

# At the Feet of the Master

Reminiscences

## At the Feet of the Master Reminiscences



T. Kodandarama Rao

Cover photograph: disciples of Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in 1923.  
Kodandarama Rao is seated extreme right in the middle row.

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM PUDUCHERRY

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## Publisher's Note

T. Kodandarama Rao first met Sri Aurobindo in December 1920. A few months later he came to live near him in Pondicherry. He remained until 1924. After his return to Andhra Pradesh, he remained in contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and was present at many *darshans*.

More than forty years after his departure from Pondicherry, Kodandarama Rao published his reminiscences under the title *At the Feet of the Master*. This little book is one of the few records we have of life during the early 1920s in what became the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The first edition of *At the Feet of the Master* was published in 1969. The present, second, edition follows the 1969 text. Spelling and punctuation have been normalised to some extent. Some of Kodandarama Rao's references to people and places have been explained in editorial notes at the end of the volume.

## **Note to the 1969 Edition**

Though autobiographical writing is delicate, at the request of some friends, the author of this book has reminisced about the trials and tribulations of his early life and his impressions of Sri Aurobindo, the mighty sage. Says the great philosopher, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his "Fragments of a Confession": "No man's story of his own life can fail to be of interest to others, if it is written in sincerity. Even if the stage be small and the role of the participant a minor one, the interactions of chance and circumstance with human desires and ideals that shape the destinies of any individual are of some interest to his fellows." Viewed in this light, the book, I hope, will be of considerable value to aspirants of Truth in understanding the great Master, Sri Aurobindo.

I am thankful to Dr. M. V. Krishna Rao, a great scholar, critic, author and professor, for writing a Foreword to this book.

Anantapur

10-8-69

Parigi H. Rao

Journalist

## Foreword to the 1969 Edition

The Aurobindo Society Centre at Anantapur is to be congratulated upon the choice of the subject of this small monograph. Many had the opportunity of studying the genius, the modes of thought and the intellectual outlook of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and the Ashramites, but few could comprehend them fully and the task was not an easy one for Aurobindo was a poet and mystic and the experiences of a mystic are peculiarly his own and are almost incommunicable through the ordinary modes of speech to those who have not shared them.

The period that Sri Aurobindo, the mystic, spent in England was a period of orientation of outlook, and characteristics acquired in the course of his upbringing in England combined with inherited tendencies exercised a profound influence on him. One of his emotional sensitivities was deeply reflected by the rising tide of Nationalism which marked the dawn of the twentieth century. A high destiny was reserved for India, and it was she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul.

This conviction was the mainspring of his activities and the core of his thought in retirement into the serenity of solitude to discover the mystery of his being, when he formulated the idea, "In the unending revolutions of the world, as the Eternal turns mightily in its courses, the infinite energy which streams forth from the Eternal and sets the wheels to work looms up in the vision of man in various aspects and infinite forms. Each aspect creates and marks an age." He thus stressed the need for a reorientation of spiritual experience to relate it to the changing conditions evolved in the onward progress of mankind. The most vital value of the age is whether future progress in humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West or by a nobler pragmatism, guided, uplifted, and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge. Aurobindo's basic conception and teaching of Vedanta is modified by his abiding sense of the value of the individual and union with the Divine and does not involve the obliteration of the individual.

The Master fascinated Sri Kodandarama Rao at an early age and being of a restless spiritual nature tempered by occasional touches of family solicitude, he groped for years in search of spiritual values and at last found solace for some years in the Ashram at Pondicherry. Aurobindo was his chosen Master, because he was a poet and speculative thinker and his writings are the outpourings of a deep and full spirit and more systematic and comprehensive than that of any other Indian thinker and he approaches speculative problems from the point of view of a poet. Kodandarama Rao whom I know for some years is a man who possesses spiritual discernment and intellectual power with a tendency to stimulate reflection on assumptions that may have been taken for granted. His interest throughout is practical and for him discernment of truth is inseparable from finding the way of life that contributes to spiritual growth and brings satisfaction. To Aurobindo as to his disciples the work of the Master is important as a synthesis between the implications of much of the deepest spiritual experience of the East and the rationalism and its consequent humanism that have characterised much of the vital and effective thought and action of the Western world.

