element. The difference was palpable. There was such a calm silence everywhere that the mind of itself turned inward. Though at the first glance one could see nothing beyond the common, yet behind it an imprint of uncommonness could be perceived by a seeing eye. The inmates seemed to be quite contentedly busy with something or other as if they did not belong to this world and their dealing was with some invisible domain.

A little before 9:30 a.m. I arrived at the house where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were living. Nolini met us at the main gate where I found Dilip waiting and led me to the room on the first floor to meet the Mother. As we were quietly climbing these steps, in the surrounding stillness even a slight noise startled me. We entered a room on the right-hand side and saw at the end a small room somewhat dark owing to a hanging curtain. The Mother was indistinctly seen sitting on a sofa in a cross-legged posture. Her face was slightly turned to one side and the right hand held a veil over her head. As I stood in front my eyes fell upon her and at once I could feel that though she had a human body she was not human. I was seeing a figured Divinity. My two hands folded by themselves and I, in that attitude, stood looking at that divine image with an enchanted gaze. She smiled and lifted her eyes towards me. What a smile, what a look! That it could not be of any human being was clear to me. I bowed down at her feet; she laid her hand on my head. Her touch poured into my heart something that acted like a soothing balm, it seemed to melt my whole being into a cool delight. When she took off her hand, I sat near her feet. Again she touched my head and my eyes closed of themselves. Then the consciousness began to rise above; at the same time a power descended, and passing through the head it spread itself in all the chakras of the body, in all the nerves. I felt that the body was a vessel which was getting so filled up that it began to swell and become hard; the body went on expanding — that was my feeling. The Mother was touching my head from time to time. Perhaps she wanted me to open my

eyes, but I could not. Every touch of hers made me go deeper. At last she put one of her fingers for a while on the middle of my brow and I opened my eyes. Still I was under a spell and my eyes were closing. Suddenly I saw that she was steadily looking at them. Her look seemed to penetrate into the very depths of me, she was transfusing something into my very core. A frail body, yet what eyes — as if a source of all power! Since then I have witnessed many varieties of her eyes' expression. She now asked us if we had anything to say. Dilip told her on my behalf several things of my life and as if with rapt attention she heard them. At the end she drew me with her two hands towards her bosom and kissed my head. Words are impotent to express that touch. After a while she lifted my face and gazed at me — a divine smile on her face, a supreme assurance in her look. She had accepted me. My eyes were overflowing with tears.

As I descended the stairs to go back to my home, a few unknown faces were curious to know my impression of the Mother. But I was in no mood to speak, and without giving any reply I walked to my room and locked it from inside. Tears started pouring, a flood of tears. God knows where they came from and my whole body began to shake with this flood. All the time I felt I saw the Mother — her look, her smile floated before my eyes, giving an intense sensation in the heart and evoking a cry from it. I did not know why the cry had arisen, I only knew there was a hitherto unsavouried satisfaction in it.

Next day at 5 p.m. the Mother came to my room, having already given previous notice of it. I had kept for her a chair beautifully arranged, in which she sat. I bowed at her feet. She asked me to sing. I sang a devotional song of Mirabai: "Lord, keep me as thy servant." She wanted to hear a second song and I sang about four of Mirabai's "bhajans". Before the Mother departed, I again did pranam. She told me very affectionately that I should not hesitate to inform her in case there was any discomfort or if I needed anything. She seemed the very embodiment of Grace and my entire being was full to the brim with love and gratitude.

The next day was 24th November, the day when the Ashram would have Sri Aurobindo's Darshan. From our very childhood we had heard his name and since then was born in our hearts a spontaneous love and devotion for

him. In our life he had taken his seat. We learnt to adore him and offer our soul's deepest homage. We had heard that he was a very great man, a friend and benefactor of mankind. His uncommon qualities of character, his supreme intellect and unparalleled love and self-sacrifice for the country — all these had been like fairy tales which had filled the air and which we children used to hear with avid attention and rapture. Now he came into my life as my Guru.

The atmosphere of the Ashram had changed. A good number of people had come from outside for the Darshan. The inmates were all a picture of brightness and their faces shone with an intense glow.

The Darshan was to take place at 7 a.m. in the same room where the Mother used to meet people. In front of the staircase was a board on which the names of the pilgrims and their Darshan-times were written. A carpet had been spread in the adjacent hall for people to sit and meditate and await their turn for the Darshan. Complete silence reigned everywhere. Incense and flower-fragrance helped to kindle the flame of aspiration. The pilgrims with flowers and garlands in their hands were silently going up to the temple to have their Darshan of the Deity, and were returning with an inexpressible radiance on their faces. Then came my turn.

It was the rule that one had to wait on the last step of the staircase until the preceding man had come back after the Darshan. As soon as Dilip entered inside, I took my stand on the highest step and glimpsed Sri Aurobindo sitting majestically on a sofa slightly leaning against it — bright and immobile like the Himalaya. He was of a fair complexion and wore a white silk *dhoti* and *chaddar*; the bust was half covered and the hair and beard mixed together hung down to the chest. As I came near what a serene, collected and eye-enrapturing figure it was that I saw! All luminous, the Mother was sitting on his right side. As I bowed down to her, she placed her two hands on my head and poured her ineffable honeyed smile as her blessings, as I found when I looked up. Then my eyes turned to the feet of Sri Aurobindo. How beautiful they were! I laid my head on them and did not want to get up at all! My whole being prostrated itself in a complete and secure reliance. I marked a strange thing: when I was coming up for Darshan, my heart was palpitating with an unknown excitement, as if

someone was striking it with a hammer, but the moment I saw him from a distance and stood before him and put my head on his feet, a totally different experience took place instead. Slightly leaning forward, he put his right hand on my head. Oh, how soft was the touch! I could not say what magic was in the touch or what I expected from it, but the fact was that I received something inconceivable which I had not received anywhere else, and that touch awoke an intense eagerness to give myself without the least reserve, free from all bondage. As I looked at his eyes, I could not turn away from his gaze, and the very bottom of some immeasurable sea was, as it were exposed to my vision. He then lowered his sight and I got up and turned to go. As to how I found myself back in my room or how the whole day passed, I had no idea. That image of eye-entrancing beauty filled my entire being.

At last, I had had his Darshan for which I had craved and brooded nights and days. I decided that if I could not take up his yoga, life would not be worth carrying on. To reach him alone, I had launched on a perilous voyage across a shoreless ocean. Whenever I thought of God, it was Sri Aurobindo's face that came to the front again and again. And now at last I had obtained his Darshan.

Was it as a guru?

"No," my soul assured me, "Sri Aurobindo is more than a guru."

Was it as a great seer or a great yogi?

"No," was the reply, "Sri Aurobindo is not even that."

As a creator of Purna Yoga?

"Even if it be so he is not that alone."

As what then?

"Only as Sri Aurobindo."

Sri Aurobindo is Sri Aurobindo. He does not fall into any category. He is one without a second. He is only Sri Aurobindo.

And Sri Aurobindo is my only refuge.

II

Now I am publishing a number of letters from me and answers from Sri Aurobindo on different topics. They are much more numerous than what I have included in my original Bengali book. We had no personal contact with Sri Aurobindo except on the four occasions of the Darshan. Therefore all our external communications with him regarding sadhana and other incidental questions were made through these letters.

His answers used to carry his presence and the best way to speak about him is to present his correspondence. Some of the answers have been published in his collected works. Even so, I cannot resist the temptation of reproducing at least a few among the many written in his own hand. They carried his blessings and form a part of my most invaluable treasures.

It has not been possible always to publish an entire letter of his since it contained personal touches which were not meant to be shared by others. There are many answers without my questions because Sri Aurobindo would simply send his answers, keeping back our own notes. I have not taken the risk of reconstructing my questions by ransacking my memory of the past. There were several letters of mine which were written in exercise books. Sri Aurobindo's answers were given in their margins or in other available empty spaces. Most of the correspondence I am quoting has been taken from these exercise books. It dates to the years 1930-38. In 1930 the letters were few; the number went on increasing year by year, till the letters stopped completely after the accident to Sri Aurobindo's right leg on the night of 23rd November 1938. On a superficial reading, many of them may look repetitive, but each really carries a special import of its own. I may add that even when I wrote to the Mother, the answers often came from Sri Aurobindo.

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MYSELF: The tears shed for the Divine out of sheer Ananda or from love and devotion — do they have a mixture of the vital ego?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only the ordinary vital emotions which waste the energy and disturb the concentration and peace, that have to be discouraged. Emotion itself is not a bad thing, it is a necessary part of the nature, and psychic emotion is one of the most powerful helps to the sadhana. Psychic emotion, bringing tears of love for the Divine, or tears of Ananda ought not to be suppressed, it is only a vital mixture that brings disturbance in the sadhana.

(21.3.31)

MYSELF: Mother, is the Ananda about which I have written to you this morning a vital Ananda?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Ananda you describe is evidently that of the inner vital when it is full of the psychic influence and floods with it the exterior 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. When 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 movement.

(6.12.31)

MYSELF: What should be the true mutual relation among us? How to bring it about?

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 vital 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 your life, action and feeling; all in you, all you feel, all you 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)

MYSELF: Very often I see that I feel greatly disturbed in the face of a difficulty and fall into a condition from which rising seems impossible. But surprisingly enough I get back strength by your Grace and say to myself: “Since Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said so, I will surely succeed.” With this inner urge I stand up and step forward, all fresh and fine. I have written to you what happened this time and what experience I gained. I was shown almost miraculously how difficulties turn into opportunities if we accept them in the right way. What a joy it was!

SRI AUROBINDO: The attitude you have taken is the right one. It is this feeling and attitude which help you to overcome so rapidly the attacks that sometimes fall upon you and throw you out of the right consciousness. As you say, difficulties so taken become opportunities — the difficulty faced in the right spirit and conquered, one finds that an obstacle has disappeared, a fresh step forward has been taken. To question, to resist in some parts of the being increases trouble and difficulties — that was why an unquestioning acceptance and obedience to the direction of the Guru was laid down as indispensable in the old Indian Yoga — it was demanded not for the sake of the Guru, but for the sake of the shishya.

(13.2.32)

MYSELF: Mother dear, can I practise tratak? I was doing a bit of looking at a bright star, but I, unlike Dilip, failed to see anything. Perhaps some time is needed for the vision to open.

SRI AUROBINDO: We do not consider it necessary for you to practise tratak. It may be useful to someone who has a strong predisposition — in Dilip for instance, in his development something was always trying to bring out this power of vision. But in your case you can wait for the vision to develop of itself or at any rate leave it till later. For you what is important

is to carry on what has been begun till it is complete in all the parts of your nature.

(28.2.32)

MYSELF: Mother mine, how sweet it is when you write so frankly about what you want of us. I have never tasted the joy of having no desire as I do now.

I have found out one thing, Mother. Please tell me if it is true that singing in the open air on the terrace causes a strain to the throat, often followed by a crack in the voice.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps when you sing it is better to do it inside; for when singing in the open one is usually led to strain or force the voice.

(4.4.32)

MYSELF: Mother, I feel such an unease when I do something without asking you beforehand. Whenever anybody wants me to do something, my automatic answer is: "I can't do or say anything without asking the Mother." There are many who don't like this. They say: "Why should everything be told to the Mother? We get to consider the word more important than the spirit." Is that so? I ask myself: "Am I being excessive? Is it all mental?"

SRI AUROBINDO: You are quite right in following what you feel about asking us in these matters. It is not mental or an exaggeration.

(12.4.32)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, I would like to tell you something. Yesterday, repeatedly I had an experience while discussing with D about sadhana... It was like this: I often felt that it was not I who was speaking but someone was speaking through me. I myself was so surprised to hear what I was uttering. It was absolutely impossible for only me to speak so. I felt sure that something which was trying to express itself came out through me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is true that something has been speaking through you. Be more and more careful to speak without the interference of the mind or the feeling and speech will become more and more clear.

MYSELF: When I commit a fault, I repent and cause myself much pain. I don't know why I should feel so intensely.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a certain excess and exaggeration somewhere in your vital. A greater constant calm and control in your vital — the whole of it — is necessary. For these movements do not help — they prevent a quick recovery and shake the nerves and the body and push to unreasoned action.

(20.5.32)

MYSELF: Mother Beloved, I am always waiting for your directions. Why are you not correcting me, Mother? Sri Aurobindo has given me permission to take the course of following implicitly the directions given by you; so kindly do not forget, Mother Gracious, that I am eagerly waiting to have your directions.

SRI AUROBINDO: YOU can certainly put aside the mental or vital sense of responsibility and take the course of following implicitly the directions given you by the Mother — keeping however the need of psychic assent and a certain inner vigilance.

One thing only you must be careful about that there should be nothing inert or tamasic in this self-giving to the guidance and it should not be made by any part of the vital into a plea for not rejecting the suggestions of lower impulse and desire.

There are always two ways of doing the Yoga — one by the action of a vigilant mind and vital seeing, observing, thinking and deciding what is or is not to be done. Of course it acts with the Divine Force behind it, drawing or calling in that Force — for otherwise nothing much can be done. But still it is the personal effort that is prominent and assumes most of the burden.

The other way is that of the psychic being, the consciousness opening to the Divine, not only opening the psychic and bringing it forward, but opening the mind, the vital and the physical, receiving the Light, perceiving what is to be done, feeling and seeing it done by the Divine Force itself and

helping constantly by its own vigilant and conscious assent to and call for the Divine working.

Usually there cannot but be a mixture of these two ways until the consciousness is ready to be entirely open, entirely submitted to the Divine's origination of all its action. It is then that all responsibility disappears and there is no personal burden on the shoulders of the sadhak.

(24.5.32)

MYSELF: Mother, Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me: "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 be otherwise there. Not that it will be entirely absent even if you take nothing, but you will not be bound any longer." But when I do not accept what people want to give me, they are hurt, even offended, especially when they offer with love, affection or respect. Then it becomes difficult to refuse them. What should be done in such cases?

SRI AUROBINDO: The best thing is to keep the rule of not asking, of taking when it is given. It helps to gain mastery over desire and it is that mastery that is here the important thing.

(27.5.32)

MYSELF: My constant and ardent aspiration is that Sri Aurobindo's Light may come into my mind. Tell me, dear Mother, if it will ever happen. Shall I be able to receive his Light?

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 all other mental influences.

(29.5.32)

MYSELF: What is the meaning of "to get rid of all other mental influences"? Is it that I had better not read any other books than Sri Aurobindo's writings, or that I should not try to learn anything from hearing or by reading others?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a question of books or learning facts. When a woman loves or admires, her mind is instinctively moulded by the one she loves or admires and this influence remains after the feeling itself has gone or appears to be gone. This does not refer to X's influence merely. It is the general rule given to keep yourself free from any other admiration or influence.

(30.5.32)

MYSELF: Mother, I have analysed and found one thing more, that is to say, I think I go for typing not merely to type but also to have an excuse to go to X's place. I am trying to stop all the old vital movements, it is not that I do not find it difficult, but I sincerely want to be changed. Was my analysis wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it was quite right.

(2.6.32)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, yesterday when I was writing to you, I saw thrice a strong blue light coming through the page as if from behind. I thought it must be Sri Aurobindo's Light — I felt so happy! Is it true that it was His Light?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

(2.6.32)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, do you think what I feel about not going to X's place is a mental rule? I want to know it from you. As for myself I feel it to be a necessity, for it comes from within, that means I feel that this sort of relation must go now, I want to be sincere and true to you and true to myself and for that I want to try to take the resolution to give up all that stands in the way. So nowadays whatever I feel as a necessity, I want, at least, to try sincerely to do it seriously. Is this merely mental?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a mental rule, but, as you say, an inner necessity, but something mental moves in your outer attitude, because in the outer being and in the subconscious vital there is still something which is

not overcome. That may give your way of doing it a rigidity which they feel. That was what we wanted to say, not in the least that the resolution did not come from your inner being or that it was merely a mental rule.

(6.6.32)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, whatever I want to do or whatever resolution I take, comes to nothing eventually. Either an intricate problem or some obstacle appears and everything becomes a jumble and the resolution is lost. I don't seem to have found the right way. I may be giving too much importance to the outer ways of doing things. Do tell me, Mother, what I should do at every step. I will not try or think even of doing anything of my own accord. This idea is coming up again and again.

SRI AUROBINDO: The difficulty about meeting your demand that the Mother should plan out and fix a routine for you in everything which you must follow is that this is quite contrary to the Mother's way of working in most matters. In the most physical things you have to fix a programme in order to deal with time, otherwise all becomes a sea of confusion and haphazard. Fixed rules have also to be made for the management of material things so long as people are not sufficiently developed to deal with them in the right way without rules. But these things of which you write are different; they are concerned with your inner development, your sadhana. In fact, even in outward things the Mother does not plan with her mind and make a mental map and rule of what is to be done; she sees what is to be done in each case and organises and develops it according to the nature of each case. In matters of inner development and the sadhana it is still more impossible to map out a plan fixed in every detail and say "every time you shall step here, there, in this way or that line and no other." Things would become so tied up and rigid that nothing could be done; there would be no true and effective movement.

If the Mother asked you to tell her everything, it was not in order that she might give you directions in every detail which you must obey. It was in order first that there might grow up the complete intimacy in which you would be entirely open to her, so that she might pour more and more and continuously and at every point the Divine Force into you which would

increase the Light in you, perfect your action, deliver and develop your nature. It is this that was important; all else is secondary, important only so far as it helps this or hinders. In addition it would help her to give wherever needed the necessary touch, the necessary direction, the necessary help or warning, not always by words, more often by a silent intervention and pressure. This is her way of dealing with those who are open to her; it is not necessary to give express orders at every moment and in every detail. Especially if the psychic consciousness is open and one lives fully in that, it gets the intimation at once and sees things clearly and receives the help, the intervention, the necessary direction or warning. That was what was happening to a great extent when your psychic consciousness was very active, but there was a vital part in which you were not open and which was coming up repeatedly, and it is this that has created the confusion and the trouble.

Everything depends on the inner condition and the outward action is only useful as a means and a help for expressing or confirming the inner condition and making it dynamic and effective. If you do or say a thing with the psychic uppermost or with the right inner touch, it will be effective; if you do or say the same thing out of the mind or the vital or both, a wrong or mixed atmosphere, it may be quite ineffective. To do the right thing in the right way in each case and at each moment one must be in the right consciousness — it can't be done by following a fixed mental rule which under some circumstances might fit in and under others might not fit in at all. A general principle can be laid down if it is in consonance with the Truth, but its application must be determined by the inner consciousness seeing at each step what is to be done or not done. If the psychic is uppermost, if the being is entirely turned towards the Mother and follows the psychic, this can be increasingly done.

All depends therefore not on a mental rule to follow in practice, but in getting the psychic consciousness back and putting its light into this vital part and making that part turn wholly to the Mother. It is not that the question of your going too much to your S is of no importance, — it is of considerable importance — but to limit the contact is effective only as a

means of helping your vital part to withdraw from this servitude to old movements. It is the same everywhere.

The kind of outward obedience you lay stress on, asking for a direction in every detail, is not the essence of surrender, although obedience is the natural fruit and outward body of surrender. Surrender is from within, opening and giving mind, vital, physical all to the Mother for her to take them as her own and recreate them in their true being which is a portion of the Divine; all the rest follows as a consequence. It would not then be necessary to ask her word and order outwardly in every detail, the being would feel and act according to her will; her sanction would be sought but as the seal of that inner unity, receptiveness of her will and obedience.

(11.6.32)

MYSELF: Mother mine, I am feeling a little depressed for the attachments that live still in me; I know how little importance you give to these things, but I don't know why they have become so important to me. May I know? Am I giving them too much importance or is it going to be like this? Why cannot I take things in an easy way if it is so necessary? I am writing to you because I cannot forget the thought about my attachments and that thought makes me feel I am so incapable and this sense of incapacity depresses me more.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no reason to be gloomy and it does not help but rather hinders. See these things quietly with the full confidence that they will be removed as early as possible.

(1.7.32)

MYSELF: I am feeling after a long time that the difficulties are as if fleeting away from me. I am not sure, of course, whether it is the vital's consolation to me or not, but I am feeling less responsible about myself. Pray tell me whether all this which is coming to me is true or the obstinate part of the vital is trying to baffle me with these satisfying answers.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is all right. If you develop the inward truth as you describe here, the outward will follow.

(4.7.32)

MYSELF: Mother, today I took my lunch at A's place. Was it a wrong step?

SRI AUROBINDO: 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 has gone — for if that happens, then small things may again begin to matter.