Sri Kodandarama Rao has done a distinctive service to the devotees of the Ashram by presenting to the public an autobiography of his own rich experience, the troubles and tribulations of his spirit, the spiritual tensions and gains which have marked the passage of years. This little booklet is a useful addition to the libraries and the shelf of every home in our country.

Bangalore,  
7-8-69

Dr. M. V. Krishna Rao, M.A; D. Litt.,  
F.R.A.S. (Lond.)  
*Retired Professor and Editor*  
“The Bramhavadin”

## A Flash of Lightning

Having lost a pious and devoted mother at the age of ten and a cultured father with a keen intellect at the age of thirteen, destiny threw me at the mercy of relatives. While undergoing mental worries, I turned to the Divine for succour then. At that time, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature became available to me through a brother-in-law of mine, who was the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Samaj, at Cuddapah, where I was studying in the local Municipal High School. The Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mutt, Swami Sharvananda, Nirmalananda, Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri (who was the Dt. Judge at Cuddapah then), one of the keen intellectuals at Madras and a great devotee, and others were visiting the Samaj now and then and delivering lectures on Vedanta and Hindu culture. There was also a Theosophical Society branch at Cuddapah, where leading Theosophists used to lecture on Theosophy. I used to attend some of these lectures and read some books also. I passed the S.S.L.C. (matriculation) examination in June 1917 and joined the Presidency College at Madras for further studies in July 1917.

After joining the College, I read intensely Swami Rama Tirtha's<sup>1</sup> works and I became eager to practise Yoga. Of a very shy disposition, I was not bold enough to approach the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Math at Madras, though I went there several times, to give me initiation into Yoga practices. Anyway, the ascetic spirit of Sankara and Rama Tirtha possessed me and I began experiments in Pranayama by myself, taking the practical hints given by Swami Vivekananda in his book on Raja Yoga. I was staying in the Victoria hostel where I could not command a single room for my practices and so I felt very uncomfortable.

My financial resources dried up at the end of two years of College study. The spirit of renunciation of the world seized me. Knowing my state of mind, my relatives contrived to bring about my marriage, which came about suddenly much against my wishes. My father-in-law persuaded me to continue my studies offering financial help. Relying upon God, I decided to continue my studies, though I did not take much interest in class lessons. I became other-worldly, so to say, not caring for food or dress and so I was ridiculed by my room-mates and friends when they saw my odd behaviour. I did not however care for their insults. The College lecturers too had an eye on me as I did not take down their notes or regularly attend the lectures.

1920 was a crucial year in my life. The Non-Cooperation Movement<sup>2</sup> was in full swing. Great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal<sup>3</sup>, and others were addressing mass meetings at Madras to revolt against the British, boycott schools and colleges and foreign goods,

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<sup>1</sup> *Swami Rama Tirtha*. Gossain Tirath Rama (1873-1906) took the name Swami Rama Tirtha when he became a *sannyasin*. Earlier he had been a professor of mathematics in Lahore. He spoke on Vedanta in India, Japan and the United States, and published *Practical Vedanta* and other books.

<sup>2</sup> *Non-Cooperation Movement*. Launched by Mahatma Gandhi in August 1920, the Non-Cooperation Movement was a phase of the Indian freedom struggle. Thousands of volunteers took part in a countrywide movement of non-violent non-cooperation with the British government and its institutions. Gandhi called the movement off in February 1922 after a violent incident in Bihar.