(13.7.32)

MYSELF: Tell me frankly — is there anything objectionable if I go and read your *Prayers and Meditations* with D? He says he can explain it to me (there will be two or three other persons). If anyone else could explain *Prayers* I would equally be willing to take the help. Anyhow, I will do what you want me to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: We don't think that much depends upon that — your going or not going. It is the inner attitude and state that matters, the resolution to conquer, that is the thing important.

(22.7.32)

MYSELF: What shall I do if I can't make the rejection completely? Everything comes to the same point.

SRI AUROBINDO: It would 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.

(27.8.32)

MYSELF: YOU have spoken of bringing down "settled peace" and "equanimity". But what is the way? Will you please tell me?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Mother's peace is above you — by aspiration and quiet self-opening it descends. When it takes hold of the vital and the body, then equanimity becomes easy and in the end automatic.

(28.8.32)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, this new place is very quiet, but I don't feel the atmosphere, the intensity that I was always feeling in the former house. I know all this depends on my inner condition. I am feeling calm and quiet but don't have the former joy and energy in every movement, the same heart-filling and soothing feeling which was constantly there. Guard me, Mother, from all that pushes me back towards the surface.

SRI AUROBINDO: It must be something in the vital that has come up and got in the way. You should find out what it is and reject it.

(7.9.32)

MYSELF: Mother, I fail to know the reason. I am trying to keep the right attitude by remaining calm and quiet. Some days ago, I had an experience about the right attitude and I wanted to live in the consciousness of that attitude so that no excitement might come in. Yet it is true that still there was excitement at times. Now, please tell me what went wrong.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the effect of a wrong movement — a mixture of seeking after comfort and convenience and a certain vanity or self-esteem (it is difficult to get an exact word for the feeling) which you did not seem to have recognised sufficiently in your vital. It was an eager excited movement with the vital push behind — not the right thing. As it was connected with the house the effect came up when you removed to that house. We say this because you ask what it was, — but as it is now over, the best thing is to forget all about it and get back to your true condition.

(7.9.32)

MYSELF: Mother Divine, Sri Aurobindo has mentioned my wrong movement. May I know when it came about? I am asking because I want to be clear about it. I remember that just before my shifting here I had the wrong movement and recognised it there, and I remember writing to you all about it. I also realised afterwards the wrong movement of all my ambitions etc. (what Sri Aurobindo has mentioned) and experienced what should be

the right attitude and offered myself to be put anywhere in any way you decided. After this experience I was trying to remain in that consciousness, and about this also I wrote to you. After that I don't remember having any craving or eagerness for such things; on the contrary I was ashamed that I had written so many letters about them. That is why I am writing to you to know when the wrong movement stepped in. I mentioned in my letter of yesterday a rising of excitement sometimes, but that was of this character — to do what has to be done hurriedly — and I was always drawing myself back and trying to remain in that experience-consciousness. So is it the effect of *that* wrong movement that is still going on? Or did it appear again without my sufficient knowledge and recognition when I was moving to the new place?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was before when you were still in the other house, but something of it continued afterwards also — your excitement was the result of that feeling suppressed but still there, at least in the subconscious vital, and the desire to finish quickly is the result of a desire to get rid of the occasion of this want of the entire inner clearness and quietude. You are not yet entirely conscious of what is there in your physical and vital physical consciousness when it is not formulated to the mind and higher vital consciousness.

(8.9.32)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, in my waking consciousness I feel that I flow always in the stream of sadhana, but in my sleep I am quite a different person. I want to be changed in my sleep also. How to improve it? During sleep too I want to keep the constant contact with you. Will my sleep begin to change in due time? What must I do to make it change? Is there any process or has any personal effort to be made or should I simply call your help before I retire to bed?

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspire and want it always — that is the first thing. As for the methods perhaps the best is not to go to sleep straight in the ordinary way, but to meditate and through meditation pass into sleep.

At least before going to bed have a meditation.

(13.9.32)

MYSELF: Let me know if I have done anything wrong in telling you what I suspect in the matter that has been going on for some days.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing wrong in telling, but the less these things are thought about, the better. By dwelling on them with the thought or speech, vibrations are set up which increase the chance of their developing.

(27.9.32)

MYSELF: Mother, whenever I look at you, if I stare a little, I begin to feel the descent of your Force. Simply by looking at you, can we really receive anything?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, you can.

(1.10.32)

MYSELF: Mother, my Sweet Mother, tomorrow we shall have the opportunity to rest our heads on Your Feet. The eagerness, the joy, the inner push that I feel nowadays to go and see you — is it vital in character? I feel the movement starts from deep within myself and the whole of it remains and goes on deep behind my chest, nearly at the back. Is it merely a vital craving or desire? Or something deeper than that? I am unable to express exactly what I feel; it is some very strong and joyous movement.

SRI AUROBINDO: The original is not vital, it is psychic, it is only if disappointment comes in that there is evidence of the vital mixing in it some unruléd movement. The vital has to share, but in the psychic way.

(4.10.32)

MYSELF: Mother, see what has happened! So long I was going on well, but today the memory of the past has been coming and going like pictures before my mind. I was almost pressed down by them. I got up to meditate, but failed. Then I tried to reject — no success. I couldn't separate myself at all. These things stop the progress and I feel heavy and exhausted.

SRI AUROBINDO: SO long as you have not learned the lesson the past had to give you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come, you will see that they are connected with some psychological movements in you that have 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)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, shake me up again and again until I am able to succeed in this matter. I have experienced many times that for the first few days after a new experience I always happen to be very wakeful about what I experience, but slowly, if I am not sufficiently earnest about keeping what I gain, it gets lost behind the veil of inferior, ordinary or clouded movements of vision. So I pray shake me up each time (whatever way you like) so that I may be able to keep these things present in my consciousness until they are removed.

Now kindly tell me afresh about my tea or food with others. I have found out that I am quite fond of tea; only, I was not admitting it. May I know what I should do if anybody offers tea or asks me to take food?

SRI AUROBINDO: AS to taking tea or food with others, you must always remember that to be governed by these ideas is not at all an ideal condition, but if you have the impulse and are not able easily and naturally to reject it, you can take on condition you scrupulously inform the Mother both of the act and of the movement and state of mind accompanying it. Also often the desire may not be yours, but may come on you from outside, imposed on you silently with conscious suggestions by others; you must learn to see when it is like that and then you must reject it. Your aspiration must be for an inner change so that there will be no longer any need to indulge in the desires, because they will no longer have a hold on you. You must learn to watch yourself and know what is the true nature and source of the movement in you and report them carefully — as in fact you had begun to do when you first had the psychic opening and could see the movements in you or many of them at least very clearly.

(26.10.32)

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I really did not know that I still had such craving for sarees, I never felt this sort of thing before, I was wondering how it could be so absolutely strong that I could ask you to give me more than one saree. I am feeling so bad, so miserable! I can very well see now that it was you who made me see that the movement was from the vital craving and also pointed out so clearly that I have taken a wrong direction.

Mother, I dare not ask, but I am feeling like offering the sarees to you with the craving that made me press you for them. If you graciously allow I shall be very much relieved to offer them. May I do so?

SRI AUROBINDO: These things had been pressed down in you, but not got rid of. They were still lying there in the subconscious vital. That is why they now rise up with force to be got rid of more radically. It is better to keep them and get relieved.

(1.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother mine, what to write? My movement of the day is an absolute failure. This morning my attitude was good. I was quite reserved and kept quiet, at least I was very careful not to let myself go; but afterwards I found myself making foolish mistakes one after another. Each night, when I write to you, pray and take the resolution that from the next day I should carry out what I have been asked, I feel also an assurance within me that, yes, I shall be able to do so. But alas, the next day I see I can do nothing but fail! Only in the morning, after coming back from Pranam, for some time I feel strengthened, energetic and enthusiastic, I am happy and light and find all my being praying for your help.

Is it still that a part of my vital resists — or what is it, I wonder. Mother, save me from the influences that are carrying me here and there.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is simply the habit of the physical consciousness that is showing itself insistent — the want of control of the tongue especially, — don't get upset, — observe yourself and keep the will steady — it is not merely the vital but the habit of the physical mind and the body.

(2.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother, my morning-letter was full of self-defence, wasn't it? I am making the same mistake again and again; I am really very sorry for it.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good that you see clearly in yourself, it is the first necessary step for the entire change.

MYSELF: What is the use of only seeing in oneself if there is no sincere effort to rise above what one sees? The will, determination and mental strength by virtue of which all kinds of obstacles can be surmounted or what had to be done is done — are not these things needed? My efforts go no further than just giving you my word and resting contented there. What then is the remedy?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing to be discouraged about. The fact is that after having lived so long on the mental and vital plane you have become aware of the physical consciousness, and the physical consciousness in everybody is like that. 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 in 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.

(7.11.32)

MYSELF: There is still a strain of discontent. Of course I have to work, the force for it is there, a new ardour, but an inner discontent is flowing on like an undercurrent. Meditation also was not a success the last two or three days. I sit for it all right but float on the surface. Whenever I concentrate to go deep inside, I come out bounding like a spring. This is what is now going

on. When I shut my eyes to meditate, the physical mind becomes active and pushes me always to the surface and I feel a kind of heaviness near the forehead, as if some movement were going on there.

Before, I used to have good meditation; what has happened now? I feel very cheerful and enthusiastic when at work, the mind too is quiet. But all the trouble starts with meditation and brings a sort of discomfort. Is it true, Mother, that if one tries to meditate, the consciousness goes downward? Whatever the truth may be, you know where lies my defect.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is on the surface that the transformation is done. One comes up to the surface with what has one gained in the depths, to change it. It may be you need to go in again 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.

(8.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother mine, I have stated one side of the feeling I have with the nervousness or hesitation to confess about my errors etc.; there is another side which is always telling me — why should I be nervous if my errors, my defects or faults are found or pulled out, or why must I feel ashamed if my ordinary nature shows itself to you, when I know you are making me see my ordinary nature in this way for me to become conscious of these things? So then why do I feel sorry? [Here in the margin Sri Aurobindo wrote — “Exactly so, — why?”] On the contrary I should be glad and relieved to see that one by one the defects of my lower external nature are exposing themselves to you to be transformed.

Mother, I am not sure whether this sort of thing may be also a self-consolation for the mistake that is made. I don't know which is the true movement, because there are so many tendencies to deceive myself that I feel like knowing from you which is what.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, one must not make a mistake for the purpose of bringing it out or accept the mistake once made; but if it comes, one has to take advantage of it to change.

(18.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I want to understand a point clearly. Kindly make me understand it. Sri Aurobindo has written to me — “a too great stiffness in the effort of the will” — “a too great stiffness” means what exactly?

SRI AUROBINDO: I mean a strong mental coercion on a recalcitrant part of the being — an outer tussle and wrestle to make it obey — that makes it resist more and brings reaction.

(22.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother mine, how can something be carried out without making an effort with a strong will behind it, and with only the quiet persistent aspiration, as Sri Aurobindo has written? That is to say I have only to go on aspiring — is this what Sri Aurobindo meant for me when a part resists?

SRI AUROBINDO: YOU have to look at it, reject, and bring a quiet pressure for it to change its will. That is the most important — to bring light and change into the resisting part.

(22.11.32)

MYSELF: Mother, after informing you, I became conscious about one thing — I could see very well what was working behind the condition. I saw that that force came to test if I really wanted to be freed from the bondage. A friction with one’s relatives is often succeeded by a soft and tender feeling which along with a sense of sympathy or emotional stress covers the consciousness completely; and taking advantage of the occasion and the weakness, the force tries to turn the mind and increase the tenderness towards the old tie. This, I saw, is also one of the tricks of the forces. Please show me if I am anywhere wrong in my perception.

SRI AUROBINDO: NO, what you saw about the forces was perfectly correct. You are not exaggerating or deceiving yourself.

(8.1.33)

MYSELF: Mother mine, I remember that, when we used to go for a drive with you, you told us once that after a meditation we should go behind this ordinary consciousness. I feel I go deep down, but I don't go behind this consciousness. You said it was very important, but then how to do it? I want my meditation to be improved. I feel a beautiful sense of going deep, a quiet, a vastness, a peace etc. I like to remain in that state also, but I don't feel clearly the change of consciousness — going from one place to another — kindly let me know how to go beyond this physical consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Beyond, behind, deep (within) are all the same thing.

MYSELF: I began to try also to go out of this body, and after practising sometimes I began to feel a giddiness. Sri Aurobindo had asked me to stop this practice. May I try it again now?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, very dangerous.

MYSELF: I want to make progress in my meditation, Mother Beloved. I am not satisfied with my meditation, I am eager to get an initiation from you if only I am now capable of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no initiation to give. As you go on, all will open up of itself. It is not necessary to go into trance in order to have all the needed experiences.

(21.1.33)

MYSELF: I feel such a relief now that I have found in myself the mistake of following the outer methods and cannot but be grateful to you for having made me conscious in time and saved me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is right. Relying on outer methods mainly never succeeds very well. It is only when there is the inner poise that the outer movement is really effective and then comes of itself.

(27.1.33)

MYSELF: Again the old things are pushing themselves up driving me to anger! And the anger brought the usual result!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is really simply the recurrence of an old habit of the nature. Look at it and see how trifling is the occasion of rising of this anger and its outburst — it becomes more and more causeless and the absurdity of such movements reveals itself. It will not really be difficult to get rid of it if when it comes you look at it calmly — for it is perfectly possible to stand back, in one part of the being observing in a detached equanimity even while the anger rises on the surface, as if it were someone else in your being who had the anger. The difficulty is that you get alarmed, grieved and upset and that makes it easier for the thing to get hold of your mind which it should not do.

Help we are giving you — stand back so as to be able to feel it and not the obsession of these surface movements.

(30.1.33)

MYSELF: I am doing your work all right but where is the joy of the service? Cheerfulness is gone, there is faith neither in my success nor in divine grace. All empty and void. I am lying listless in an empty house. The flame is out!

SRI AUROBINDO: YOU must throw all that away. Such depressions can only make you shut to what Mother is giving you. There is absolutely no good reason for such an attitude. The existence of difficulties is a known thing in the yoga. That is no reason for questioning the final victory or the effectuality of the Divine Grace.

(4.2.33)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, this desire of mine to remain all alone — has it arisen from a fixed mental idea? To keep quiet, to go within, cutting off social contacts — does this stress come from a pre-formed notion of the sadhana and does it want me to follow it? Or am I being pushed towards it as a genuine call coming from you? Is it all imagination? If it had been a

wrong path I was choosing, surely you would have pointed out the mistake. Or perhaps you didn't want to do so.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not *kalpana* [imagination]. Mother herself stresses in these things wherever possible not from any mental preference but because it is seen that these habits keep the sadhaks here in a light externalised ordinary consciousness open to all kinds of doubts, self-indulgence, carelessness about the aim of yoga. If there is a stress in you it is her stress in you. Follow it quietly but keep it for yourself alone as each has to find it out for himself in his own time.

(22.2.33)

MYSELF: Very often we refuse to admit our wrongs but try to seek self-justification and thus don't see the truth. We indulge these habits which really we should abandon. In arguments too, do we not want to prove "I am right"? Isn't the ego at the root of all this?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, self-justification keeps the thing going because it gives a mental support. Self-justification is always a sign of ego and ignorance. When one has a wider consciousness, one knows that each one has his own way of looking at things and finds in that way his own justification, so that both parties in a quarrel believe themselves to be in the right. It is only when one looks from above in a consciousness clear of ego that one sees all sides of a thing, also their real truth.

(2.6.33)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, again depression! Not very strong, not swallowing me up. I have realised concretely the truth that each depression makes the resolution for the Divine more firm. I am sending my experience of this in the form of a sentence, expecting Sri Aurobindo to correct it. The last time he did it so well!

(This is how Sri Aurobindo put it now: "Each depression overcome kindles a new aspiration in the heart, consolidates the mind's resolution, opens up a new, a more elevated relation with the Mother.")

SRI AUROBINDO: There may be something in a half subconscious form which causes the mechanical vital repetition of old thoughts, but can no longer take a strong mental or vital shape: so even if it is there, there is no necessity to trouble much about it — it can be left to fade out. The depression may have been largely atmospheric and of the mechanical physical kind — that can be more easily thrown away.

(11.3.33)

MYSELF: Mother, I am feeling so happy that Sri Aurobindo has corrected my sentence. I also felt that the depression was atmospheric, since all the other inmates had slight depression. As regards the mental movement I spoke of, there too I felt that it would slowly vanish; so I didn't take much notice of it. When Sri Aurobindo wrote, "It can be left to fade out", I felt a great support within, understanding that it would one day leave me for good.

(12.3.33)

MYSELF: Mother, you know very well that I have the bad habit of letting out whatever I hear; I can't hold back anything. Now there has come a strength in me not to speak to anybody all that you write to me, for, as I cannot reproduce things correctly, much misunderstanding and confusion are created.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to keep what is written in the book for yourself. If people could be relied on to receive or interpret rightly, it might not be perilous to tell them to others, but they cannot. Besides things kept for oneself have a greater power than if one lets them out to others.

(13.3.33)

MYSELF: What has hurt me much is certainly due to my sentimentality, but how to protect myself?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only from the vital and sentimental point of view that it had any value — but that ought now to belong to the past — the standard now ought to be different.

(22.3.33)

MYSELF: Mother, do give me a strong support; otherwise the downward pull makes me suffer intensely. Now it is the last tie; let it be rent asunder. So far the movement was downward; now it seems to be looking up towards the Light. I pray to Sri Aurobindo to keep his touch constant. Whenever I turn towards the Light, he stops writing. This touch along with your touch and smile enables me to fight. Otherwise I would have been finished long ago.

SRI AUROBINDO: My touch is always there; but you must learn to feel it not only with the outward contact as a medium — a touch of pen — but in its direct action on the mind and heart and vital and body, there would then be very much less difficulty — or no difficulty at all.

(27.3.33)

MYSELF: I am ready to give up all contact with X. You know that. I am aware that I shall suffer for it, but still I hope that your grace will make me come out of this weakness. I have suffered no less for this weakness. But there is no other way.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that you write in this letter is quite correct. It is useless to go through the old kind of reconciliation — it will bring back the same futile circle — for he will act in the same way always (until he changes spiritually in the vital and that means a turning away from all vital relations) and you would be flung back into the same reactions. To cut away is the only thing — the best for him, the best for you. As for the feelings excited in him — more hurt self-esteem than anything else — they will fade out of themselves. The first necessity of both is to free yourselves from the old relations and that cannot, it is very clear, be done by going back to any remnant of the old interchange.

For the rest keep to your resolution. Do not discuss him with anybody, do not interest yourself in what he does or does not do; let it be his own concern and the Divine's, not yours. Expect nothing personally from him — you may be sure that your expectations will be disappointed. His nature is not yours and his mental view of what should or should not be done is quite

different — incompatible with yours. By retaining anything of the old feeling you will only invite pain and farther disillusionment — you gain nothing and pay a heavy price for that nothing. It is only by becoming one-minded in the sadhana that you can escape from this painful circle.... Let the physical consciousness as well as the rest of the nature turn wholly to the Light and the Divine and seek only the one true source of happiness and Ananda.

(31.3.33)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, I find that towards the evening an aspiration from within rises upwards with a good deal of intensity, but at noon there is nothing of that kind. At times a sense of emptiness and boredom comes over me and I feel lonely. It can be driven away, but that intensity does not come back. A condition of being neither here nor there is very painful. It is almost suffocating to remain in this middle zone.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is best to take these movements as a means first of knowing what part of the being is still unchanged or imperfectly changed and then of bringing into it the true condition. As here it is evidently the physical vital consciousness that has still not lost the social instinct and the need of social pleasure. Don't get discouraged when these things come, but react with a quiet confidence that this must change and will change.

(2.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother mine, I feel so ashamed to speak to you of all these utterly futile talks. Please correct the impure motive that may be lurking behind them. Whatever be the true motive that may not be detected by me, it will be clear to you and my purpose will be served. I feel at ease after unburdening myself to you. What would be the best thing to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: To confess or speak to the Mother what you knew was always right and could have only a good effect — but not to yield to jealousy and other passions and the conduct that came from it. If anything good came out of that, it was because the Divine Will overruled all for a good result, otherwise there could have been disastrous consequences.

(4.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, today, I sang for an hour, expressing my ardent prayer to you and, on getting up, I at once wrote this letter. I lost myself entirely in you. That feeling is still throbbing inside. It was as if my whole being had fallen at your feet and been making this prayer intensely. I shall simply send this song of Rabindranath with slight changes made by me and offer my humble prayer through the song:

O Mother, do accept me now,
 Don't turn me back again,
Possess my rebel heart,
 With me remain!
The days that have gone by
I call no longer nigh,
 Let them fall to dust.
"To keep open to thy Light"
 Should be my life's refrain.
What lures, what voices
 Made me roam here and there
 In the wild waste!
Now with thy face close to my breast
Let me catch thy wondrous strain.
All darkness and deception
 Still hide in my secret heart,
O Mother, burn in thy pure fire —
 Turn me not back again!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the way. The intensity of the aspiration brings the intensity of the experience and by repeated intensity of the experience the change.

(5.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, I am aspiring for that condition, that Ananda which, once obtained even for a short while, makes one realise what it is to live with impatience and dryness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is sure to come back — let there be such a foundation that it can remain.

(7.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, I want so much that my attachment should go, but alas, I don't see any effect. I feel very depressed. How shall I be free from the bondage? It seems I am just where I was. What then is the way?

SRI AUROBINDO: You should not indulge this sense of grief — remain calm, confident, turned to the one Will in all circumstances, that is the way to be secure that each step will be taken in the right measure and produce its best possible consequences. Regard henceforth the question of Y and your relation as a minor and subordinate thing on the other side of your sadhana. If you take it as a problem of the first importance it will become that and stand in your way again, look at it as a question from the past that has been firmly settled and put in its place and turn to the central aim of your sadhana.

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For the rest, apart from this, circumstances need change nothing in the inward aim and concentrate your will and endeavour on the one thing to be done — the entire self-giving and self-dedication of your inner and outer being to the Divine alone. If you can adopt firmly the right inward attitude, it may even be easier so than by a strong compression on your outer movements with the wall of an outward rule for your main protection.

(18.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, have I still to write about this coming and going? I thought it would be better not to do it, for writing about it would mean remembering. So long as there is no difficulty, I should not refer to it. But I leave the decision to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think you are right. It is no use any longer thinking always about him. Only when you need to write or that there is anything we

ought to know as regards yourself in that connection — a marked progress or any serious difficulty.

(12.4.33)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, last night at about 10 p.m. suddenly my defects of judging this man and that man, accompanied by some expectations from them, attacked me. I was almost upset to see them still lurking in me. Fortunately as suddenly everything became quiet within and I recollected Mother saying once that we should be happy to notice our defects, for it would give us a chance to conquer them. Then I remembered Sri Aurobindo's writing the same thing to me, and instead of being upset a quiet will and aspiration arose to face and reject them, keeping myself detached. Then there was relief and a feeling that the proper attitude had come.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, all depends on that. For so long as they are not rejected altogether, they will try to rise.

(13.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, this time I must come out of this vicious circle. Whatever may be the difficulty, I must not succumb but rise above it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Keep to that and it will be much easier. It is the getting upset that depresses the consciousness and the strength and so gives the enemy their chance.

(14.4.33)

MYSELF: I am so contented when I feel that I am nothing more than an instrument.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good that all has come back so strongly. It is the full surrender of the vital.

(19.4.33)

MYSELF: I am quite happy and cheerful, the ananda and the sense of beautiful love and deep devotion is there. Only I hope today my talking too much did not do any harm.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is only occasional, it ought not to have any effect.
(23.4.33)

MYSELF: Mother, the peculiar thing is this that I can understand the whole thing so well, so clearly, but if I just pay a little attention to the feelings of sentiment, all other things surge up with it; one has to be so careful all the time!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is just what you have not to do. Fling it back decisively and briefly and do not let your mind dwell in this idea. Keep the gate shut on these hostile forces and their suggestions.
(26.4.33)

MYSELF: I am very well in most respects by your Grace, only a pull is there of the old habit of inquisitiveness and curiosity of the physical mind. I was able to separate myself from this movement (of habit) as something which was passing through me, and I was simply looking at it without paying any attention, but the pull of which I have written drew my attention in that direction. I was calling you calmly and refused quietly to pay any attention. Mother, I am writing to you only to let you know about the pull so that it may not do any mischief. It was like this: a small part of me was feeling this pull to turn and look at what was going on — and all the other parts saw this quite clearly. I felt it was not I but a part of me and even that was also not quite connected as there was a sense of separateness, I felt detached.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is by separateness that the elimination becomes possible.
(5.5.33)

MYSELF: Mother, will you please explain to me what you mean by your Mahakali method? Why don't you use this method with everybody?

SRI AUROBINDO: All these things depend on the person, the condition, the circumstances. The Mother uses the method you speak of, the Mahakali method, (1) with those in whom there is a great eagerness to progress and a fundamental sincerity somewhere even in the vital, (2) with those whom she

meets intimately and who she knows will not resent or misunderstand her severity or take it for a withdrawal of kindness or grace but will regard it as a true grace and help to their sadhana. There are others who cannot bear this method — if it was continued they would run a thousand miles away in misunderstanding and revolt and despair. What the Mother wants is for people to have their full chance for their soul, be the method short and swift or long and tortuous. Each she must treat according to his nature.

(9.5.33)

MYSELF: When I have done something wrong I suffer from it and I torture myself.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a certain excess and exaggeration somewhere in your vital. A greater constant calm and control in your vital — the whole of it — is necessary. For these movements do not help — they prevent a quick recovery and shake the nerves and the body and push to unreasoned action.

(20.5.33)

MYSELF: I understand well that unless I can be free from the ego, there is no deliverance for me. Yet this ego doesn't seem to budge at all. Then I doubt if I would be able to continue my sadhana. The thought of going away also often comes to the mind.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the same irrational tendency in the vital — pushed by a strong ego-feeling. It is through that the adverse force acts and the impulse towards going away is one of the favourite suggestions of this force with the purpose of breaking the yoga.

(20.5.33)

MYSELF: When one wants to wipe out the past and build up one's future with you as the guide, why then should there be so much attachment for the fallen remnants of the past? Should the memory always be in bondage even after understanding all this?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because the old habitual ways of thinking and feeling have still roots in the physical mind and vital and subconscious; you have either to root them out or to work them out.

(22.5.33)

MYSELF: Mother, I feel so happy to be alone. Have you permitted this, because I wanted it? Or because you thought it to be necessary for me? If it was a mistake on my part or if I have taken a wrong path to isolate myself in this way, then I will do gladly whatever you want me to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is best for your sadhana to be apart.

(2.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother, the last two days I wake up at night with a kind of twisting pain in my chest. The feeling at that time is like this: “What has happened? Why has it so happened?” Everything appears strange. In my waking consciousness, there is no such perception of pain. It comes in sleep, and when I am awake I drive it away; but at the same time the mind keeps on thinking that still there is some attachment in the subconscious and I feel bad about it. I can’t free myself from the brooding concern that the attachment is lingering still, the result being a short period of depression. Why should this happen?

SRI AUROBINDO: YOU need not attach too much importance to it. It is an impression left in the subconscious — necessarily a strong impression because the feelings were acute — which as it can no longer affect the waking state comes up in dreams. It is a common experience that long after one has got rid of things in the waking state, e.g., sex, family attachment or any past preoccupations that no longer exist, they return from time to time in dreams. Your self-liberation is quite recent, so it is not surprising that the impression comes up in this form. You have to reject it very quietly and without concern — if it is not fed in the waking state it will die away.

MYSELF: My ego has found so much support from me in everything that it now doesn’t want to leave me so easily. It must stay either in front or

behind, openly or in secret. What I see clearly, or am aware of and about which there is no doubt — even there the ego peeps! What a dismal aspect of human nature!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with everybody, because the human consciousness is permeated in all its past ideas with this substance of egoism. It is only by a constant quiet vigilance and increasing consciousness that it can be got out — for if it is not allowed to play openly, it conceals itself and takes subtle and disguised forms.

(8.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother sweet, an attitude of indifference that I should no longer defend myself has now come upon me. To justify and defend myself constantly to others appears so disgusting. Since you have made me conscious that all these movements are born of ego, enable me then to remain in that consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: This indifference or equality will be a great progress towards getting the true spiritual attitude.

(12.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother dear, this seems to be a vital movement in me, for to feel like singing all the time as a result of some pressure of ananda, as if I were under some intoxication, can't be a sign of the psychic. Besides, I myself understand clearly that it is a vital movement, because there is no control. The psychic is accompanied by a sense of quiet and collectedness whereas the vital is under excitement and restlessness. Am I not right, Mother? I should have restrained myself, I feel. That I became too impatient is a clear sign of the vital movement. It was a mistake to yield to it, isn't it so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously, when there is that inability to control and overeagerness, it must be the movement of a vital nature. The vital can take part in a movement but it must not be in control — it must be subordinated to the psychic.

(18.6.33)

MYSELF: Again stark darkness, and a surge of weeping. No concentration at all. That I can't move forward towards you is what is most depressing. It is true that the things I loved once are dropping off and that gives joy, but if it is not followed by an intimacy with you as a result, if I can't advance forward, then what do I gain? What I felt to be the greatest obstacle on the path has been removed, but I remain where I am and consequently within there is a terrible dryness. That I can't look at the relation between so and so in a better light is also galling to me. The vital nature refuses to come under control; the upshot is that my mind is shattered. I am carrying my own self like a burden — a lifeless corpse.

SRI AUROBINDO: What you have felt is a revival or return on you of the lower vital with its demands and desires. Its suggestion is "I am doing the Yoga but for a price. I have abandoned the life of vital desire and satisfaction but in order to get intimacy with the Mother — instead of satisfying myself with X and the world, to satisfy myself and get my desires fulfilled by the Divine. If I do not get the intimacy with the Mother and immediately and as I want it, why should I give up the old things." And as a natural result the old things start again — "X and Y and Y and X and the wrongs of Sahana." You must see this machinery of the lower vital and dismiss it. It is only by the full psychic relation of self-giving that unity and closeness with the Divine can be maintained — the other is part of the vital ego movement and can only bring a fall of the consciousness and disturbance.

(20.6.33)

MYSELF: Reading Sri Aurobindo's letter, I got terribly upset and felt that I wouldn't be able to do sadhana. I have left everything for you alone; still if I feel sad that I don't get the intimacy in the way I want it and you call that sadness a vital demand, then how should I want it? I do want you and, for that, I am trying my best to follow your directions, but if that does not bring me closer to you, and the intimacy within doesn't deepen, then it is quite natural that I should feel sad and be in despair about myself. It is clear that I am not able to do what should be done.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was from your description of the reaction that I said there was a vital demand. In the pure psychic or spiritual self-giving there are no reactions of this kind; no despondency or despair, no saying “What have I gained by seeking the Divine,” no anger, revolt, *abhimān*, wish to go away — such as you describe here — but an absolute confidence, and a persistence in clinging to the Divine under all conditions. That is what I wanted you to have; it is the only basis on which one is free from troubles and reactions and goes steadily forward.

(21.6.33)

MYSELF: If to want you is desire, then what is called the aspiration of the soul? The discontent that issues from my inability to want you heartily was, I thought, discontent of my soul, the soul’s aspiration. That was something pure in me, I believed. Now, alas, it is not so; it is impure, it is desire! How helpless am I still before my lower nature and when I see this the despair comes with double force.

SRI AUROBINDO: But are such feelings a sign of the soul’s self-giving? If there is no vital mixture how do these things come when I write to you and as the result of my writing and trying to show you the way?

(21.6.33)

MYSELF: NOW I feel very much better. Though the attitude is clear, there is still a heaviness within. I don’t know how Sri Aurobindo’s letter evoked a spirit of revolt and came like an attack. And yet when I read this letter again, I found that there was nothing to produce this revolt. My head was all on fire!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the first movement of this part to revolt when it is shown its own nature and asked to change.

(21.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother, please, don’t put me off by simply saying “Dismiss” and all that. Tell me just what I can do. I am quite willing to work hard, but

the things you say or ask are so difficult that I feel as if I am lost on a wide sea, and the word “impossible” is all that I can utter.

SRI AUROBINDO: Difficult? It is the first principle of our sadhana that surrender is the means of fulfilment and so long as ego or vital demand and desire are cherished, complete surrender is impossible — the self-giving is incomplete. We have never concealed that. It may be difficult and it is; but it is the very principle of the sadhana. Because it is difficult, it has to be done steadily and patiently till the work is complete.

(21.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother, why at times do things appear so difficult? Again, the more they are difficult the greater is the joy in surmounting them. This is a very pathetic condition: swaying between the possible and the impossible. Now to get out of the grip of the lower vital is the problem I have to answer.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to go on rejecting the vital mixture every time it rises. If you are steadfast in rejecting, it will lose more and more of its force and fade out.

(21.6.33)

MYSELF: Mother, please don't suppose that I have been weak enough to want back what I have once given up. Not at all, in spite of all hard struggle. Those incidents regarding X and Y have all been completely excised from my memory. Still a tension is there. I know that ego, self-love, self-importance are at the root of it all, but at the same time I forget it all as quickly. It has been reduced to a tiny little thing, but how persistently it sticks, like a leech! My God, problems and problems!

SRI AUROBINDO: That means it is an obstinate but irrational and mechanical survival of the old movement. That in fact is how these things do try to survive. It is bound to go if you do not give it fresh life.

(23.6.33)

MYSELF: My mind says how happy it will be when it will be quite free from these bad thoughts! What else shall I write to you, Mother? Do make me free for ever so that not a tinge abides anywhere — make a clean sweep!

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no doubt of it — you have only to understand it rightly and you can get at once to the right ground.

(23.6.33)

MYSELF: I went to hear the part-recital of a famous drama in someone's house. I liked it, I must say, but the inner being doesn't respond as before in a different atmosphere. I enjoyed it but not with my whole self. Some part watches always the movement of other parts. Nowadays many things which remained at one time unnoticed, are now easily detected, because the vision has turned inward so that I am becoming clearer to my own eyes. Therefore it is no longer possible to enjoy things, in a state unaware of myself. There is always something watching one's varied movements.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a great and indispensable progress to have reached this condition.

(10.7.33)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, this morning as I was getting up after pranam I saw a sadhak meditating. I saw with open eyes a bright blue light on the wall behind him. A sort of meditative mood came upon me, as I kept on watching the light. Then I closed my eyes; after a while when I opened them, there was such a dazzling golden light that I could look only for some instants. Then I saw not only light, but a figure of light. As soon as I tried to concentrate on it, it vanished. Again, when my mind turned towards you, suddenly this glittering light on the wall attracted my sight. I looked at it for quite some time. Was it really a vision or something else?

SRI AUROBINDO: The bright blue light was probably the light of the spiritualised mind and the golden light is that of the higher planes of knowledge. Probably it was the light of some Being you saw projected before you, but the vision not being developed you did not see the figure

clearly. Sometimes these lights are those of some form or Power of the Mother — many see like that.

(20.7.33)

MYSELF: In ordinary life, we boast so much of our reason and judgement, but there is no end of error in these judgements.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a question of ordinary life. In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and error.

(25.8.33)

MYSELF: Mother, we struggle so much over your outer contact, but the inner contact is of no less importance. Then why don't we yearn for it as much as we do for the outer contact?

SRI AUROBINDO: The outward touch is helpful, but the inward is still more helpful when one is accustomed to receive it with a certain concreteness — and the outward touch is not always fully possible, while the inward can be there all the time.

MYSELF: Mother, very often I observe that those persons with whom we live have ways of life different from ours. These don't quite agree with our ways. For this reason an irritation is caused and a kind of uneasiness lingers in the mind. Is there a way to get rid of it at the very root?

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say is right. Those one lives with have always some ways and manners that do not agree with one's own and may grate on the mind. To observe quietly and not resent is part of the discipline in life. Not to be moved or affected at all but to see with equanimity the play of one Nature in all is the discipline of sadhana.

MYSELF: My vital (external) seems to be like an untrained horse — so impulsive that it is hard to control it. It will not come under any discipline easily, and is happy to roam about at its sweet fancy. However, since you

have said that the external vital must undergo some discipline, I have taken up an attitude to follow regarding work. It seems some good result is coming, thanks to your Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is true that for the external vital an outer discipline is necessary for the purification, otherwise it remains restless and fanciful and at the mercy of its own impulse — so that no basis can be built there for a quiet and abiding higher consciousness to remain firmly. The attitude you have taken for the work is of course the best one, and applying it steadily the progress you feel was bound to come and is sure to increase.

MYSELF: I see very well that my consciousness has become externalised. When shall I become free from taking interest in the discussions and criticisms made by other people? One part of mine is very eager to join in the discussions. Now it is kept down; otherwise it will pop up at any opportunity. At times in moods of confidence I feel that I have nothing to do with these things. But alas, the moods don't last and I lose my proper condition. However, when a veil falls upon the light of awareness, it produces a suffocation and I cry, "Oh how I wish I could get out of this intolerable situation!"

SRI AUROBINDO: It is also better to be more strict about not talking of others and criticising them with the ordinary mind — not only in the case of Y and X but all. It is necessary in order to develop a deeper consciousness and outlook on things that understands in silence the movements of Nature in oneself and others and is not moved or disturbed or superficially interested and drawn into an external movement.

Dismiss all that and get back into your poise.

(26.8.33)

MYSELF: Mother, this evening I sang and felt much better, as if some light was there. Otherwise the whole day was in a neutral state. The vital and the psychic alternating with each other and thereby bringing endless joy and endless suffering. What an upheaval!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because this has been a constant and long-indulged habit. These habits of the physical vital are almost automatic in their action and it takes either a very strong will or a persistent effort of self-discipline to get out of this automatic, almost reflex action. You should not therefore be discouraged by the difficulty, but go on with the necessary perseverance of the will to press it out of existence.

(27.8.33)

MYSELF: Rejection has to be done: I know it but to yield oneself again and again to what has to be rejected is a condition I cannot bear, nor the suffering caused by it.

SRI AUROBINDO: The lower vital is not a part that listens to reason. There is no why to its action; it acts in a particular way because it has long been accustomed to act in that way, and it goes on even if the doing brings a painful reaction.

(27.8.33)

MYSELF: I want to ask one question. Wherever I see anyone affected by doubt, disbelief or disturbance my aspiration and faith become more firm. These things never touch me; on the contrary my faith and aspiration surround and protect me like an armour, as it were. Very concretely I feel in me an unshakable faith at all times. Others' disbelief seems rather to increase my strength. Isn't it strange? Is there any meaning in it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the natural 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.

(31.8.33)

MYSELF: Mother mine, Sri Aurobindo has written that I haven't informed you about the cause of my depression, but I couldn't myself make out at first what the reason was. On the first day, I felt a weakness since things began to be insipid and gradually the depression went on increasing. It seems to me this was an attack coming from outside and passing by me.

There was nothing against you or anybody else. Often the past invades and causes a fall of consciousness, but there was nothing of that sort. I was myself surprised at what had happened. One day Dilip came in a very depressed condition and was saying many things. I was very much distressed to hear them. Could that be the reason then?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a Force going about the Ashram trying to attack anybody who gives an opening. It fell upon Dilip and threw him into depression — in his case there were small outward reasons but all quite small and trivial, but the depression was of great violence and lasted long. Somehow or other it came through him to you but as it could not find any place to get through in the mind or the vital, it fell upon the body (vital-physical or nervous) and created a weakness in which it was able to play. As soon as it could do that, helped by Dilip's remark, it began to whirl round the old machine of thoughts and repinings and despairs. This time it was purely mechanical and irrational, the subconscious bringing up the old habit and turning it like a wheel — which shows that it is nearing its last resources. This is what I saw, but I wanted to know the outward details from you and these entirely confirm what I saw.

(12.9.33)

MYSELF: Mother, since yesterday, I have been feeling worse. Painful old memories afflict me. Egoism again was coming back, I tried to reject it, but couldn't. Then followed a severe depression with thoughts of failure and other self-lowering tendencies increasing and ending in a climax that with this body and this nature no sadhana can be done. Therefore let this body perish; where is the necessity to continue living? Now, the tendency to tell you everything got closed up and I took up the attitude that since I was going to die, I shouldn't disturb you further. All possible sorts of painful, depressing thoughts I indulged in, more in anger at myself. Deeply perplexed, I failed to find the cause. When, however, this phase passes, I laugh at myself and feel even ashamed. So dramatic, and yet disturbing!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the suggestion of incapacity and departure (if not death) that the adverse Force is trying to suggest in each case. The whole thing is absurd and meaningless in your case, a mechanical repetition of old

movements. But there was some spot somewhere in the physical in which the button could be pressed and the machinery began to turn round. You must therefore be on your guard especially against any beginning of depression and react immediately — you must not allow physical weakness to bring mental depression, for that is the gate by which it came in.

(13.9.33)

MYSELF: Mother, Sri Aurobindo's reply of today showed me how many kinds of forces are at play and how they make us suffer.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is really the same Force taking different forms using different means of approach or acting on different levels of the nature.