<sup>3</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal*. M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948) took over the leadership of the Indian national movement in 1920. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) and Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) were two important leaders during earlier phases of the movement. Tilak helped launch the Home Rule Movement in 1916. Note that he died just before the Non-Cooperation Movement started and thus did not address any Non-Cooperation meetings.

and win freedom for India. Dr. Besant, Arundale, Wadia<sup>4</sup> and other Theosophists also launched the Home Rule movement to get Dominion Status for India. There was great turmoil in the country, and the student population became excited by the fiery speeches of the leaders. The contagion spread to our college also, which was considered to be the premier Government college in the then Madras State, manned by English professors with a bureaucratic outlook. Though the students in our college had great sympathy for the freedom movement, yet very few responded to the boycott of college education. My friend and classmate Tirupati<sup>5</sup>, became prominent in the college by wearing khaddar and donning the Gandhi cap and created a sensation in the college. He stealthily took away my lace and silk clothes presented to me by my father-in-law, and made a bonfire of them, as they were of foreign cloth. I was happy when he told me about it after the event, as I was in an ascetic mood then.

At about this time, tossed between a desire to join the Non-Cooperation Movement, and a desire to renounce the world for spiritual practices, I happened to pursue the *Arya*, the immortal philosophical and cultural monthly journal edited by Sri Aurobindo, Paul and Mirra Richard<sup>6</sup>, on the table of our hostel library. The pages of the journal were not opened by anybody though I was seeing it on the table for days together. The matter contained in the journal was superb and I could not get the back volumes of the journal as it was newly subscribed. So I approached Sri R. S. Pantulu, an engineer, and got a few issues from him. After reading the *Arya*, I became attracted to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Pantulu told me some things about him, and explained some difficult things in the *Arya*. Pantulu was an ardent soul devoted to Sri Aurobindo even then, and after retirement from his profession, he settled down at Pondicherry, leading a dedicated life in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. College studies lost all attraction for me and the problem was whether to wade through the political currents, or dive deep into the spiritual waters.

It was about the last week of December 1920 and the College was closed for Christmas vacation. There was a heavy down-pour of rain in Madras. Suddenly, an idea flashed in my mind that I must go to Pondicherry and have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo, and take his advice as to my future course of action. My friend, Tirupati, who came to know about my trip, decided to join me, and so we took the night train to Pondicherry. Reaching Pondicherry in the morning, we went to the hotel Amma Nivas, in the Indian quarter, infested with mosquitoes, due to bad sanitation and open drain water flowing on the road sides. Pondicherry is noted for its parallel streets, and the French quarter abutting the sea was very neat, tidy and silent. We were told that Sri Aurobindo was residing at 41 Rue François Martin, at that time, and so we went in search of it, after our breakfast, at about 8 a.m.

Although we had no introduction to the great seer, we went straight to Sri Aurobindo's residence. The big outer gate was fortunately open and so we entered the house, but there was nobody in the

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<sup>4</sup> *Dr. Besant, Arundale, Wadia.* Annie Wood Besant (1847-1933) was an English writer, feminist, activist and Theosophist. In 1916 she became a leader of the Home Rule Movement in India. Her Theosophist colleagues George Sidney Arundale (1878-1945) and Bahman Pestonji Wadia (1881-1958) were also active in this movement and like Besant were briefly interned by the British authorities.

<sup>5</sup> *Tirupati.* V. Tirupati was a friend of T. Kodandarama Rao, like him hailing from Andhra Pradesh. Both men became members of the community that grew up around Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. Tirupati remained a member of the community until 1926, when Sri Aurobindo sent him back to Andhra Pradesh because he was beginning to lose his mental balance. A series of letters that Sri Aurobindo wrote to Tirupati at this time are published in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest.*

<sup>6</sup> *Paul and Mirra Richard.* Paul Richard (1874-1967) was a French lawyer and writer who met Sri Aurobindo in 1910. In 1914 he and his wife Mirra Richard (1878-1973) joined Sri Aurobindo in launching the philosophical review *Arya*. After spending the years of the First World War in France and Japan, the Richards returned to Pondicherry in April 1920. Paul left towards the end of the year. Mirra remained, becoming the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

verandah and there was silence pervading the whole house. Then, a servant appeared who led us to the Manager Sri Amrita's room. In response to our call, the genial good-looking Amrita<sup>7</sup> came out and asked us about the purpose of our visit. My friend told him that we wanted to have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo and seek his advice on political and spiritual matters. He said that it was not possible to see Sri Aurobindo.