(13.9.33)

MYSELF: At times I feel so vexed to see that the things one should seek for in a pure or unmixed way in order to go forward in sadhana, are all lacking in me, — there is only the ego!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with everybody. Human nature is shot through in all its stuff with the thread of the ego, even when one turns to get away from it, it is in front or could be behind all thoughts and actions like a shadow. To see that is the first step — to discern the falsity and absurdity of the ego movement is the second, to discourage and refuse it at each step is the third, — but it goes entirely only when one sees and experiences (not only thinks) the One in everything and equally everywhere.

(8.10.33)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, I find that many people are upset over X's and Y's departure. Why should one be upset when a person leaves? I feel neither sympathy nor pain in such cases. I rather feel for you, thinking that you have taken so much trouble, spent so much of your time for them. But why are people so frequently leaving the Ashram? Is there any undue pressure of sadhana? In this year, just see how many departures! We didn't see so many going when we came. Is there any special reason or simply the action of the

same hostile force? If so, why should that force succeed to such an extent now?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know why. It is perfectly irrational. People have been going as well as coming since the Ashram began. Perhaps it arises from the ignorant idea that the people who go like X and Y are great bhaktas and sadhaks — while the fact is that X never made much progress even elementary and Y has been in a state of vital revolt sometimes against the Mother, sometimes against myself, latterly against both, for the last six or seven years. People go away because they are proud and arrogant to accept the control of the Guru or of the Truth or of the Divine. Y had decided that the Truth was in Him alone and there was no Truth in myself or in the Mother.

(10.10.33)

MYSELF: From time to time my body has been giving me so much trouble that I can't say that I have really enjoyed what may be called good health.

SRI AUROBINDO: The human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces chose to lay hands on it and illness is the toll it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn.

(16.10.33)

MYSELF: Herewith a letter from a friend. She would like to come and settle here if you would accept her.

SRI AUROBINDO: The difficulty is that she seems to have vairagya for worldly life without any knowledge or special call for this yoga and this yoga and the life here are quite different things from ordinary yoga and ordinary Ashram. It is not a life of meditative retirement as elsewhere. Moreover it would be impossible for us to decide anything without seeing her and knowing at close hand what she is like. We are not just now taking more inmates into the Ashram except in a very few cases.

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, I have received a letter from another girl who had come for Darshan. You may remember that long ago she wrote once asking for shelter here. I have known her since her childhood. She wants now to come to do yoga. I have asked her to read your books, but she expects a reply. Will you let me know what to write?

SRI AUROBINDO: As for your friend, it is not possible to say that she can come here for that depends on many things which are not clearly present here. First, one must enter this Path or it must be seen that one is called to it; afterwards there is the question whether one is meant for the Ashram life here. The question about the family duties can be answered in this way — the family duties exist so long as one is in the ordinary consciousness of the Garhastha, if the call to spiritual life comes, whether one keeps to them or not depends partly upon the way of yoga one follows, partly on one's own spiritual necessity. There are many who pursue inwardly the spiritual life and keep the family duties, not as social duties but as a field for the practice of Karmayoga, others abandon everything to follow the spiritual call or line and they are justified if that is necessary for the yoga they practise or if that is the imperative demand of the soul within them.

MYSELF: Mother, my inborn idleness is still very cheerfully alive; but I am none the less desirous of offering myself through work. I was never devoted to work, especially household work — this big fault finds scope even when I remain in a good condition, while it is also true that I want to get rid of this idleness and turn a good worker. It seems I became one, and a habit also grew up but the frequent bouts of idleness unsettle that habit.

SRI AUROBINDO: Idleness must of course go — but sometimes I think you have pulled too much the other way. To be able to work with full energy is necessary — but to be able not to work is also necessary.

MYSELF: Mother, what is the colour of moonlight? Does it give the impression of a golden colour or a silver colour? My impression is that the light of the Sun is gold but the light of the moon is silvery. Is it not generally said “Silvery moon”? Of course in the moon sometimes one can see a little

golden tint just when it begins to rise, but its light is always silver. Is it not so? Or is it sometimes golden?

SRI AUROBINDO: The moon itself is often golden, not always silvery. As for the light when it rests on the ground it is golden, in the air it is pale whitish blue.

(21.10.33)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, what is the poetical convention regarding moonlight? In Bengali poetry and in Sanskrit too, moonlight is considered to be “silver-white”. Dilip said that the poetical convention is golden light. You wrote: “in the air it is pale whitish blue”. When pale whitish blue becomes radiant or shining, then the impression, if it is not silvery, can’t be golden. By silvery I have meant silver-white and when the white becomes shining, the silver tint is suggested. Am I right?

SRI AUROBINDO: In English poetry moonlight is usually spoken of as golden, because of its effect on the ground or water, although moon-silvered is also used. The silvery element is there in the moonlight in the air, but it is an element only.

(22.10.33)

MYSELF: I am ever busy with thinking of myself, seeing and giving importance to myself. Even the progress I make is to my credit. My ego at every step brings in front the “I” as the master, and due to habit I accept it again and again. The play of this “I-ness” is going on; the road out of it shown by Sri Aurobindo in so many ways and so beautifully remains out of reach. As long as this “I” is there, how shall I realise you or become entirely yours? This feeling is getting the upper hand and making me suffer, even depressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: You cannot expect to drive the ego out of the movements in a short time. What is necessary is to see it quietly without being discouraged by its presence, and by a steady persistent action work it out of the system.

(26.10.33)

MYSELF: Mother, on the whole, I am all right. There is no longer a feeling of irritation about work; the inclination to work comes now and then. Still, a state of disorder seems to persist. Sometimes a state of spontaneous conscious control over some aspects, at other times a sense of “lightening” in regard to other aspects — these keep alternating.

SRI AUROBINDO: All these things are in fact things that had been left in the outer being, in the physical consciousness, though some were rejected by the higher parts and their persistence there or their remnants made the progress incomplete. Now they are rising up for dispersal and have to be thrown out from these parts also. As for unwillingness to work, if the sleep comes fully back and the body recovers its elasticity it should not be difficult to get rid of that.

MYSELF: Today also at noon there was an attack of depression. At first, I thought of concealing it from you. Neither did I want to reject it. I feared that you might be displeased with me. However, eventually I rejected it after a regular tussle! And the light came, thanks to your Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is always a mistake to conceal. That was the tamasic ego in the vital physical — a resistance of inertia which comes when the rajasic is disappointed.

(7.11.33)

MYSELF: Mother, again everything appears off-colour even after coming from you. I feel so bad. I expected that everything would be all right, once I would see you, but quite the contrary is the effect. I feel so bad that there is a strong impulse to go away; that feeling is still active. Today your dealing with me seemed very remote and on the surface. I missed this time the intimacy I had known when I had come up to you with my last difficulty. You had put me right with the touch of your deep affection, but there was no joy of satisfaction in the recent contact; you had moved far away and this was the first time that I felt like this. For the first time I feel no ardour, eagerness or prayer for the 24th’s Darshan. God knows what will happen

finally! Perhaps this movement may draw me away! Death appears to be preferable as a way of deliverance.

I don't feel like writing even. If this continues I will have to stop writing. Have I then stumbled upon a desert-tract?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was certainly not because the Mother was different to you from other days or pushed you to a distance, but because you came rather shut up in that part of your physical being which is still shrinking from the Light. It is this part which was always fundamentally responsible for all your bad passages and painful movements even when the direct difficulty was higher up. Its nature is to cling to the old habitual pre-Yogic consciousness and to shut up doors and windows against the help that is offered and lament in the darkness when it has felt itself hurt. This is a thing that everybody must get rid of who wants to progress. Do not go on identifying yourself with this part and calling it yourself. Get back into your inner being and look at this only as a small though obstinate part of the nature that has to change. For apart from its insistence there is no reason why your way should enter into a desert. It should enter into a wideness of liberation — open to the calm and peace and power and light of a consciousness that is wider than the personal and into which the ego can happily disappear.

(8.11.33)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo's letter has made me healthy again. I was completely closed within. My *abhimāna* about you went on increasing till it ended in revolt, finally in madness. That's how I was in its grip and suffered a lot. There was no will at all. I won't write further; the body is utterly broken.

SRI AUROBINDO: We are very glad to know that you have recovered. Your true self got covered up by a dark cloud of a foreign Force. It covered up your reason and took from you your will. You must always in future turn back from any movement that allows this to come in. At the least trouble turn to take refuge in our protection and love.

(8.11.33)

MYSELF: My dear Mother, I am well, I am happy but with a vital joy, for I talked a lot — the aftermath of suffering, as it were. Your affection has filled me up. The whole Ashram came to know I was on the point of leaving. What a drama! And a total shrinking! Now the approach of the 24th's Darshan fills me with joy. How I was caught by what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'black being'!

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate you know now and can be on your guard — so that lessens his chance.

As the moment of the possibility of the supramental Descent grows nearer, these forces have become more eager to keep their hold in the Asram atmosphere and break the sadhana of anyone they can touch. Their main aim is to get as many as possible to leave the Asram, so that they may not share in the descent and so that the descent itself may be delayed and disturbed by a constant tempest in the atmosphere. That is why I put the notice suggesting that the sadhaks should not admit these forces and need not. To be on one's guard and admit no violent and irrational movements, to be calm and persistent in faith and self-opening to us is all that is needed.

(12.11.33)

MYSELF: Mother, today what I heard from some sadhaks would have been better for me not to hear and for all not to hear. They were not saying it with any disrespect, still when they do utter things like "If the Supermind has descended, why should Mother's eyes suffer?", they don't seem to know that it is not our business to bother about such matters. I was pondering: "Our limited mind, vision, consciousness can't have the slightest inkling about these things; why then should we sit in judgement over them?" Maybe, I am posing myself as a superior being trying to judge others from an egoistic attitude. Still, I told them, "Have Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said anywhere that the Supermind has descended into their bodies?"

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I have not said that at all. It is quite impossible for the Supramental to take up the body before there has been the full Supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and others seem always to

expect some kind of unintelligible miracle — they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, rapid but following the law of creation, that has to take place. A miracle can be only a moment's wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure.

(14.11.33)

MYSELF: Here in the Ashram many people say, “Mother and Sri Aurobindo want that our sadhikas should dress well.” I can't accept this opinion, since both of you have often stressed detachment. My belief is that women are by nature much attached to good dress. If, however, Sri Aurobindo has written anything to this effect, I would like to know.

SRI AUROBINDO: After realisation whatever the Higher Will demands is the best — but first detachment is the rule. To reach the Freedom without the discipline and detachment is given to few. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life.

(15.11.33)

MYSELF: I feel a sort of calm and quietness. I am aware still of what I have to do. Usually all our talks revolve round persons, their actions, doings etc. Now I see that if we put a stop to idle gossip, there remains hardly anything to talk about. Besides, even if the talks were of a good kind the sense of “I”, with its pride, superiority, has a play in various guises. So, there is no further incentive to talk. Everything seems to become quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say about ordinary conversations is quite correct and that all should fall away is very necessary for the true consciousness.

MYSELF: Now, the matter of food doesn't appear to be a problem. If anything good is sent to me the taste is enjoyable, but the former pleasure has changed its character. Once you said that these things can crop up after a long lapse. If I pay no attention to it, then what would you say?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to be careful in the matter of food etc.; as in the stage through which your sadhana is passing there is a considerable sensitiveness in the vital physical part of the being and it may be easily disturbed by a wrong impact or a wrong movement like overfeeding.

MYSELF: Mother, when K was overtaken by an attack of depression, I saw distinctly that he was possessed by something very black. I at once remembered the eclipse of the moon by Rahu. Just as the moon is slowly devoured by Rahu, so was he by this black something. I didn't have visions before. Is there any truth in it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so seen when the inner vision is opened. It is an influence from an adverse force or from the universal lower nature (an influence more often than a possession) that brings about this violent depression and disturbance and it is seen like a grey or black cloud or form throwing itself on the adhar.

MYSELF: Mother dear, people see light, radiance etc. in your face. Not all have this faculty. Can it be then the Divine Grace that enables one to see it? Or is it an inborn gift? Does this vision open by itself by people's contact with you or do you open it in them?

SRI AUROBINDO: What people see around the Mother is first her aura, as it is called nowadays and secondly the forces of Light that pour out from her when she concentrates as she always does on the roof for instance. (Everybody has an aura — but in most it is weak and not very luminous, in the Mother's aura there is the full play of lights and powers.) People do not see usually because it is a subtle physical and not a gross material phenomenon. They can see only in two conditions, first if they develop sufficient subtle sight, secondly if the aura itself begins to become so strong that it affects the sheath of gross matter which conceals it. The Mother has certainly no idea of making people see it — it is of themselves that one after another, some 20 or 30 in the Ashram I believe, have come to see. None of them are big yogis, some of them are mere beginners. It is certainly one of

the signs that the higher Force (call it supramental or not) is beginning to influence matter.

(15.11.33)

MYSELF: After receiving that letter of Sri Aurobindo saying, “First detachment is the rule. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life”, an aspiration towards detachment has come upon me and a will that luxury or desire or habit of any kind should be eschewed. It is after the darshan of the 24th that the will has become active that I should plunge into sadhana with all sincerity.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it can be done (in a positive not merely in a negative way), then it would be an immense step forward.

(18.11.33)

MYSELF: Mother, Sri Aurobindo has written of a positive way, not a negative way. I can't make out what it means. Please explain.

SRI AUROBINDO: By negative I mean merely repressing the desire and wrong movements and egoism, by positive I mean the bringing down of light and peace and purity in those parts from above. I do not mean that these movements are not to be rejected — but all the energy should not be directed solely to rejection; it must also be directed to the positive replacement of them by the higher consciousness. The more this consciousness comes, the easier also will the rejection be.

(19.11.33)

MYSELF: Mother, the resolution that I have taken is extremely difficult. I know it. Even so, since by your Grace it has come, I must proceed on the way. You know very well, Mother, that plenty of difficulties will try to entangle my steps: sentimentality, attachment, tenderness etc. will beckon me and block the way. But I must remain firm. On the 24th, laying down all my past at your feet and carrying your blessings and with complete surrender I would like to walk on the path with quiet steps. I am getting prepared within but the outer has not yet begun to follow.

SRI AUROBINDO: Determination is needed and a firm patience, not to be discouraged by this or that failure. It is a change in the habit of the physical nature and that needs a long patient work of detail.

(19.11.33)

MYSELF: Mother, not 'this' or 'that' alone but all that is not the Divine I want to be free from and go forward.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, detachment from all that is not the Divine and development of all that is the Divine.

(21.11.33)

MYSELF: I have no inclination for reading or writing or any other mental work, except to live within. Why is there this unwillingness, while the physical work is quite welcome?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no indispensable need to do these things when the mind is otherwise concentrated. At present the preparation of the inward change is more important than anything else.

(25.11.33)

MYSELF: I understand that I shouldn't pay any attention to whatever we do or say when seized by anger, for they aren't really part of our true nature, but still when it happens, for the moment I am much disturbed.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think it would be quite useless and harmful to lay stress on things said by anyone in these fits of the whirl of dark forces or to resent or remember them at all for they are exaggerations and perversions of the vital mind, that boil up whenever the vital is in effervescence and they cannot be taken as something deliberately thought and spoken. It is better to let them disappear and be forgotten as if they had not been said — to give them importance strengthens them to return when the occasion arises.

(30.11.33)

MYSELF: It is not that I have no weakness for things, but I feel a joy to see that to reject firmly and to call for your help are helping me greatly not to submit to the weakness or to think of these things. The result being: by rejection grows the strength of rejection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is so. Each victory gained over oneself means new strength to gain more victories.

(7.12.33)

MYSELF: I have observed that whatever I have decided to give up and am ready to fight out with all my strength tries in all possible ways to take advantage of my weakness, thwart me and baffle my resolutions. In other words, it tries to entangle me in its clasp. Is this the rule?

SRI AUROBINDO: That always happens; when one gets the definite release, then they fall away.

(9.12.33)

MYSELF: Mother, today my concentration was amusing. When the mind was becoming one-pointed various thoughts began to enter in and when I took interest in them, I observed with a startle that the consciousness was moving from inward to outward: the concentration was all on a sudden losing itself in various useless thoughts and then again getting collected — so, there is a tendency for the movement to get externalised. Am I right in my observation?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the present nature of the physical mind — its motion is outward.

(9.12.33)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, when I heard that letters to Sri Aurobindo would be discontinued, then at first I felt very sad that we were going to miss Sri Aurobindo's contact, but immediately felt how selfish I was, and at once I started feeling in the other way and was really glad that Sri Aurobindo would have a little rest; Mother, through writing letters to him regularly for

such a long period I came so near to you and him, but at the same time I understood quite well that I must be more intimate inwardly.

SRI AUROBINDO: The books and letters are not going to be discontinued — but I shall have to take one day off in the week (Sunday). The volume of the correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and a good part of the day — apart from the work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work. It is this that makes the Pranam later and later, for we do not finish till 7.30 or after. Also much work falls in arrears and piles up and many things that have their importance have had to be discontinued. Some relief is necessary. If all sadhaks were more discreet it would be better. But this does not apply to you, for you keep always within the limits.

(19.12.33)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, I am thinking of giving up writing to you regularly — can I do so? I shall write whenever I need to write: in my difficulty, or about work or permission, or concerning my sadhana, otherwise I do not want to take up Sri Aurobindo's time in this way. I am really feeling so very sorry for you both.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think it would be good for you to discontinue altogether like that. Your discontinuing alone would not make any appreciable difference, and besides your book was not part of the heavy baggage. At the least you could write every second day and on other days whatever may be urgent. But I would prefer to have a few lines from you at least each day.

(20.12.33)

MYSELF: Gracious Mother, surely I will take rest as long as you want me to do so. I am feeling really sorry to think that as it is you have so much work to do and I increase your work because of mere negligence and carelessness on my part. In this way I help to prolong my own physical suffering instead of allowing myself to be cured soon. Anyhow from now

on I shall remain very quiet without doing any work. So from now kindly let me know frankly if you have any objections to anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: After an illness like the one you had, the body remains very sensitive especially where it has been touched in the illness and one should be very careful for some time afterwards. This weather is very bad for these things and it is easy to catch a chill in it. I don't think there is any other cure; it is a physical struggle which is going on and of which all this illness is the result. These were the reasons for which we were urging you to be careful for some time.

(21.1.34)

MYSELF: Mother mine, I know it is my weakness and carelessness and laziness too to make a constant effort for rejection, I haven't enough will to undergo the discipline of constant effort and it is because I wanted to give up all these small habitual things that all these old things have come in my way; anyhow, I don't want to deceive myself in any way. If I am unable to see anything hidden behind this movement of self-deception, pray make me conscious.

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital in the physical easily slips back to its old small habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick. They go entirely only when that part gets equanimity and a simple natural freedom from all desires.

(22.3.34)

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I am physically all right by your grace today; only, I am not feeling so cheerful. I am not doing properly the things which I ought to do. I am neither sincere nor serious about the sadhana etc. etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Whatever you see, don't get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it.

(3.4.34)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, out of the two methods which is better: either to go on writing poems till one comes in contact with the original source of inspiration or to concentrate first till one gets the contact? It seems to me (if I have understood aright) the Mother approved of the second method when I had asked her. But my concentration leads me to deep meditation; and I meditate not only when I concentrate — the result is that whenever I sit with closed eyes I fall into meditation. However, whatever the means, the point is the opening. And so long as it doesn't happen I can take up your poems and try to translate them as an exercise. What do you say? I would then live in your atmosphere. Until the inspiration comes down, I can go on with concentration as well as the translation of your poems. Please give me your frank opinion.

SRI AUROBINDO: Dhyana is perhaps the best way — for if you can get into the consciousness which makes all poetry which proceeds from it original, that is the best, even if it means postponement of the actual writing of poetry. The habit of writing no doubt increases the skill and mastery of verse, but then it might only be verse such as all good *littérateurs* can write. A higher inspiration is necessary. As for translation I don't know — if one has the translator's gift like Dilip or Nishikanta, then it is all right — but otherwise translation is more difficult than original writing.

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, one question: it is about poetical expression. Our poet has written in one of his songs, "What a numerous crowd of water-maids are playing Holi with diamond powder in the sea!" Is such a combination permissible? For, "diamond" indicates a bright whitish something while "powder" here indicates red, for the Holi is played with a red powder and gives a different impression. "Diamond", which means sparkling white cannot possibly qualify something which is red: it is contrary to fact. Are we then to understand that even something inconsistent and having no resemblance to reality can be poetically used? When the sun rises or sets, poets usually describe it as "The disc of red powder" or, during the sunset when the entire sky is red and red, the poets say, "The body of the sky is sprinkled all over with red powder." Such images have no incongruity and the impression is just. The truth of reality takes its proper

form there. The red being called powder doesn't destroy the impression, since the powder is red. Nevertheless, I don't know what is permissible in poetry and what is not. So I would like to know, learn and understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on what the poet wants to say. The scattering of red powder or liquid is the outward traditional sign of the Holi and when the poets so describe the sunrise, that is the image they want to bring out. But the poet may want to express something else, something which has the force and reckless play of the holi, the spirit of that play but it need not be in the exact outward form — from this point of view there may be a Holi-play in which what is scattered is not red colour but a spray of diamond hue. A poet is not bound always by the physical outward fact, he can play variations on things, provided he expresses some essential truth of them in his image.

(14.4.34)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, the editor Lilabati Nag of *Jayasri* is constantly writing to me for some articles. Once I sent with your permission a poem, after which I heard that the Mother and yourself had forbidden it. As I haven't sent any reply, she goes on writing, and will even give some remuneration, she says. Not to take notice of her letters would amount to rudeness, I think. Is there any harm in just replying to her letter? The paper seems to be supported by many literary figures and national leaders. So it may not matter much if I don't contribute. Would you like to have a look at the paper? Jyoti and I would like however to know what you want us to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: I told Jyotirmoyi she could reply and then gradually allow the correspondence to drop, you can do the same (without giving any reason for the dropping off). The public Men in India are not circumstanced like the Asram. For us also if it were a personal matter it would not matter. But if a report goes from the British or French police that the Asram is associated with revolutionaries in Bengal or with a paper run by a Terrorist, that will be a note against us in the record (which is at present quite clear) and any future Governor or party in power here, if hostile to us, may use it in a report or complaint to the ministry in Paris. In that case any such Governor or party would be able on that ground alone to dissolve the Asram

by a stroke of the pen — the Governor is all powerful and can do such things by a single order of decree. It is no use running the Asram and the work into danger for a trivial reason which has nothing to do with our work. That is why the Mother is so careful not to give any ground for hostile representations and that is why she wants no connection of this kind between the people in the Asram and suspects there.

MYSELF: Mother, the songs I am singing for gramophone recording are not turning out at all well. My throat is also bad. Besides, those who have come for recording believe that the old songs I used to sing before in Calcutta would have been better. I told them “That won’t do, I feel no inspiration for singing such songs.” I don’t regret the songs being unsuccessful, but since they have come from a great distance and have spent so much for it I would be happy if they didn’t incur any loss on my account.

SRI AUROBINDO: If the condition of your voice had been brought to our attention in time, we would have tried to set it right before these people came. Even as it is, if you can shake off the nervous hesitation and get the impulse from within, the voice may come back suddenly and maintain itself long enough for the purpose of the records. Afterwards with rest and the necessary improvement of the condition of the throat, it can permanently recover.

(Note: The following letter of Sri Aurobindo is apropos of my wanting to return some money sent by a distant relative.)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is hardly possible to return the money once it has been sent, in view of your past relation with him; but you can consider it as an advance on any money that may fall due to you after the expenses of the book have been met. Your mistake was to say that you were in need of money — his sending is a natural result; but once sent, if you send it back, it will be throwing back his gift in his face — which cannot very well be done.

MYSELF: In connection with some particular matter, a lower trait of my nature has been very rudely exposed to my view and I am filled with shame and disgust to see that even now such possessive instincts are lurking in me. What a shame, what a repulsion! It had hidden itself so cleverly that I could not detect it at all. Dear Mother, I want not detachment alone, but wideness as well. Do cleanse my entire being. I can't bear to see these ugly figures of the lower nature any longer.

SRI AUROBINDO: In a certain sense it is good that it has risen and you have seen clearly and got disgusted with it. Only give no justification, support it in no way, be resolute to finish with it altogether. You will get all the help we can give you.

MYSELF: I seem to be engrossed in writing. Is it all right? Have I understood your views exactly regarding the novel I want to write? There must be somewhere something amiss, otherwise why this unease? If so, I shall give up the writing. I was hurrying up with the work with the thought that I would be able to offer you the book on my birthday if it could be finished in time.

SRI AUROBINDO: 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.

(3.5.34)

MYSELF: What you have written about writing is clear to me, but I don't know how to carry it out. As soon as I sit to write I am lost in it. Suppose I stop writing for two days; the thoughts still go on spinning in the brain. How to stop them, regulate them, harmonise them? If the mind is preoccupied with these thoughts, then what good accrues from it? So it may be better to suspend the writing for the time being; I didn't want my sadhana to be jeopardised at any cost. You have done well by sending a note of

warning, otherwise I would have thought that other writers too suffer in this way.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you cannot get rid of the ideas it may be best to finish off the thing.

(3.5.34)

MYSELF: I observe that I have a softness towards my own writing, which does not seem good to me. So I decided to give it up. Why should there be such a strong attachment? One day perhaps the book will be finished or it may not. What does it matter? I haven't come here for writing. So today I feel light. It is up to you to say if I am right or wrong.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think you are right. There should be no attachment to the work — if it is to be done it will be done hereafter as well as now.

(4.5.34)

MYSELF: For the last few days, I have been passing through a dryness. A dissatisfaction has shown itself regarding my aspiration. If the aspiration does come, it is in a very small dose. At times, my mind says that even if I don't realise you in this life, it is no small thing to be able to pass this life under your shelter at your feet with your blessings. It is not a sign of aspiration, I know; but it is better than allowing the mind to run into a worse condition. But there is no satisfaction in it; on the contrary a discontent. And no sign of detachment either; perhaps I don't want it sincerely.

SRI AUROBINDO: Thoughts like these should never be accepted — they come to lower the condition or keep it lowered. When there is a cessation, dryness or other difficulty as understood, then something has come up which has to be changed, remain quiet and call down the Force to change it.

(12.5.34)

MYSELF: Instead of gathering myself, I am dissipating myself all the while. If I could cut off all connection with others inwardly, or feel myself all alone, perhaps then I could do sincerely what I have come for. My mind tries always to plunge itself in petty things.

SRI AUROBINDO: You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses 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 communication 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 this price, by learning to do that, that one can have the siddhi in Yoga.

(5.6.34)

MYSELF: Another thing I notice is that my family-feeling has become uppermost in my consciousness. I quite understand that it has to go. I see that at first something crops up from within, then I become conscious of it, then follows the resolution, but to carry it out needs time. This is the habitual trend in many other things. In this matter it is clear that I have to give it up now. There is will and determination. But they are not put in action. Perhaps some time has to be given as in other cases. Am I right?

SRI AUROBINDO: The habitual movement in the consciousness which persists or revives from time to time has to lose its hold and disappear.

(6.6.34)

MYSELF: I am not allowing myself to be overjoyed at what is going on within, for I have seen that if I do so the good movements get lost in the outer expressions. I am trying to effect a control over them so that they may get a chance to grow instead of being spent in outward-going movements.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the best. If one can establish a basis of unalterable peace and equality — that is always the best foundation for spiritual progress.

(19.5.34)

MYSELF: I am getting more and more conscious, by your compassion, of the source of the desire to criticise or find fault with others or speak ill of

them, what forces act behind these tendencies and why one indulges in them. Mother, there are so many sides to see and your light is bringing them out!

SRI AUROBINDO: 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)

MYSELF: I am trying to turn my mind inward. The effort is sometimes enjoyable, sometimes dry. This creates a sort of tension. At times, the effort becomes very difficult, at others quite easy. Today I noticed with surprise that a deep devotion was welling up towards you and the feeling, the perception, is changing everything. What appeared to be dry and difficult was changing to an easy and encouraging matter of joy.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is by so doing that finally the rejection of these things becomes a habit. And they must be rejected for that is now the field of sadhana and this ground must be cleared for it to progress.

(16.7.34)

MYSELF: Mother mine, here is the account of last month. You will see that I took ten rupees' advance last month. May I take another ten rupees extra from Amrita, as I have bought some very good cheese for Sri Aurobindo's sandwiches? I have signed my name and not yet paid the money. When I see anything especially good or nice anywhere I feel like buying it then and there for you and can't remember about the money question. Though you have given me permission, can I go on like this? I feel I am too extravagant perhaps. What I have taken in advance I have kept back. May I take extra this time as I don't think I shall be able to deduct the sum any more.

This is only a business letter.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is as you like. But why spend like that? You should make a rule not to exceed the means you have — so that you will train yourself to control the habit of too easy spending.

(1.9.34)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo, I don't know what to write today! I am so moved, flooded with deep gratitude for what you have granted me! Why on earth do all these movements come and cover up this beautiful and really genuine feeling? I wish I could keep up this sweet feeling and not trouble you with all these silly things any more.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the small habits of the lower vital being which gather all their strength to resist correction and try to occupy the consciousness. When they come you must learn to detach your inner consciousness from them entirely so that even when they strongly come they will not be able to occupy the consciousness or get any assent.

Be sure that all our help will be with you.

(6.9.34)

MYSELF: Sweet Mother, I have become conscious of another movement now. When I am in a very good condition, that is to say when I feel intensely the upward movement in me, I see also that another movement (of the lower vital) pushes me downward. Formerly I was not conscious of the latter movement, I used to think it was a movement of joy but the other day, after meeting you, I experienced the significance of the flower: "Sweetness of the mind, filled with beautiful thoughts turned exclusively to the Divine." I was absolutely filled with your thought and simply thrilled with an intense joy. While this upward movement was going on so intensely I felt a strong impulse to go to the market to buy cheese for Sri Aurobindo's sandwiches, and in fact I was carried away by this impulse, but as soon as I came back I felt that it was not out of a true movement of joy that I had yielded but from a movement that had pushed towards self-deception by bringing in a reason that seemed highly satisfactory; then the impulse of enjoying oneself in a sort of social way also comes, that is to say: go and chat or eat or drink with

someone with whom one has an affinity. Before, I was not conscious of these two movements together, I used to take it as an expression of joy and nothing else. May I know whether I have understood or interpreted the thing correctly? If not, kindly clear my mind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is quite correct. It is this mixture that has always stood in the way. Now that you have seen it, it must be farther separated and thrown away.

(13.9.34)

MYSELF: Mother, I still have one thing to ask you to know clearly. In our love, I mean in spite of its mixture, is there no true element? Why do I feel so happy to see you? Why does all my being become so happy, so joyous whenever I happen to see or meet you? And why, after coming back from you, is the whole day filled with you alone? Is this vital love?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no harm in vital love provided it is purified from all insincerity (as for example self-importance etc.) and from all demand. To feel joy on seeing the Mother is all right, but to demand it as a right or to be upset or in revolt or *abhimān* when it is not given, to be jealous of others who get it — all that is demand and creates an impurity which spoils both the joy and the love.

(13.9.34)

MYSELF: Beloved Mother, since last Thursday an intense silence and deep peace has descended on me, and it is getting more and more intensified. I am also very careful this time to keep what has descended on me. This silence and peace has given me a turning towards inwardness. In all my work and movements I find I remain in my inner self. Sometimes I feel so strongly like sitting for meditation that I can neither speak nor keep my eyes open; the meditation comes of itself.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good indeed. The peace and silence must settle deep in, so deep that whatever comes from outside can only pass over the surface without troubling the settled calm within. It is good also that the

meditation comes of itself — it means the Yoga Force is beginning to take up the sadhana.

(18.9.34)

MYSELF: Mother dear, you are revealing so much to me from within myself! So many things are showing themselves in the consciousness like a cinema! Occasionally, the physical wants to be lazy, unwilling and obstinate — but by your Grace the psychic being will not allow it at any cost; it makes the physical do its will. When such darkness comes like a wave, the part that used to be disturbed gets ready to respond, but the Helper from behind exposes the movement and places it before my consciousness so that I can see that I have already become detached, there is no link with it. “It has come from somewhere, let it pass” — this attitude prevails and I remain completely untouched. I watch all these movements and how I react to them. My feeling towards you gives great joy and satisfaction. All hurry-scurry, all impatience etc. seem to have been drowned in the wideness of peace. But one part is still there which seeks some room to indulge in its vagaries and is happy to work hard to satisfy them. I want to draw your attention to this aspect. Another thing I notice nowadays: whenever something seems impossible to me, I try to ignore this ‘I’ and open my inner being towards your light so that a descent may take place from it. I feel such a movement within and wish to concentrate on it. In other words an aspiration rises to invoke something above that will give me what I am lacking. Is it all right? At every step it makes me realise that my petty capacity can do nothing. So long as I feel any power as mine, how puny it looks!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the right fundamental consciousness that you have now got. The *tamas* and other movements of the lower universal Nature are bound to try to come in, but if one has the calm of the inner being which makes them felt as something external to the being and the light of the psychic which instantly exposes and rejects them, then that is to have the true consciousness which keeps one safe while the more positive transformation is preparing or taking place.

That transformation comes by the descent of the Force, Light, Knowledge, Ananda from above. So you are right in your feeling that you

should open with a quiet शान्त समाहित¹ aspiration or invocation for the descent of the Light from above. Only it must be an aspiration in this calm and wideness, not disturbing it in the least — and you must be prepared for the result being not immediate — it may be rapid, but also it may take some time.

(25.10.34)

MYSELF: Mother dear, learning everything and living within — what a joy it brings! Even then, just for a bubbling vital pleasure, we forget it and cling to transient sentimentalities and create no end of trouble and suffering. I perceive clearly that attachment of any kind to men or things is a big hindrance to our progress.

One word more, please. Now I don't feel the intense peace that came down before. It seems rather natural; the peace has become part of the vast experience and one with my flesh and blood.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is how it should be. It should go so far indeed that you would feel this peace and vastness as your very self, the abiding stuff of your consciousness — unchangeably there.

(26.9.34)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo and Mother, this is to let you know that I was not so upset this time. I made a mistake to tell X about it and I felt it at once, but when I saw that he had taken it in the right way, I was relieved. But it was giving me pain to see in myself the spirit to hide the thing from you, and not only that but to insist on another person also to do the same thing. I was not quite upset or disturbed as there was always the inner calm and quiet, I was feeling separately the struggle of this part, which was not violent in its nature but deep and calm too, and I took the watching part as my true being, the psychic, which was feeling so much pain to see the spirit to hide this thing from you and indulge in the insincerity of the mind (and vital perhaps). I had recognised both the parts and was wanting the psychic to persuade the unwillingness, and as soon as I started telling myself: 'No,

¹ quiet calmness

this thing cannot go on. I must tell Mother' — the whole thing became absolutely motionless, calm like a sheet all spread out, but the struggle was going on only when the other part was refusing to listen to the psychic.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good and shows that you have got a firm foundation in the inner being. It was of course the psychic that made the vital feel about the concealment and compelled it to assent to the working. That also is good, for if the psychic control is not yet so complete (as it must and will come) as to prevent some instinctive movements, yet it is evidently much greater than before and is increasing its influence.

(14.12.34)

MYSELF: Last night I felt as if a force was coming from you. This morning too, after receiving Sri Aurobindo's letter, I felt the force coming for a long time. It was clear, though the body was tired.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the Force was sent, but especially for strength and quiet in the nerves and quiet in the mind so that there might be sleep. I shall continue till the sleep and quiet come, try to be quietly open and recover.

(3.3.35)

MYSELF: Mother Divine, I hear that Sri Aurobindo's eye has become red from overwork. I am very sorry that I have been writing every day for my health. Until he is a little better I won't write any more.

About my food, it is true that I don't eat much because I am afraid about my liver trouble; so I don't eat sometimes even if I feel hungry, and there is always nervousness due to fear of getting fat. Anyhow, if it is necessary I will take more food.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't stop writing. Your letters are short and will not interfere; besides my eye is better and white, I have to be careful about it, it does not need complete rest.

To suppress hunger like that is not good, it very often creates disorder — I doubt whether fatness and thinness of a healthy kind depends on the amount of food taken — there are people who eat well and remain thin and others who take only one meal a day and remain fat. By underfeeding (taking

less than the body really needs) one may get emaciated, but that is not a healthy state. The doctors say it depends mostly on the working of certain glands. Anyhow the important thing is now to get the nervous strength back.

As for the liver also, eating little does not help, very often it makes the liver sluggish so that it works less well. What is recommended for liver trouble is to avoid greasy food and much eating of sweets and that is also one way of avoiding fat. But to eat too little is not good — it may be necessary in some stomach or intestine illness, but not for the ordinary liver trouble. What about taking a walk (for exercise and fresh air) daily?

(15.3.35)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, last night I slept well, thanks to your grace. There was no nervous disturbance. An inner quiet and peace came and the body too felt a soothing effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am glad to know the disturbance was expelled last night — now the receptivity of the body consciousness has to be kept so that it may not at all return or, if it tries, may immediately be expelled. You must always try to keep the quietude, not allow depressing or disturbing thoughts or feelings to enter you or take hold of your mind or your speech — there is no true reason after one has gained the inner quietness and wideness why that should be allowed to lapse and these things enter. And if the mind keeps the quietude and receptivity to higher forces only, it can then easily pass on that quietude and receptivity to the body consciousness and even to the material cells of the body.

(2.4.35)

MYSELF: Mother, when you accept somebody, doesn't it mean that you have found in him even a small part that desires sincerely the Divine and that you give him a chance for it? Accepting someone permanently — does it mean anything more than that?

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say about whom we receive that if one part of them sincerely desires the Divine, we give them a 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)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, kindly give me a clear and satisfying answer to this question: Can a person, who brings up another person's child as his own, love him as much as his own child? The question is Jyotirmoyee's to Nolina. Nolina says that in her experience it is possible. Dilip says it is not at all possible. Nolini says, why not? He says it is quite possible. What is your opinion? We would like to know and understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is certainly possible because it often happens — especially with women in whom the maternal instinct is easily aroused, but it happens to men also. Especially the very fact of bringing up a child in that intimate way has the tendency to create a feeling which may be tenderness or affection only but may be and often is even strong love.

(8.4.35)

MYSELF: Mother, my mind was disturbed when I heard about the incidents regarding the attitude and behaviour of M and others; they went on turning in my head. I can see clearly the matter. I have been neither hurt nor shocked by it. I could see rather calmly and straightforwardly the movement. Only the physical mind was making too much noise over the matter.

SRI AUROBINDO: That should not happen. Once a subject or thought is dealt with by the perception, you must have the power to drop it altogether out of your consciousness.

(7.5.35)

MYSELF: Mother, see what has happened! So long I was going on well, but today the memory of the past was coming and going like pictures before my mind. I was almost pressed down by them. I got up to meditate, but failed; then I tried to reject — no success. I couldn't separate myself at all. These things stop the progress and I feel heavy and exhausted.

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as you have not learned the lesson the past had to give you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come, you will see that they are connected with some psychological movements in you that have 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)

MYSELF: When I perceive that I should tell you something but there is an unwillingness on my part, I force myself to let you know so that your light and force can descend on that part. Is this forcing a mental action? Even though there was a desire to hide before telling, yet after telling, satisfaction and relief are the result in spite of the action having been forced.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is quite all right. It is not a mental rule, but comes from the psychic being.

MYSELF: Mother Divine, there was another discussion about mind somewhere else, especially about your asking us to reject mental movement. I won't write to you all that I felt and said. Here I am putting only a little bit of it.

I can feel what is the real function of the mind. And I feel that what generally people call mind or intellect is only the movement of the physical mind (because only the physical mind creates doubts — is it not so, Mother?) not the clear passive and silent mind or the higher or intuitive mind which can be the true expression of the higher things and the seat of knowledge. When you discourage mental movement it is, I feel, this limited physical mind's obscure and doubt-creating movement. Am I right?

SRI AUROBINDO: You answered extremely well.

MYSELF: I am writing to Sri Aurobindo on control of speech: "I can't make any progress in this respect. At every step I feel its necessity, but I can't carry it out rightly. As a result, many unpleasant and undesirable things happen causing mental friction and one has to pay a heavy price for it, especially during a discussion. Yet, how to save myself and others? Will

you show me the way which I can follow to learn the true method of control? Please grant me this prayer.”

SRI AUROBINDO: ...It is quite certain that these discussions are often a source of friction and misunderstanding.

Perhaps what might be the best from the point of view of sadhana is to use these occasions... as occasions of psychic self-training and the overcoming of things that in the matter of speech stand in the way of a complete harmony between the inner consciousness and the movement of the outer being.... Apart from that, the self-control that is desirable in these surroundings and in the midst of discussion would mean among other things:

1. Not to allow the impulse of speech to assert itself too much or say anything without reflection, but to speak always with a conscious control and only what is necessary and helpful.