We pleaded with Amrita, to no purpose. So, my spirits were utterly damped. We went back to the hotel, and I was in a dejected mood. Then my friend gave me solace saying that he would approach the political refugees residing at Pondicherry and ask for their help, to see the seer. He went about the town and returned in the afternoon with the news that the Mother and Paul Richard were residing at Pondicherry and that we could try to have Sri Aurobindo's darshan through them. Anyhow, before going to them, we thought of seeing Amrita once again. So, we repaired to Sri Aurobindo's residence again at about 5 p.m. Fortunately for us, the outer gate of the building was open and there was nobody in the verandah, as in the morning. We were loitering in the verandah for a while, when suddenly, an effulgent Being with a golden complexion, and luminous eyes, wearing only a dhoti came down from the upper storey walking majestically. In a couple of minutes, he was seen going up again, with his dishevelled hair flowing on his back, through the verandah, where we were standing. We could at once gather that it was Sri Aurobindo, and I made obeisance to him in my heart. We then approached Amrita once again and renewed our request to him in vain.

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<sup>7</sup> *Amrita*. This was the name given by Sri Aurobindo to Karlapakam Aravamudachari Iyengar (1895-1969), a young man from the Pondicherry area who became a close disciple of Sri Aurobindo. He was one of the original members of the Ashram and later its manager.

## In the Divine Presence

From the time I got a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo, I aspired to have his close darshan. How to get at him? My friend had made enquiries about the Mother's residence which was about 200 yards away from the Master's residence and we soon got there. It was about 6 p.m. As soon as we entered the building, the Mother was seen coming out of the house dressed in western style, on her way to Sri Aurobindo's house (so we were told later on). She was a serene personality with sweet transparent eyes and we saluted her and requested an interview. She showed us into the presence of Mr. Paul Richard and went away smiling.

Mr. Paul Richard was a tall well-built person, with a broad forehead, keen blue eyes. We told him about the purpose of our visit and I added that I was reading the *Arya* and his illuminating quotations and writings in the said journal under the caption "Eternal Wisdom" and that I was anxious to be enlightened on Yoga. He answered some of our questions and asked us to meditate with him for some time, which we did. We requested him to get us darshan of the Master, which he promised and asked us to see him next day evening. We took leave of him and went back to our hotel, and spent the night in the company of mosquitoes.

Sri Aurobindo was staying in one of the rooms on the first floor his building at the time. There were then about half a dozen persons with him. There was a rush of political visitors at the time, as the Non-Cooperation Movement was in full swing and everyone was anxious to have his darshan and get political wisdom from him. But he was leading a secluded life of the spirit and avoided seeing politicians generally, unless it was quite necessary in the interests of the country. He was seeing visitors in the morning between 9 and 10 a.m. every day. We called at Amrita's room at about 9.30 a.m. the next day and he said that we could see Sri Aurobindo for a few minutes. At the proper time we went upstairs.

Sri Aurobindo was seated behind an oblong table covered with a blue cloth on the verandah and was glancing through the morning newspapers. We stood before him and saluted him with folded hands and he made a sign asking us to sit in the chairs before him. An effulgent personality he was, radiating light from his golden body. With his luminous eyes, he looked deep into me and I felt a thrill passing through my being, and I became speechless. My friend asked some questions about Yoga and whether we should appear for the final B.A. degree examination, which was to come off in the next three months, or give up our studies and join the political fray, or take to Yoga. He advised us to appear for the examination remarking that the question of Yoga or politics could be finally decided afterwards. I asked whether Pranayama was quite necessary and whether could be practised without it. He replied in the affirmative and asked me to surrender everything to the Divine and call in the Higher Power to do the Sadhana. Several doubts I had disappeared on seeing him and so I could not further question him. After a short silence, he blessed us as we took leave of him. When departing, I prayed for permission to see him whenever I wanted, which he granted graciously.