2. To avoid all debate, dispute or too animated discussion and simply say what has to be said and leave it there. There should also be no insistence that you are right and others wrong, but what is said should only be thrown in as a contribution to the consideration of the truth of the matter.

3. To keep the line of speech and wording very quiet and calm and uninsistent....

4. Not to mind at all if the others are heated and dispute, but remain quiet and undisturbed and yourself speak only what can help things to be smooth again.

5. If there is gossip about others and harsh criticism (especially about sadhaks), not to join — for these things are helpful in no way and only lower the consciousness from its higher level.

6. To avoid all that would hurt or wound others.

Perhaps you have tried to do these things already; if so, then see how far you have been successful and perfect the self-control.

In spite of it if anyone misunderstands or feels offended, then there is no help for it.

(14.6.36)

MYSELF: Mother, if I could have followed the line Sri Aurobindo has indicated, then by now I would have succeeded a lot, but in fact nothing has been done in that respect. Nevertheless, I have gone on trying according to my way of understanding. But you know what our efforts come to. Hence so much suffering for not being able to do as well as I should. I shall, however, try anew to follow on Sri Aurobindo's directions, but again how difficult!...

Dear Mother, my condition is still not settling down. Rise and fall, well and not well, urge and again no urge for sadhana or change — this is the state. At times the prayer is moved by emotion, at others it is only a string of words. Can't get hold of the right thing through all these fluctuations. Will these ups and downs go on for ever?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an oscillation due to something in the resistant part (not the whole of it) being still dissatisfied at the call to change. When any vital element is disappointed, dissatisfied, called or compelled to change but not yet willing, it has the tendency to create nonresponse or non-cooperation of the vital, leaving the physical dull or insensible without the vital push. With the psychic pressure this remnant of resistance will pass.

(29.8.36)

Now I shall present 6 consecutive letters but I have to say something by way of introduction. In January 1937 my condition began to deteriorate so much so that I decided to leave this place. It started with my *abhiman* towards the Mother, my ego's resentment, the reason being that she didn't appear to love me. Along with it, many difficulties regarding the sadhana began to accumulate, leading to the conclusion that sadhana was impossible, I couldn't do it. Besides, if the Mother didn't love me, when she had despaired of me, what was the use of my staying here?

The situation rose to a climax and I took the decision to leave. Friends tried to dissuade me in various ways, but I gave no ear to their pleadings. Only one refrain I repeated, "If anyone can prevent me, it is the Mother." A terrible obstinacy gripped me. All my luggage was packed, except the bedding. The preparation was complete. Still, strange to say, I felt that I

couldn't go; all this was just a drama, but outwardly I was determined. As I was ready and waiting, the mind enveloped in darkness, Nolini came quietly and said, "What? Are you going?" "Yes, Nolinida, I am going," I replied with tearful eyes. The atmosphere of the house was tense, sombre. He kept quiet for a while and sat on my cot. Then in a deep slow voice he continued, "Mother asked, 'Is Sahana going tomorrow?'" Then he stopped. Again, he repeated, "Mother said, 'Is Sahana going tomorrow?'" He repeated it just in the way the Mother had said it. She seemed to have spoken three times slowly, halting at each time. My being was then filled with silent sobs and I burst out as soon as he had finished. Utterly broken I cried, "Nolinida, please tell Mother I won't go." It was as if I was just waiting for this touch of the Mother. The cloud dispersed at once. What a relief! Nolinida said before departing, "Give me whatever money you have with you." I understood his fear. After this event, there was no repetition of this thought of going away. Now the six letters from Sri Aurobindo bearing on this episode:

(1a) All these suggestions that came to you were of course part of the attack on the physical consciousness, — the attack on the body is used to raise these ideas and the ideas are used to make it more difficult for the body to recover. At a certain stage attacks fall heavily on the body because the opposing forces find it more difficult than before to upset the mind and vital directly so they fall on the physical in the hope that that will do the trick, the physical being more vulnerable. But the sensibility of the body to attacks is no proof of incapacity just as a finer sensibility of the mind or vital to attacks was no proof — it can in due time be overcome. As for the feelings about the Mother and that her love is only given for a return in work to those who can do sadhana well, that is the usual senseless idea of the vital-physical mind and has no value....

I hope you will be all right soon. If the body does not right itself, you must keep me informed from time to time.

(17.1.37)

(1b) Try to keep yourself open to our Force in the body, that is the main thing. If the nerves (physical) are quieted, the illness itself will be less intense in its symptoms and can be more easily got over.

(17.1.37)

(2) It would not be at all right to yield to these suggestions which are obviously there of a force that wants to make use of unease and disappointment of the vital in order to drive you to break your sadhana. These are the usual suggestions that come to all under the stress of the vital condition, "I am not fit for this sadhana. I must go, I cannot stay here —. The Mother does not love me. I have given up everything and got nothing. The struggle makes me too miserable, let me go." As a matter of fact there is no real foundation for these suggestions. Because an acute struggle has come, it would be absurd to conclude that you are unfit for the sadhana and to give up after going so far. It is because you have asked the physical vital to give up certain of its cherished attachments and habits that it is in this condition; unable to resist altogether, miserable at being deprived, it accepts these suggestions as an excuse for escape from the pressure you have put upon it. The acuteness of the struggle is due to the vehemence of the attack, but still more to this vital or a part of it responding to the suggestions; otherwise a less disturbing even if a slower movement would be quite possible. The Mother has in no way changed towards you nor is she disappointed with you — that is the suggestion drawn from your own state of mind and putting its wrong sense of disappointment and unfitness on to the Mother. She has no reason to change or be disappointed, as she has always been aware of the vital obstacles in you and still expected and expects you to overcome them. The call to change certain things that seem to be in the grain of character is proving difficult even for the best sadhaks, but the difficulty is no proof of incompetence. It is precisely the impulse to go that you must refuse to admit — for so long as these forces think they can bring it about, they will press as much as they can on this point. You must also open yourself more to the Mother's Force in that part and for that it is necessary to get rid of this suggestion about the Mother's disappointment or lack of love, for it is this which creates the reaction at

the time of Pranam. Our help, support, love are there always as before — keep yourself open to them and with their aid drive out these suggestions.

(26.1.37)

(3) As you say that you are determined to go, I can only answer by reaffirming our disapproval of the step you propose to take and the rejection — from a blind vital feeling — of the true path and the spiritual life. It is not true that you could not appreciate our help and solicitude or that you were unable to follow the sadhana, you are only shutting the door of your mind and vital to the help and laying stress on a temporary block which would have disappeared if you had dissociated yourself from it. I can only express the hope that the true being in you will awake in time and draw you back from this course, restoring the inner contact with us and the unity with the higher self a glimpse of which had come to you for a moment.

(31.1.37)

(4) From your last letter it is clear that it is not your own will that pushes you to go but something that has taken hold of your mind, a clutch of some Force which is using old movements of the outward mind and vital to drive the action. All the more reason to reject this action as contrary to the soul's and heart's true feeling. The pride that says, "I am one of those who can break but will not bend" is a poor thing and conceals the fact that one is bending before forces and impulses that are ignorant and obscure. Its result is as you yourself have seen at the end of your letter that one bends to the lower forces of nature but refuses to bend to the Divine.

If sadhana as a struggle between the higher will and the old forces of nature brings suffering and inner torment, we do not want you to do that kind of sadhana. That is not the spirit of our Yoga. What we want you to do is to recover your quietude and go on in that. To have the basis of quietude and allow the Divine Force to work in you firmly and quietly is always the best method — it is not necessary to proceed through a big personal effort, disturbance and struggle. Come back to this — open yourself once more, as you did before, — then you could get back sleep or health in a day or two

and were growing inwardly without excessive trouble — and let the Mother's Power and Grace lead you.

I shall do all to help you and pull you out, but that which has closed itself in you must open for the help to work quickly as it did before. Otherwise too it can pull you out, but if there is this strong obstruction that has to be undone, time is needed. A central change of attitude in your mind would, I believe, make all the difference — it has done so before.

(1.2.37)

(5) I have not the slightest doubt that you can do the sadhana if you cleave to it — not certainly in your own unaided strength, for nobody can do that, but by the will of the psychic being in you aided by the Divine Grace. There is a part in the physical and vital consciousness of every human being that has not the will for it, does not feel the capacity for it, distrusts any hope or promise of a spiritual future and is inert and indifferent to any such thing. At one period in the course of the sadhana this rises up and one feels identified with it. That has happened to you now but along with an attack of ill-health and nervous indisposition which has turned this passage through the obscure physical into a dark and intense trouble. With enough sleep and quieting of the nerves and return of physical energy that ought to disappear and it would be possible to bring the Light and Consciousness down into this obscure part. An intense concentration bringing struggle is not what is needed but a very quiet attitude of self-opening. Not any effort of sadhana just now, but the recovery of tranquillity and ease is what is wanted at present to restore the opening of the nature.

(2.2.37)

(6) I am very glad to hear that the incubus of this depression and dark condition has been lifted. I think now that the first thing is indeed to restore your nervous and physical strength by sleep and food — it was largely through the depressed body consciousness and nerves that the bad condition was able to hold and to prevent the return of mental clarity and the psychic to give its balance. For the sadhana simply keep the consciousness open to us and let things go on quietly until you are naturally and without struggle

or too much effort able to do more. Also do not hesitate to write whenever it is necessary.

(3.2.37)

MYSELF: Mother, this time I was able to keep my consciousness right even under multiple attacks.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a great thing that you have been able to keep your consciousness right under these attacks.

(17.3.37)

MYSELF: Through various ups and downs, troubles and trials, I acquired experiences and perceptions beyond belief. Still, the inherent difficulties of our nature, their hold over us and their power of creating hurdles on our way (for example, attachments, desires, tendencies of the lower nature, etc. whose roots are very deep indeed) remain, but to make myself free from such obstacles, to conquer, eradicate them is the urge and aspiration I am feeling now. Should I devote myself to achieving it? Shall I succeed? What is the way? Please let me know.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, all the help possible will be given. As for the method, there are always the two ways possible — one, to overcome the difficulty in its own field, the other to develop the inner realisation until it grows so strong that the roots you speak of have no longer any soil to hold by and come out easily by a spontaneous change.

(19.3.37)

MYSELF: Yes, I have understood that the dumb has no enemy, so I shall henceforth keep dumb. But shall I for ever remain a disturbing element?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly in these things “Silence” is the best motto.

(13.6.37)

MYSELF: I feared that I have lost my voice for good. Very often I had the impulse to give up singing, but I realised at once that I was not singing for

my sake but for the Divine to whom I should offer whatever I have. I find after three months that good results have started to follow.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with all things in the path of sadhana, one must persist however long it takes, so only one can achieve.

(13.6.37)

MYSELF: I feel often that weeping is a thing which opens the door to weakness, allows opportunities to those powers to enter which take away our mental will.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is quite correct that weeping brings in the forces that should be kept outside — for the 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 affliction, tears of bhakti, spiritual emotion or Ananda.

Your experience was a very beautiful one — the inner being realised by it that which must be established in the waking state as the foundation of the spiritual consciousness and spiritual life.

(3.7.37)

MYSELF: Mother dear, I used to have such experiences at one time; I could then separate my inner being, but not in the way Sri Aurobindo has indicated. I remember that the suffering of the body used to appear as something quite different, I could see that it was the outer being that suffered, the inner being was not involved, there was a division into two parts in the being.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is that separation of the inner from the outer which has to come back and be fixed — until outer and inner can become one free consciousness. Probably when you had it your attention was more on the change of mind and vital and you were observing those.

(26.7.37)

MYSELF: Sri Aurobindo, am I then going on a wrong track? You wrote nothing, so I am uneasy. Please let me know where I stand.

SRI AUROBINDO: Silence does not mean disapproval. Your letter informed me of your present state in regard to your inner feeling in relation with others which is evidently very good. You have only to go forward and see that it is confirmed and perfected beyond all possibility of interruption, disturbance or mixture.

(23.9.38)

MYSELF: It seems there is a control over speech; still, how difficult for me! What we call a slip of the tongue seems also to be less now. I wonder at the amount of tangles in which our nature is caught. To change them will be a Herculean job. One gets lost even to think of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: The habits of the physical or the vital physical nature are always the most difficult to change, because their action is automatic and not governed by the mental will and it is therefore difficult for the mental will to control or transform them. You have to persevere and form the habit of control. If you can succeed in controlling the speech often, — it needs a constant vigilance, — you will finally find that the control stands itself and can in the long run always intervene. This must be done so long as that movement is not fully opened to the Mother's Force and Light, for if that happens the thing can be done more quickly and sometimes with a great rapidity. There is also the intervention of the psychic, if the psychic is sufficiently awake and active to intervene each time you are going to speak at random and say "No", then the change becomes more easy.

(11.10.38)

NOTE: The period of correspondence with questions and answers comes to an end. I shall now begin furnishing Sri Aurobindo's letters without questions — not all, but quite a number of them.

III

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

The rejection of desire is essentially its rejection from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature. But refusal to indulge the suggestions of desire can also be part of the rejection and it must be part of the yogic discipline. It is only when it is done in the wrong way, by an ascetic principle as a hard moral rule, that it can be called suppression.

When one lives in the true consciousness one feels the desires outside oneself, entering from outside, from the universal lower Prakriti, into the mind and vital parts. In the ordinary human condition this is not felt; men become aware of the desire only when it is there, when it has come inside and so they think it as their own and a part of themselves. The first condition for getting rid of desire is, therefore, to become conscious with the true consciousness, for then it becomes much easier to dismiss, than when one has to struggle with it as if it were part of oneself to be thrown out from the being.

When the psychic being is in the front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspiration and love for the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness. This is what is happening in you; so you need not be over-anxious about the desires, only careful that they do not get in and bring a vital mixture.

(21.3.31)

The division of the being of which you speak is a necessary stage in the yogic development and experience. One feels that there is a twofold being, the inner psychic which is the true one and the other the outer human being which is instrumental for the outer life. To live in the inner psychic being in union with the Divine while the outer does the outward work, as you feel, is the first stage in "Karma Yoga". There is nothing wrong in these experiences; they are indispensable and normal at this stage.

If you feel no bridge between the two, it is probably because you are not yet conscious of what connects the two. There is an inner mental, an inner vital, an inner physical which connect the psychic and the external being. About this, however, you need not be anxious at present.

The important thing is to keep what you have and let it grow, to live always in the psychic being, your true being. The psychic will then in due time awake and turn to the Divine all the rest of the nature, so that even the outer being will feel itself in touch with the Divine and moved by the Divine in all it is and feels and does.

(9.4.31)

You write “যতদিন না আমার ¹ psychic being জাগে ²” But your psychic being is already awakened, if it were not, you would not have these experiences. The inner being which you feel in union with the Mother is the psychic being. As you probably have not quite understood what I wrote to you, it might be better if you show Nolini my letter and ask him to explain to you the difference between the three layers (স্তর) of the being about which I have spoken in the letter —

- (1) The inmost psychic being which is now awakened in you.
- (2) The external being which you feel doing work while the inner (psychic) is in union with the Mother.
- (3) The inner mental, vital and physical consciousness which connects the two, but of which you are not as yet conscious.

(9.4.31)

It is all to the good if you are not disturbed by the recurrence of the pain; not to be disturbed, to remain quiet and confident is the right attitude, but it is necessary also to receive the help of the Mother and not to shrink back for any reason from her solicitude. One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures

¹ until my

² awakes

and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account; for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged. Yoga is not an easy path and the total change of the nature cannot be done in a day. It is necessary for us to know precisely the state of your health so as to give you precise and constant help, that is the reason why the Mother has to put you the question from time to time.

(27.5.31)

There is no reason why you should not practise singing, if you feel that you can make it part of your yoga.

It is not possible for the Mother to give you the five minutes a day you ask for, her time is already too much taken. There are many others who have asked the same thing, the Mother has had to refuse them all. You are mistaken if you think that any such arrangement is necessary for your sadhana and daily meditation of the kind would help you if you kept always the right attitude; but if you keep the right attitude, you will not need any such routine of outward means, the help the Mother is always giving you would be more than sufficient.

I think it needful at this stage of your sadhana to repeat my previous warning about not allowing any vital mixture. It is the crudity of the unregenerated vital that prevents the psychic from remaining always in the front. You have now seen clearly the two different consciousnesses, — according to what you have written in one of your letters, — the psychic and the vital. To get rid of the old vital nature is now one of the most pressing needs of your sadhana. You are trying to get rid of the vital attachments and to turn entirely to the Mother. At this juncture you must be careful not to allow the movements of the old vital nature to enter into your relations with the Mother. Take this matter of your wish for more physical nearness to her or contact with her. Take care not to allow this to gain on you or become a desire; for if you do, the vital will begin to play, to create demands and desires, to awake in you jealousy and envy of others and other

undesirable movements and that would push your psychic being into the background and spoil the whole truth of your sadhana. There are some who have suffered much trouble and difficulty in their yoga by making this mistake, and I think it therefore better to put you on your guard.

(13.7.31)

I do not know why you doubt your experiences — you should accept them as genuine unless we expressly say anything to the contrary. In all the experiences you have sent to me up to now I have never found any that were not perfectly genuine; moreover, your observation of them is quite sound and accurate.

Your first experience was that of the opening of the psychic; you became aware of the psychic being and its aspirations and experiences and of the external being in front, as two separate parts of your consciousness. You were not able to keep this experience because the vital was not purified and pulled you out into the ordinary external consciousness. Afterwards, you got back into the psychic and were at the same time able to see your ordinary vital nature, to become aware of its defects and to work by the power of the psychic for its purification. I wrote to you at the beginning that this was the right way; for if the psychic is awake and in the front, it becomes easy to remain conscious of the things that have to be changed in the external nature and it is comparatively easy too to change them. But if the psychic gets veiled and retires into the background, the outer nature left to itself finds it difficult to remain conscious of its own wrong movements and even with great effort cannot succeed in getting rid of them. You can see yourself, as in the matter of food, that with the psychic active and awake the right attitude comes naturally and whatever difficulty there was soon diminishes or even disappears.

I told you also at that time that there was the third part of the nature, the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical) of which you were not yet aware, but which must also open in time. It is this that has happened in your last experience. What you felt as a part of you, yourself but not your physical self, rising to meet the higher consciousness above, was this inner being; it was your (inner) higher vital being which rose in that way to join

the highest self above — and it was able to do so because the work of purifying the outer vital nature had begun in earnest. Each time there is a purification of the outer nature, it becomes more possible for the inner being to reveal itself, to become free and to open to the higher consciousness above.

When this happens, several other things can happen at the same time. First, one becomes aware of the silent Self above — free, wide, without limits, pure, untroubled by the mental, vital and physical movements, empty of ego and limited personality — this is what you have described in your letter. Secondly, the Divine Power descends through this silence and freedom of the self and begins to work in the Adhar. This is what you felt as a pressure; its coming through the top of the head, the forehead and eyes and nose meant that it was working to open the mental centres — especially the two higher centres of thought and will and vision in the inner mental being. These two centres are called the thousand petalled lotus and the ajnachakra between the eyebrows — you can ask Nolini to explain to you about them. Thirdly, by this working inner parts of the being are opened and freed; you are liberated from the limitations of the ordinary personal mind, vital, and physical and become aware of a wider consciousness in which you can be more capable of the needed transformation. But that is necessarily a matter of time and long working and you are only taking the first steps on this way.

When one goes into the inner being, the tendency is to go entirely inside and lose consciousness of the outside world — this is what people call Samadhi. But it is also necessary to be able to have the same experience (of the Self, the workings in the inner consciousness, etc.) in the waking state. The best rule for you will be to allow the entire going inside only when you are alone and not likely to be disturbed, and at other times to accustom yourself to have these experiences with the physical consciousness awake and participating in them or at least aware of them. You did therefore quite right in stopping the complete going inside while you were at M's place. There was no harm in having these experiences there or anywhere, but there should be nothing to draw the attention of others — especially of those who are not in the yoga or in the atmosphere.

(5.8.31)

The Witness of whom you have become aware is not the psychic but the *inner mental being* which has come to the front as the psychic came before. It is this mental being in you which watches, observes and passes judgement on all that happens in you. The psychic does not watch and observe in this way like a witness, but it feels and knows spontaneously by the very purity of its own nature and the divine instinct within it, and so, whenever it comes to the front it reveals at once what are the right and what the wrong movements. It is evident that the psychic is still active in you, not prominently in front, but shedding its native light on the mental; otherwise the mental being would not be so sure in its observation and judgement but might make mistakes and be misled by the outer vital or clouded by the physical nature.

I have already told you that while the psychic is the inmost part of the being, there is also standing between it and the external surface nature a triple inner being, the inner mental, the inner vital, the inner (subtle) physical, and that these too had in their turn to come to the front. This is what is now beginning to happen in you.

The being of man is composed of these elements, the psychic behind supporting all, the inner mental, vital and physical, and the outer external nature of mind, life and body which is their instrument of expression. But above all is the central being (Jivatman) which uses them all for its manifestation, it is a portion of the divine Self and is hidden from the external man who replaces it by the mental and vital ego. It is only those who have begun to know themselves that become aware of their true central being; but it is there standing behind the action of mind, life and body and is most directly represented by the psychic which is itself a spark of the Divine. It is by the growth of the psychic element in one's nature that one begins to come into conscious touch with one's own central being. When that happens and the central being uses a conscious will to control and organise the movements of the nature it is then that one has a real, a spiritual self-mastery. But in the meanwhile it can and often does use the inner mental being for the purpose. This is what is happening in you just now and that is why you feel the conscious will coming forward to obey and execute the

instructions of the witness. It is the beginning of self-mastery, but, naturally, it cannot be at once complete; you have to go on until all in you opens and you become completely conscious of yourself, and are entirely in all your being the child and instrument of the Divine Mother.

(21.9.31)

It is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place but is everywhere. It is not necessary for everybody to be at Pondicherry or physically near the Mother in order to lead the spiritual life or to practise the yoga, especially in its earlier stages. But that is only one side of the truth, there is another. Otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all or for the existence of the Asram or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few is it well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life. It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the awakening of the psychic being — that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact. It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many — if they are ready — in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have the development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able to keep the contact and go on with his spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and, if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished by adverse influences or movements. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of a return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or give a

fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent or mixed with a vital motive, — but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This is for those who are not called upon or are not *yet* called upon to live in the Asram under the direct pressure of the central force and Presence. Those who must so live are those called from the beginning or who have become ready or who are for some reason or other given a chance to form part of the work or creation which is being prepared by the yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness are indispensable; to depart would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are often in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and pressure are greater; but so also is their opportunity greater and the power and influence for development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call.

(7.10.31)

This is the true reply. To remain within, above, and untouched, full of inner consciousness and the inner experience, — listening, when need be, to X or another with the surface consciousness, but with even that undisturbed, not either pulled outwards or invaded, that is the perfect condition for the sadhana.

(8.12.31)

It is true that one has to try to keep the inner condition under all circumstances, even the most adverse; but that does not mean that one has to accept, unnecessarily, unfavourable conditions when there is no good reason for their being allowed to go on. Especially, the nervous system and the physical cannot bear an excessive strain as well as the mind and higher vital; your fatigue came from the strain of living in one consciousness and at the same time exposing yourself too much to prolonged contacts from the

ordinary consciousness. A certain amount of self-defence is necessary — so that the consciousness may not be pulled down or out constantly into the ordinary atmosphere or the physical strained by being forced into activities that have become foreign to you. Those who practise yoga often seek refuge in solitude from these difficulties; that is unnecessary here, but all the same you need not submit to being put under this kind of useless strain always. You need not waste time and exhaust yourself by chat with M and P and N's being with you for the greater part of the day is excessive. The best thing would be for you to fix a limited time for seeing others and not go beyond it — you can say that the Mother has asked you to do so.

(19.2.32)

There is nothing wrong in your experience or insincere in your expression of it; to write is helpful and it is our wish that you should go on doing it. An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical consciousness. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true condition and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause or the thing that needs to be set right.

(4.3.32)

It is quite true that rising into a higher consciousness than the ordinary human consciousness is the right way towards transformation. Merely to remain in the ordinary lower consciousness and try to reject from there the wrong movements can produce no permanent or complete result. But there are several points here which you must note or this perception may be accompanied by an error.

As you have yourself subsequently seen, all the parts and personalities that constitute the being must share in the higher consciousness, otherwise the old movements under various pretexts will intervene.

You speak of rejecting the lower vital, but it is only the unregenerated lower vital movements that can be got rid of, you cannot get rid of the lower

vital itself, for it is a necessary part of the manifested nature, like the higher vital or the mind. It has to be changed in the power of the higher consciousness, not left to itself or dropped from you.

If you do not so change it, if you simply remain content by living in the psychic or other higher consciousness internally then you run the risk of doing like those who are satisfied to have experiences and some inner quietude or Ananda, but leave the external nature and surface active movements unchanged, either thinking them of no importance or justifying them under the plea that there is the psychic or spiritual consciousness behind them.

I asked you to look for the cause of the abatement of energy or zeal (*utsâha*), because it is evident that there must be some resistance somewhere, otherwise there would not be these constant headaches and this less intense condition. If the physical consciousness is open the headaches should disappear or at least diminish in frequency and force, and if the lower vital is all right, the intensity ought to continue.

Certainly you should go on writing and tell Mother everything that is happening in you. My not answering was due to want of time.

(6.5.32)

All fear ought to be cast out. This movement of fear belongs to a still unchanged part of the vital which answers to the old ideas, feelings and reactions. Its only effect is to make you misinterpret the Mother's attitude or the intention in her words or looks or expression. If the Mother becomes serious or has an ironic smile, that does not in the least mean that she is angry or has withdrawn her affection, on the contrary, it is with those with whom she is most inwardly intimate that she feels most free to become like that — even to give them several chidings. They in their turn understand her and do not get afraid or upset, — they only turn to look inside themselves and see what it is on which she is putting her pressure. That pressure they regard as a privilege and a sign of her grace. Fear stands in the way of this complete intimacy and confidence and creates only misunderstanding; you must cast it out altogether.

(22.5.32)

If you accept your weakness which means accepting the thing itself — some part of your nature accepts it and to that you yield — then what is the use of our telling you what to do? That part of your vital will always be able to say — “I was too weak to carry it out.” The only way out of it for you is to cease to be weak, to dismiss this sentimental and sensuous part of you, to call down strength to replace its weakness and to do it with a settled and serious purpose. If we cannot get you who have had some foundation in the sadhana to overcome this element in you, how do you expect us to get X to do it who says he has no foundation but is still floating?

(8.6.32)

The experience you write of in today’s letter shows clearly the only way of safety against these attacks, to get back to the close and happy connection, the psychic openness to the Mother which had been so long the foundation of your sadhana and the cause of the great progress you were making.

Do not listen to the clamour of the adverse vital force which has been attacking you, its reasonings or its wrong emotional suggestions — it only wants you to fall from happiness, to suffer and to descend into a lower consciousness and lose your progress.

Get back into the true spirit of love and closeness, surrender and confidence and Ananda and remain there — then in due time all problems and difficulties will solve themselves as the light and power of the Truth descend into the still weak and obscure parts of the nature.

(13.6.32)

It is again the old vain imagination prompted by an uprising of the dissatisfied desires of the vital nature. The Mother had no idea of an ironical smile and there was no reason why she should show any irony. There was nothing that you had written that was wrong and there was nothing that you had done. But evidently the old wrong attitude of desire must have been waiting for its opportunity and it gave the opportunity also for the old vital to rise and indulge in its accustomed movements. It is this vital that

suggested to you the ironic smile and made your mind accept it so that it might have an excuse for its movements. It is also evident that it was the pressure of the desire coming up from below that removed the Ananda. The psychic Ananda and the desire of the complaining and clamouring vital cannot go together; if desire comes up, the Ananda is obliged to draw back — unless you reject the desire in time and refuse to make any compromise with it. Especially when the Mother was giving you wideness and peace and intense Ananda, it was irrational in the extreme to give room to an external desire and sacrifice all that for its sake.

It is well that this time you did not continue to justify the demand and desire and made a movement quickly to recover. But next time it arises — if there is a next time which ought not to be, — you should throw it away at once instead of harbouring it even for a moment. It is only so that you can have a continuous and unbroken progress.

P.S. Of course your experiences were perfectly genuine — there was no exaggeration.

(26.12.32)

Men are always mixed and there are qualities and defects mingled together almost inextricably in their nature. What a man wants to be or wants others to see in him or is sometimes on one side of his nature or in some relations can be very different from what he is in actual fact or in other relations or on another side of his nature. To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by a spiritual endeavour that one can realise it — and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation which many sadhaks and yogis even are not capable of and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the Divine working.

(30.3.33)

It is likely to be fundamental and definite. But in these matters even after the liberation one has to remain vigilant — for often these things go out and

remain at a far distance waiting to see if under any circumstances in any condition they can make a rush and recover their kingdom. If there has been an entire purification down to the depths and nothing is there to open the gate then they cannot do it. But it is only after one has been a long time free that one can say “Over, it is all right for ever.”

(11.5.33)

Why should you decide beforehand that your birthday is spoiled? You have only to throw off all these undesirable ideas and feelings which proceed from a still imperfectly purified part of the external being and take the right attitude which you should always have when you come to the Mother. There should be no idea of what others have or have not — your relation is between the Mother and yourself and has nothing to do with others. Nothing should exist for you but yourself and the Divine — yourself receiving her force flowing to you.

To secure that, better do not spend the time at your disposal in speech — especially if anything of the depression remains with you, it will waste the time in discussing things which cannot help the true consciousness to predominate. Concentrate, open yourself and let the Mother bring you back to the psychic condition by what she will pour into you in meditation and silence.

(16.5.33)

Nothing had happened between yesterday and this morning, there was no new accusation against you, no fault that you had committed, no displeasure of the Mother against you. There was no bad look of the Mother on you, nor any refusal of her smile. On the contrary, as the Mother told me this morning before getting your letter, she saw that there was something wrong with you, a darkness and depression, and she did her best to remove it, but she could not get any smile from you in response. It is clear that once more you came with a preconceived idea or else an expectation in your subconscious, born of your sleepless night and self-tormenting thoughts and of X's behaviour and saw and interpreted everything according to your expectation. All the

surge of doubts and painful thoughts of which you speak have therefore no basis whatever in anything we have thought or done.

As to your going away for a time in order to get rid of your difficulty with X, a difficulty can never be overcome by your running away from it. And if you cannot overcome it with the direct and immediate help we can give you and have always been giving you and the support of our presence, I do not see how you are going to do it at a distance, and without our immediate help and presence.

It seems to me all this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself in meeting the consequences of your trouble. It is not by tormenting yourself with remorse and harassing thoughts and sleepless nights that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance, trusting in the grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way — and there is no other.

(20.5.33)

It is not a question of ordinary life. In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and errors.

(25.8.33)

It was indeed a microscopically small cause for so strong an upsetting, but really it is the whole difficulty of this raw and unreasonable sensitiveness which cropped up with this very infinitesimally small excuse — and that sensitiveness is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaks here. There are two remedies for it — the psychic's confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, i.e. "Whatever she wills is best for me" and the vastness which you feel now, — it is the wideness of the true self of the

true mental, vital, physical being also, from which such things fall like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever....

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the wideness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve in it and the attachments fall away.

(28.8.34)

Yes, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that that is of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a whole. If the peace descends there, this restlessness will disappear.

The sex-sensation came from the subconscious. When it is unable to manifest in the waking consciousness, it appears from the subconscious in sleep. The mind must not allow itself to be disturbed — it will go out with the rest.

(20.9.34)

It is good that you were able to observe yourself all the time and see the movements and that the intervention of the new consciousness was frequent and automatic. At a later stage you will no doubt get a guidance in the mind also as to how to do things you want to get done. Evidently your mind was too active — as well as the minds of the others also — and so you missed your objective, owing to the excessive multitude of witnesses! However —

(4.10.34)

Yes, it is a very encouraging progress. If you keep the wideness and calm as you were keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all

is safe — for it means the double foundation of the yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace and freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movements turned towards the true goal.

(10.10.34)

Yes, it was what the Mother meant. The attraction of the emotional and sentimental feeling naturally passes away when one grows inwardly from the vital basis into the maturer psychic stage but there is an interval when that has gone and the deeper psychic feeling has not yet found its seat or its form or expression. Even when it does, it may find fewer to appreciate it.

(31.1.35)

From what you describe it seems that you have got into contact with the mechanical mind whose nature is to go on turning round in a circle on the thoughts that come into it. This sometimes happens when the thinking mind is quiet. This is part of the physical mind and you should not be disturbed or alarmed by its rising up but see what it is and quiet it down, or get control of its movements. The one serious difficulty is about the sleeplessness — that must stop, for it weakens the nerves and the body and produces fatigue and inertia. You must try and receive the Force and get back the sleep. With sleep and rest the other things ought soon to disappear.

What you propose about seeing the Mother at will is not physically practicable and whenever in a few cases it has been allowed in the past, the results have not been helpful. What you should do is to write every two days or so a few lines until the difficulty is over. You must especially let me know about the sleep and the nervous condition. In fact you ought to have let me know at once although correspondence was stopped and still is till further notice, I had said that important or necessary communications could be sent.

(3.3.35)

The thoughts and feelings expressed in your letter are born of the depression and have no truth in themselves apart from it. Your being here does not in

the least take up space that could be occupied by ‘better’ sadhaks. For a good sadhak there will always be a place in one way or another. The incapacity which you discover in yourself is simply the resistance of the habitual external and physical nature, which everyone has and which none, however good a sadhak, has yet been able to transform radically, because it is the last thing to change and its resistance is acute just now because it is against this that the power of the sadhana is now pressing so that the change may come. When this part presents itself it always tries to appear as something unalterable, incapable of change, impervious to the sadhana. But it is not really so and one must not be deceived by this appearance. As for the fear of madness, it is only a nervous impression which you should throw away. It is not vital weakness that leads to such upsettings — it is an obscurity and weakness in the physical mind accompanied by movements of an exaggerated vital nature (*e.g.* exaggerated spiritual ambition) which are too strong for the mind to bear. That is not your case. You have had long experience of inner peace, wideness, Ananda, an inner life turned towards the Divine and one who has had that ought not to speak of general incapacity, whatever the difficulties of the external nature, — difficulties common in one form or another to all.

(11.3.35)

A weeping that comes with the feeling you speak of is the sign of a psychic sorrow — for it translates an aspiration of the psychic being. But depression and hopelessness ought not to come. You should rather cling to the faith that since there is a true aspiration in you — and of that there can be no doubt — it is sure to be fulfilled, whatever the difficulties of the external nature. You must recover in that faith the inner peace and quietude while at the same time keeping the clear insight into what has to be done and the steady aspiration for the inner and outer change.

(17.3.35)

The conversion which keeps the consciousness turned towards the light and makes the right attitude spontaneous and natural and abiding and rejection also spontaneous is the psychic conversion. That is to say man usually lives

in his vital and the body is its instrument and the mind its counsellor and minister (except for the few mental men who live mostly for the things of the mind, but even they are in subjection to the vital in their ordinary movements). The spiritual conversion begins when the soul begins to insist on a deeper life and is complete when the psychic becomes the basis or the leader of the consciousness and mind and vital and body are led by it and obey it. Of course if that once happens fully, doubt, depression and despair cannot come any longer, although there may be and are difficulties still. If it is not fully, but still fundamentally accomplished, even then these things either do not come or are brief passing clouds on the surface — for there is a rock of support and certitude at the base, which even if partially covered cannot disappear altogether.

Mostly however the *constant* recurrence of depression and despair or of doubt and revolt is due to a mental or vital formation which takes hold of the vital mind and makes it run round always in the same circle at the slightest provoking cause or even without cause. It is like an illness to which the body consents from habit and from belief in the illness even though it suffers from it, and once started the illness runs its habitual course unless it is cut short by some strong counteracting force. If once the body can withdraw its consent, the illness immediately or quickly ceases — that is the secret of the system. So too if the vital mind withdraws its consent, refuses to be dominated by the habitual suggestions and the habitual movement, these recurrences of depression and despair can be made soon to cease. But it is not easy for this mind, once it has got into the habit of consent, even a quite passive and suffering and reluctant consent, to cancel the habit and get rid of the black circle. It can be done easily only when the mind refuses any longer to believe in the suggestions or accept the ideas or feelings that start the circle.

(13.3.36)

You feel as you do only because you are largely identified with the part that has to undergo change and so you feel the difficulty, even the impossibility of changing. But although the difficulty is there the impossibility does not exist. Even this identification may be helpful, for so the change can be

radical by a direct action in the part itself, instead of an indirect influence upon it through the mind or higher vital. Rest and restore your physical forces, open so that the Mother's force may freely work on you, all trouble pass away and a new stronger movement commence.

(22.3.36)

It is perhaps that the attitude you took of going on with the calm within and slowly changing what had to be changed, postponing certain things for the future — though not a wrong attitude in itself — made you somewhat lax, allowing things to play on the surface (desire etc.) which should have been kept in check. This resolution may have opened the way for the old movements to rise through this part which was not yet ready to change at all and the hostile forces finding you off your guard took the opportunity to push the attack home. They are always vigilant for an opportunity and there must be a sufficient vigilance on the sadhak's side to refuse it to them. It is also possible that as the Force descending in the general atmosphere has carried in it some pressure on the consciousness of the sadhaks to be more ready, more awake, less engrossed in the movements of the ordinary nature than they are now, it fell upon this part and the resistance in it which was mostly passive for a long time became suddenly active under the pressure.

(29.3.36)

What you write is quite accurate about the true soul, the psychic being. But people mean different things when they speak of the soul. Sometimes it is what I have called in the 'Arya' the desire soul, — that is the vital with its mixed aspirations, desires, hungers of all kinds good and bad, its emotions, finer and grosser or sensational urges crossed by the mind's idealisings and psychic stresses. But sometimes it is also the mind and vital under the stress of a psychic urge. The psychic so long as it is veiled must express itself through the mind and vital and its aspirations are mixed and coloured there by the vital and mental stuff. Thus the veiled psychic urge may express itself in the mind by a hunger in the thought for knowledge of the Divine, what the Europeans call the intellectual love of God. In the vital it may itself as a hunger or hankering after the Divine. This can bring much

suffering because of the nature of the vital, its unquiet passions, desires, ardours, troubled emotions, cloudings, depressions, despairs. The psychic can have a psychic sorrow when things go against its diviner yearnings, but this sorrow has in it no touch of torment, depression or despair. Nevertheless all cannot approach, at least cannot at once approach the Divine in the pure psychic way — the mental and vital approaches are often necessary beginnings and better from the spiritual point of view than an insensitiveness to the Divine. It is in both cases a call of the soul, the soul's urge — it only takes a form or colour due to the stress of the mind or vital nature.

(29.5.36)

What you have written about your condition seems to be correct as a whole. There is certainly a greater calm within and a freedom of the inner being which was not there once. It is this which gives you the equality you feel there and the capacity to escape from more serious disturbances. When one has this basis of inner calm, the difficulties and imperfections of the surface can be dealt with without upset, depressions, etc. The power to go among others without any invasion is also due to the same cause.

As for the second question there is no general rule, but your attitude is the right one for you — for you have not the need of any particular development of capacity, having behind a sincere attitude of a more general and penetrating and pervasive character. Others who feel the need of a particular development actually ask for it and get it.

(9.6.36)

Fundamentally, it is the same question as the control of speech, — not to allow the mind or the vital to act or speak or make formations without an inner criticism and control. Once that habit of psychic control and the eye of the psychic perception kept on these things is established, there will be no difficulty.

(21.6.36)

There is no reason for despondency; when one has progressed as far as you did, that is so far as to feel and maintain the calm and have so much of the psychic discrimination and the psychic feeling, one has no right to despair of one's spiritual future. You could not yet carry out the discrimination into an entire psychic change, because a large part of the outer physical consciousness still took some pleasure in old movements and therefore these roots remained alive in the subconscious. When you were off your guard the whole thing rose up and there was a temporary and violent lapse. But this does not mean that the nature is not changeable. Only the calm inner conscious poise, the psychic discrimination and above all a will to change stronger and steadier than before must be so established that no uprising or invasion will be able to cloud even partly the discrimination or suspend the will. You saw the truth but this part of the old nature which rose up did not want to acknowledge — it wanted its play and imposed that on you. This time you must insist on a complete truthfulness in the whole being which will refuse to accept any denial of what the psychic discrimination sees or any affirmation or any consent anywhere to what it disapproves, spiritual humility and the removal of self-righteousness, self-justification and the wish to impose yourself, the tendency to judge others etc. All these defects you know are in you; to cast that out may take time, but if the will to be true to the inner self in all ways is strong and persistent and vigilant and always calls in the Mother's force, it can be done sooner than now seems possible.