In the evening, we went to Mr. Paul Richard to take leave of him at the appointed time. He was pleased to give us tea and made further enquiries of us and said that he would be visiting Madras shortly and would be at Adyar, the Theosophical headquarters, and wanted us to meet him there. We

then took leave of him and left for Madras the same night. I was feeling Sri Aurobindo's presence throughout the journey.

Sri Aurobindo was a dynamic force which could be felt in his presence, as he was radiating it all round and into those that could hold it. He sowed the seed of divinity in me and awakened the aspiring soul in me to go forward, more by his will, than words, in the manner of the great Rishis of old, who worked wonders through their silence and looks and will power.

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## Interval

In spite of the encomiums paid to Indian culture by Western savants and thinkers like Max Muller, Emerson, Annie Besant, Woodroffe, Havell and others, Indians had lost faith in their own religion, philosophy, poetry, music, painting, sculpture and other arts, sciences, and hoary institutions. They were blindly imitating Western manners and customs and following its ways of life and institutions. It was at this time that the Indian Renaissance movement started. The pioneers of this movement were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Tilak and Gandhi gave an impetus to this movement and worked for the political, social, economic, and spiritual regeneration of India.

Students of my generation in 1921 took to English education mostly to get jobs in State service, and had no serious views of life. Simple living and high thinking were at a discount. When Mahatma Gandhi came to our hostel in a loincloth, and on seeing the huge waste of food scattered in the dining halls, he advised us to be frugal and simple in our habits and tastes, many students laughed at him, not understanding the great soul. I read with great interest Sri Aurobindo's essays entitled "A Defence of Indian Culture" and advised my friends to study them and the Master's other works. But they had no inclination to study this literature as they considered it "serious", but wasted their time in wading through detective, sensational novels. After my first contact with Sri Aurobindo, I lost interest in my class books though the degree examination was nearing. With a great gusto, I studied Sri Aurobindo's essays in the *Arya* entitled "The Psychology of Social Development" ("The Human Cycle"), "The Future Poetry", etc., which helped me later on to successfully answer my examination papers also. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo whom I regarded as my Master from now onwards, about some of my spiritual experiences and sent my prose-poems also to him. I wrote a few essays on cultural subjects at this time, besides doing some sadhana.

In or about March 1921, Sri Paul Richard came to Madras and stayed in Adyar for some time. I visited him frequently and was much benefited by his conversations on philosophy and Yoga. He was eminently intellectual, and his admiration and devotion for the Master were profound. In his published books, "The Sons of Heaven" and "The Dawn over Asia", he predicted the resurgence of Asia, and hailed the Master as the Superman of the age, who was destined to bring New Light on Earth.

I appeared for the degree examination in April 1921 as per the Master's advice, but my friend after his return from Pondicherry joined the Non-Cooperation Movement, and later joined Lala Lajpat Rai's school of politics, and finally became a political prisoner. The summer vacation commenced after the examinations. I wanted to go and spend the vacation with the Master. But a friend of mine drew me to Pithapur to see a saint called Muthukrishna Paramahansa, who was alleged to possess miraculous occult powers. I thought he would be like the great Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and I was attracted by the appellation of "Paramahansa", being a novice in spiritual matters.

I stayed with the Paramahansa for about a month. Muthukrishna was an old wiry person, with a robust constitution, donning silks always, and was a good Ayurvedic physician. He seemed to be an adept in the practice of Pranayama exercises and my friend told me that he knew the science and art of alchemy. I did not receive much of spiritual instruction from him. But, he treated me kindly, and was giving me plenty of fine mangoes offered to him by the Maharajah of Pithapuram and his other disciples, as well as the sweet medicated lehayams prepared by him; and the herbal oils prepared by

him to cool the brain were at my disposal. The Paramahansa was not conversant with English, but knew only Tamil and Malayalam and a little of my mother tongue, Telugu. At this time I became interested in Telugu literature and came into touch with some Telugu poets and scholars, as the Maharajah was a patron of Telugu literature. The Paramahansa wanted me to continue the practice of pranayama, which I wanted to avoid, as it appeared to me artificial and difficult and had to be done with great care and guidance.

I thought of Pondicherry once again and went to Sri Aurobindo, for the second time in about the month of May 1921. I narrated to him the story of my stay at Pithapur and my impressions of the Paramahansa. I was put up in a hotel and I was allowed to be with him for the evening meditation along with the ten or twelve disciples that gathered round him at the time. The Mother was living then in one of the first floor rooms in the Master's house, along with the other disciples. She was then regarded as an elder co-disciple of the Master. None knew then about the mystic and occult powers possessed by the Mother, as she was generally reserved and very silent, and spoke little. After a fortnight's stay with the Master, I took leave of him and came to Madras and there learnt that I had passed my B.A. degree examination, long after the results were announced. I owe the result to the Master's blessing alone.

As I was not corresponding with my relatives, they gave me up for lost or thought I was leading a wayward life somewhere. When I suddenly went to see my relatives, it was a surprise to them, and they thought that I would seek some employment; and they advised me strongly to do so. When I told them that I would go to my village and lead a quiet life, they dissuaded me and my father-in-law offered to finance me for my law examination. I was wavering and did not know what to do, whether to go back to the Master, or study for a Law course. I wrote to my Ashram friend, Sri Satyendranath Varma<sup>8</sup> about my indecision, and he promptly wrote me affectionately to follow the inner call. The inner command was to go to the Master, but the external pulls were too strong and tempting and I told my people that I would pursue the Law course and took the amount of Rs. 200/- given to me by my father-in-law for paying the college fees etc., and started for Madras. After reaching Madras, I changed my mind and the inner command to go to the Master became resonant and clear. So, without joining the College of Law, I sped to my Master to practise Yoga. It was the beginning of July 1921. Sometime after reaching Pondicherry, I wrote to my father-in-law and other relatives that I was with the Master and that they need not be anxious about my whereabouts. It was of course a great shock to my wife who was only fifteen years old then and to her father and others.

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<sup>8</sup> *Sri Satyendranath Varma*. Satyendranath (generally shortened to Satyen) was the name given by Sri Aurobindo to Vindhyeshwari Prasad Varma (born 1892), a man from Bihar who joined the community forming around Sri Aurobindo in 1921. Five years later, he became an original member of the Ashram.

## The Journey Starts

When I went to stay with the Master for the third time he asked me to stay with him for a year. Had I not read in books about the wonderful powers exercised by great saints and Yogis over their disciples by according to them mysterious experiences and powers in a short time? So, I believed innocently that a year's stay with a mighty Yogi like Sri Aurobindo, the Divine Master, would bring all blessings and powers to me and change me completely. Little did I know then about the magnitude and complexities of the Integral Yoga propounded and practised by Sri Aurobindo.

The Divine Master was ready to impart his experiences and pour his light and power into the disciple. But should not the disciple's "adhar", receptacle, be pure and ready and able to hold the divine contents? An unbaked vessel would only break and spill the divine nectar.