(21.8.36)

You did quite right to go to V — it was the thing to do as soon as the vital was clear. You also saw accurately about the obstacle (as to be) the first to go, that it was a pride that had not to be entertained. The ordinary and the spiritual view of these things must necessarily be different, and from the spiritual viewpoint not to give a foothold to the ego was the important thing. Also the resolution not to preoccupy oneself with the faults and offences of others — whether committed against oneself or other people — is just the right resolution. There was no mistake nor any thing vital concealed in your movement.

(3.9.36)

It is of course the resistance of the old vital in the past that is being redeemed which creates this irritation and these imaginations about the Mother's displeasure. For as a matter of fact there was no dissatisfaction against you in the Mother's mind and this idea is usually a suggestion to the sadhak's mind from the Force that wants to create the wish to go or any other kind of discontent or depression. It is a curious form of delusion that has taken root, as it were, in the Asram atmosphere and is cherished not so much by the individual vital as by the forces that work upon it to break, if possible, the sadhana. You must not allow any harbourage to that or else it will create any amount of trouble. The absence of proper sleep naturally brings a state of fatigue in the nerves which helps these things to come — for it is through the physical consciousness that they attack and if it can make that consciousness tamasic in any way their entry is more easy.

(15.9.36)

Your attitude towards the change needed and new life is the right one. A quiet vigilant but undistressed persistence is the best way to get it done.

For the intimacy within to be reestablished the quietude must deepen so that the psychic may come out in the physical as it has done in the higher parts.

(28.9.36)

It is the beginning of a very decisive experience and realisation — first, the Ascent above the mind (head) into the spiritual plane. It is here that one realises and is released into the vastness, stillness, silence, freedom, peace and joy of the Infinite and becomes aware of the Universal Self and the Divine. This realisation is the foundation (when it is fixed and one lives constantly above the body in the wideness of the infinite Being) of the spiritual state and the beginning of the spiritual transformation of the nature. What you have been having up to now is the psychic change; when the psychic and spiritual join together, then the transformation can be complete. For this Descent is necessary and that is the second thing you are feeling, — the Descent of the higher, spiritual, or divine consciousness and

energy into the whole system down to the bottom of the spine where is the Muladhara or centre of the Physical Consciousness. The Energy descends through all the levels and centres, mind centre, vital centre, physical centre and fills the whole body with the higher existence and consciousness. The ascent is the liberation (Mukti), and when one thus ascends, one is liberated from the body consciousness, one no longer feels the body as a form, no longer feels contained in the body, but widens out into the formless Vastness of the Divine. Or sometimes the body is felt as something very small in this Vastness. In the Descent the body is felt but not as a confining form so much as an instrument and receptacle for this larger consciousness. Your description of the experience is unmistakable. All the elements are there. What has to happen is to get fixed in the wideness, freedom, stillness, peace of the consciousness above and for the Descent to continue till it has fixed the higher power of being everywhere below — in the body and in the subconscious below it and also all round the body so that one lives enveloped in this new consciousness and being.

(13.11.36)

It is indeed good that the psychic intervened and prevented the mind taking the wrong direction. It is not possible that there should not be occasional stumbles, failures etc. in the work of self-purification and change, but to feel upset or remorseful over them is harmful rather than helpful; it easily brings depression and depression brings clouding of the mind and weakness. To observe calmly the wrong movement and its nature (here it was the tongue that was at fault and the tongue is always an easily erring member) and to set it right inwardly is always the best way. Calm, especially when the true spiritual calm of the Self is there, is the thing that must always be preserved; for all that everything else can be done in time and with the least trouble.

(27.11.36)

The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a formation which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as an expression of the vital and its habits

without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has been increased by the habit of talk about others — gossip, to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself, not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of yogic self-control.

It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there, it can be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind.

(6.12.36)

There seems to be two elements in the physical difficulty that is weighing on you. The first is the liver trouble weakens and must weaken still more if it leads you to diminish your food below what the body needs for maintaining sufficient strength to react — also probably the nervous tendency to insomnia with its consequences. The second is an inertia of the lower vital and physical consciousness which prevent it from throwing off the lassitude, from reacting against the attacks and from opening steadily to the Force which would remove these things. All that is due to the break down of the poise that you had for so long, the vital trouble that caused it and the reaction of the lower vital to the insistence on throwing out the causes of the trouble. This reaction seems to have been a restlessness at losing the things of which it was still holding — such a reaction always brings the inertia of the physical consciousness while the right reaction in the lower vital brings on the contrary a sense of peace, release, quietude which definitely opens the lowest physical parts to the higher consciousness and force. If you can get over this and get back the old poise, then all these things can be made to disappear,

Nirod was of course right from the medical point of view in recommending exercise — both for the liver and as a tonic to the body it is helpful. So if you are not going to the Aroume more than once or twice some

walking may be advisable. Care should be taken of the body certainly, the care that is needed for its good condition, rest, sleep, proper food, sufficient exercise; what is not good is too much preoccupation with it, anxiety, despondency in illness etc., for these things only favour the prolongation of ill health or weakness. For such things or the liver attacks treatment can always be taken when necessary.

But it is always the right inner poise, quietude inward and outward, faith, the opening of the body consciousness to the Mother and her Force that are the true means of recovery — other things can only be minor aids and devices.

(7.3.37)

It is the right resolution and all our help will be with you to carry it out and bring it to fruition. The mechanical activity of the vital mind of which you speak ought not to be too difficult to dispel — we shall send you force for that and for recovering the sleep. I am glad to hear that the energy is coming back — with the restoration of the upward connection between the physical and the Above it was bound to do so.

(13.3.37)

I suppose the proposal came as a touch to see how far the old things could revive and how far the new psychic life within would cancel this vibration. That often happens when there is a forward drive from within. We shall certainly aid you towards their removal. For the ego, however insistent it may be, one has only to keep one's eye on it and say no to all its suggestions so that each position it takes up proves to be a fruitless move. Treated in that way it becomes ready for the moment when the psychic has only to give a slight push for it to fall away in each field of its activity from its loosened roots. Persevere steadily in the present movement and it cannot fail to be effective.

(21.3.37)

The difficulty is probably somewhere in the external physical vital or else comes up by habit from the subconscious. But if the vital itself supports the new movement, these obstacles are bound to disappear. One has to persevere quietly and steadily with as much vigilance as possible. I hope the headache etc. will soon disappear. For all that you have written about we will try to give you the necessary support of our force always.

(28.3.37)

It is quite natural that there should be much mixture in the attitude till all is clear — the ordinary nature clings to the action and the transformation in its completeness cannot be sudden. What is necessary is that the basic consciousness should become firmly established in the Divine, then the mixture and the rest can be seen and steadily weeded out. To have this outwardly as well as inwardly is a great progress.

(24.4.37)

What has to be done is not to struggle with this state, but get a conscious control. That is to say, if it comes at a time when other things have to be done, then instead of fighting it (which gave you the headache) you must concentrate quietly within for a short time, but concentrate with the will to come out of it in a short time. If the thing comes at a time when you can sit for long and are not likely to be disturbed, then you need not resist it even in that way, but still in going in aspire to be conscious and master of the trance movement so that you can go in at will and come out at will. It is probably a rush of the consciousness to go inside deep into the inner being or to go up above the mind; but the more consciously this is done the better.

(21.5.37)

Your suggestion that I am telling you things that are untrue in order to encourage you is the usual stupidity of the physical mind — if it were so, it is not you who would be unfit for the Yoga, but myself who would be unfit to be in the search for the Divine Truth anybody's guide. For one can lead through lesser to greater Truth, but not through falsehood to Truth. As for your fitness or unfitness for the Yoga, it is not a question on which your

physical mind can be an unerring judge — it judges by the immediate appearance of things and has no knowledge of the laws that govern consciousness or the powers that act in Yoga. In fact the question is not of fitness or unfitness but of the acceptance of Grace. There is no human being whose physical outer consciousness — the part of yourself in which you are now living — is fit for the Yoga. It is by grace and enlightenment from above that it can become capable and for that the necessity is to be persevering and open it to the Light. Everybody when he enters the physical consciousness has the same difficulty and feels as if he were unfit, obscure and nothing done, nothing changed in him since he began the Yoga; he is apt to forget then all that has happened before or to feel as if he had lost it or as if it had all been unreal or untrue.

I suppose that is why you object to my phrase about your having gone so far. I meant that you had had openings in your thinking mind, heart and higher vital and experiences also and had seen very lucidly the condition of your own being and nature and had by that got so far that these parts were ready for the spiritual change — what remains is the physical and outer consciousness which has to be compelled to accept the necessity of change. That is no doubt the most difficult part of the work to be done, but it is also the part which, if once done, makes possible the total change of the being and nature. I therefore said that having gone so far it would be absurd to turn back now and give up because this resists — it always resists in everybody and very obstinately too. That is no reason for giving up the endeavour.

It is this consciousness that has expressed itself in your letter — or the obscure part of it which clings to its old attitude. It does not want to fulfil the sadhana unless it can get by it the things it wanted. It wants the satisfaction of the ego, self-fulfilment, appreciation, the granting of its desires. It measures the Divine Love by the outward favours showered upon it and looks jealously to see who gets more of these favours than itself, then says that the Divine has no love for it and assigns reasons which are either derogatory to the Divine or, as in your letter, self-depreciatory and a cause for despair. It is not in you alone that this part feels and acts like that, it is in almost everybody. If that were the only thing in you or the others, then

indeed there would be no possibility of Yoga. But though it is strong, it is not the whole — there is a psychic being and a mind and heart influenced and enlightened by it which has other feelings and another vision of things and aim in sadhana. These are now covered in you by the upsurge of this part which has to change. It is tamasic and does not want to change, does not want to believe unless it can be done by reassuring the vital ego. But there is nothing new in all that — it is part of human nature and has always been there, hampering and limiting the sadhana. Its existence is no reason for despair — everyone has it and the sadhana has to be done in spite of it, in spite of the mixture it brings till the time comes when it has to be definitely converted or rejected. It is difficult to do it, but perfectly possible. These things I know and realise and it is therefore that I insist on your persevering and encourage you to go on; it is not my statement of the position that is untrue, it is the view of it taken by this obscure part of your being that is unsound and an error.

(29.7.37)

I never heard of anyone getting genius by effort. One can increase one's talent by training and labour, but genius is a gift of Nature. By sadhana it is different, one can do it; but that is not the fruit of effort, but either of an inflow or by an opening or liberation of some impersonal power or manifestation of unmanifested power. No rule can be made in such things; it depends on persons and circumstances how far the manifestation of genius by Yoga will go or what shape it will take or to what degree or height it will rise.

(28.7.38)

The Mother certainly would not give you money for going away, for she could not approve of or sanction such a step which has no real ground and for which the only reasons you allege are a quite unreasonable despondency and a pique (abhimān) which is also without true cause. The Mother has not in the least changed towards you — she has neither withdrawn her affection nor felt nor expressed any disappointment about your sadhana; her support has not been withdrawn either from your singing. The only thing we can

make out in this connection is that the impression was created in your vital by her having discouraged a movement of ego in you, pressed on the removal of some defects which you yourself had admitted and wished to overcome, put aside some suggestions with regard to one occasion for your music which did not seem to her suitable. But these things she has done before and you used to be very pleased at her pointing out or letting you understand where you had to change. You yourself wanted to get rid of ego and change the resistant part and also had taken steps towards it; it would not have been helpful for your purpose that the Mother should support or indulge any movements coming from there. I can only gather from your recent letters that the resisting part has revolted against the pressure you yourself had put on it and thrown up the impression that it would not change, that the demand on it was more than it could face and it would rather go and that in your depression you have identified yourself with its feeling and misinterpreted the Mother's motives and her attitude — a thing that in your clearer consciousness you would either not have done or else soon corrected the mistake. I hope that this clearer part of you which is the larger part will quickly reassert itself and give you back your former right vision and attitude. I shall do and do always what I can to help towards that and towards the psychic victory in you and your spiritual progress. Your departure and renunciation of sadhana is a thing which nothing in us accepts for a moment.

(No date)

I do not see why you make such a big difference between the quarrels and jealousy over other women and quarrels and jealousy over other attractions not of a sexual character. They both spring from the same primary impulse, the possessive instinct which is at the base of ordinary vital love. In the latter case, as often sexual jealousy is not possible, the mind supports itself on other motives which seem to it quite reasonable and justifiable — it may not be conscious that it is being pushed by the vital, but the quarrel and the vivacity of the disagreement are there all the same. Whether you had or had not both forms of it, is not very material and does not make things better or worse. It is the getting rid of the instinct itself that matters, whether from the psychological point of view or from that of a spiritual change.

The one thing that is of any importance is the fact that the old personality which you were throwing out has reasserted itself for the moment, as you yourself see. It has confused your mind, otherwise you would not ask the question whether it is there still and how that agrees with my description of your aspiration and glimpse of turning entirely to the Mother as true and real. Of course, they were true and real and sincere and they are still there even if for a moment clouded over. You know well enough by this time that the whole being is not one block so that if one part changes all changes miraculously at the same time. Something of the old things may be there submerged and rise up again if the pressure and fixed resolution to get rid of them slackens. I do not know to what you refer when you speak of the statement that — “Light and Darkness, Truth and falsehood cannot dwell together,” — but certainly it can only mean that in the spiritual endeavour one cannot allow them to dwell together, — the Light, the Truth must be kept, the Darkness, the Falsehood or error pushed out altogether. It certainly did not mean that in a human being there can be either only all light or only all darkness and whoever has any weakness in him has no light and no sincere aspiration and no truth in his nature. If that were so, Yoga would be impossible. All the sadhaks in this Asram would be convicted of insincerity and of having no true sadhana — for who is there in whom there is no obscurity and no movement of ignorance?

If you have fallen down from the consciousness you had, it is because instead of dismissing the dispute with K as a moment’s movement, you begin to brood on it and prolong the wrong turn it gave. It is no use persisting in the feelings that it creates in you. You have only to do what I have been trying to tell you: Draw back from them and, having seen what is lingering in the nature, dismiss them quietly and turn back again to the true consciousness opening yourself to receive once more the Truth that is creating you anew and let it come down into all your nature.

(No date)

By will I meant this that there is something in the body that accepts the illness and has certain reactions that make this acceptance effective — so

there must always be a contrary will in the conscious parts of the being to get rid of this most physical acceptance.

(No date)

You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem — to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the higher planes that much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say “Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga”. Of course when you come to the point, make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up — it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call on the Mother’s Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every yogin does — to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained a steadiness — it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother — for it is her force that is behind it and behind all progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine — then you will go on more smoothly. Get the full psychic opening in the most external

physical consciousness. That and not despondency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience.

(No date)

Your nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one's own sadhana, one's own endeavour, one's own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things can really come — development, perfection or siddhi — in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric — until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrument in this body — and that can only be when these things become secondary and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body becomes the sole aim — the rest becomes merely the fulfilment of the Divine's Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front you had it in your central consciousness. But there was the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and physical and especially with the most external parts of them, for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual changes) — but with the full consent of the being. As it was

done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done.

(No date)

That is good progress. As for the resisting part, there is for a long time a resistance from some layer of the physical — one layer opens, another beneath remains obscure. But if the pressure from above is continuous, the resistance gets exhausted at last.

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.

I think you are right about the change coming in many. Still chequered by remnants and returns of the old nature, it is proceeding.

(No date)

All that you write in your letter is perfectly sound and true. The very object of Yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that ananda and bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of ananda and bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspaced, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior Yoga capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the divine Influence.

(No date)

The experience you have is the experience of the true self. Untouched by grief and joy, desire, anxiety or trouble, vast and calm and full of peace, it observes the agitations of the outer being as one might the play of children. It is indeed the divine element in you. The more you can live in that, the firmer will be the foundation of the sadhana. In this self will come all the higher experiences, oneness with the Divine, light, knowledge, strength, Ananda, the play of the Mother's higher forces. It does not always become stable from the first, though for some it does; but the experience comes more and more frequently and lasts more till it is no longer covered by the ordinary nature.

(No date)

I am closing the chapter of Sri Aurobindo's letters to me with these last three letters. I am adding them with a view to demonstrate how Sri Aurobindo used to write in detail even on trivial things in spite of his shortage of time. On the one hand he was busy with composing his great epic *Savitri*, while on the other he was writing these letters with such care and affection. Among these three letters, the first one needs special mention. The two ladies referred to in it were our relatives and had come to visit the Ashram for the first time, they were not residents. Sri Aurobindo has here given precise instructions even for trifling things like getting milk for them. He used to write many such letters to various sadhaks and sadhikas, from which we get glimpses of his personality as well as that of the Mother and catch hints of what they truly were.

Sri Aurobindo's Letters

(1) For today we told Dyuman to supply the milk for Nolina; but in future it is better to get it from Amrita direct from the Dairy. The simplest thing would be for one of Maya's servants to take the milk for both at 5 o'clock or thereabouts and leave Nolina's at her place on the way to Maya's. We are informing Amrita.

(10.2.33)

(2) This book, returned herewith, is not in my opinion suitable for the purpose. The author wanted to make it look like a translation of a romance in Sanskrit and he has therefore made the spirit and even partly the form of the language more Indian than English. It is not therefore useful for getting into the spirit of the English language. Indians have naturally in writing English a tendency to be too coloured, sometimes flowery, sometimes rhetorical and a book like this would increase the tendency. One ought to have in writing English a style which is at its base capable of going to the point, saying with a simple and energetic straightforwardness what one means to say so that one can add grace of language without disturbing this basis. Arnold is a very good model for this purpose. Emerson less, but his book will also do.

It is surely better to write your own thoughts. The exercise of writing in your own words what another has said or written is a good exercise or test for accuracy, clear understanding of ideas, an observant intelligence; but your object is, I suppose, to be able to understand English and express *yourself* in good English.

(16.5.32)

(3) Why do you walk about on your bad foot? Keep it at rest; bathe it in hot water with the salts Mother is sending you. You must keep it 20 minutes in the water. A full tablespoon of salt in a full basin of water, the whole part paining must be bathed twice a day. It remains hot each time for 15 to 20 minutes.

(No date)

IV

From my childhood I have been hearing that God is all compassionate and is an Avatar of compassion. When I came to Pondicherry I had the direct perception of that by the gracious touch of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. During my Ashram life of over 56 years they have poured upon me numerous experiences which cannot be shared with all. But I shall reveal one experience and shall then close my casket of reminiscences.

A few months after I had arrived here, I started feeling a sort of uneasiness because I found that I could no more be moved or touched so much by the name of Krishna nor could I sing the songs about him as I used to do. Love, devotion, tears in the eyes, exhilarating states of the heart and mind were diminishing slowly and in their place emotions were crystallising from the very depths around the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. While singing about them I felt as if all the inner doors had been flung open. The entire inner being came out with an intense feeling which is beyond description. The feeling I used to have while singing Bhajans and Padavali Kirtans on Krishna were now very much less intense, as if practically absent, and the change brought about an inner conflict for some time. I thought: “They are all divine, only different in form and name and aspect. Why then regarding one I should have so much feeling and none regarding the other? Why should it diminish?” This tormented me for quite a long time. Then I had a splendid experience beyond my expectation while meditating, which removed all my doubts and resolved all my problems. I need not explain the experience, I need only mention that the experience was wonderful, ineffable! — I had a vision of Sri Krishna. There appeared before me a Radiant Image agleam with blue light! At once my whole being fell prostrate at his feet with tears flowing and went on repeating with both my folded hands outstretched — “Oh my Lord! my Beloved God!” In that utterance I felt such an unknown exquisitely sweet feeling of ‘oneness’ with him that I plunged into a sea of marvellous delight which took the form of this exclamation, “Oh, how intimate, how intimate! so intimate that in the whole world there can be none so much my own!” Nothing more can be spoken about that feeling of “oneness” and “ownness.” That feeling of “ownness” is composed of elements other than those that give us the feeling of any earthly “ownness.”

These elements have no existence here, only the Divine Himself comes so close that it is He who brings this feeling along with Him and infuses it in us. They are altogether of a different order, of a different world — filled with the supernal touch of some rare mood of Heaven! Overwhelming me with this inexpressible feeling he vanished conferring these benedictions — as if a standing Call for the awakening of a new consciousness to the coming Dawn of Sri Aurobindo’s future Supramental manifestation: — “Why this lassitude? I am united with Sri Aurobindo.” I wrote everything to Sri Aurobindo and asked him, “How shall I, so unfit a person, so poor a sadhika, take this experience? Have I understood it rightly?” He answered: “Who else can unite with me except Krishna?”

OM Anandamayi, Chaitanyamayi, Satyamayi Parame

OM Namō Bhagavate

OM Sri Aurobindo Sharanam Mama.