Sri Aurobindo did not impart instructions or give initiation through a mantra or a set code of spiritual practices, such as doing japa or pranayama or bhajan, or other methods of concentration or meditation. No rules were laid to be followed, and no philosophy or religion to be accepted or studied. There was therefore full freedom for a sadhaka to pursue any method or all methods congenial to his or her nature. The Divine Master's experiences in the shape of philosophy were to be found in his immortal writings in the *Arya* for our theoretical and practical guidance. His divine personality was before the sadhaka like a full-blown lotus, radiating peace, power, light and bliss to draw from. The only practical rule of sadhana was to surrender one's entire being to the Divine and invoke the Divine Shakti to purify and lighten up the being and transform the same from top to toe by ardent and sincere aspiration, rejecting all lower suggestions. "All Life is Yoga," declared the Master. These are very simple rules, indeed; but when we enter the path, all the difficulties of the nature appear, and the Divine cows representing Light, have to be rescued from the tenebrous caverns in us where they are imprisoned, and thereafter we must yoke the Divine horses representing Power to our chariot, win the battle against the Dasyus, representing evil forces, and drink the ambrosial Soma juice after great labour and victory, at the completion of the sacrifice (Yoga-Yajna).

The Sadhana chalked out by Sri Aurobindo consists of an ascent to the highest plane of consciousness and a descent from there with the superconscient Light, power and Ananda, to the conscient, subconscient and inconscient lower levels of mind, life and body, to effect a change of the lower being. It is a very hard endeavour and only rare souls can achieve the complete victory of the supramentalisation of the whole being as envisaged by the Divine Master. The plan was there before me and it had to be worked out patiently in all its details. The task seemed to be tremendous when I thought of it carefully. But, having made a choice, there was no going back. I decided to give it a trial.

I was at first put up in the same hotel which accommodated me when I first visited Pondicherry. The atmosphere there was not congenial for sadhana. So, I was spending my time outside the hotel, for a long time on the pier at the sea in the mornings and evenings, and going to the hotel only for meals. I did not mind the mosquito trouble and the dirty smell emanating from the drains, during night-time at the hotel. I had no funds to rent a room and so I got on leading a Puritan life; when the Master was having only a dhoti on, and leading a frugal life, why should I not follow his august example? I felt that he was guiding my steps. Looking back, I see that what I wanted earnestly, I got. I wanted the necessary books and I got them. I wanted to meet the Guru and I met him miraculously. And so why should I complain? With such an attitude, I felt happy.

Days passed. I made acquaintance with a Tamil friend, who volunteered to give me a room in an old unoccupied house of his. It was welcome and so I shifted to that room, continuing hotel meals, which I got for Rs. 10/- a month. After a couple of months, I started cooking food, taking but one meal a day at about noon time. I had two pairs of dhoties to see me through and I never used the two shirts which I had at the time. An ordinary mat served as my bed. My sadhana at this time consisted mostly of long walks on the beach and on the seashore pier and meditation in my room. Sri Aurobindo was meditating while walking in his room and verandah for more than six hours a day, and we disciples began to follow his example.

At this time and later on also, I used to see a flood of visitors visiting the house of the Master praying for his darshan, but many were not given the chance, as they were mostly politicians. Sri Aurobindo saw only genuine aspirants for Yoga, and politics was excluded from his abode. My class-mate and friend, Sri P. V. Krishnarao from Kakinada, after taking his B.A. degree came to see the Master and wanted to stay with me and I obliged him. Later on, one Tamilian, Sri P. S. Ramachandran, the son of a Tanjore lawyer who had discontinued his B.A. Hons. studies, saw the Master and afterwards came to stay with me. His father came to snatch away Ramachandran, but the latter would not go and I pacified the lawyer telling him that his son was not compelled to remain with Sri Aurobindo, and that he would remain for some time with the Master and then join him. But the father was not satisfied and he began to criticise the Master, saying that he was keeping his son against parental authority. His criticism was unfounded and he had to go away. Then came Krishnarao's widowed mother and pleaded with me to dissuade her son from staying with the Master, as she was helpless and poor and wanted her son to go with her and earn a living and marry. Krishnarao would not go and decided to remain for a year. At last we induced her to go away, holding out hopes of her son's return home after a year. Myself, Krishnarao and Ramachandran lived together and cooked our food by turns in the old house of our Tamil friend for some time.

By now, I became sufficiently acquainted with Sri Vindhyeshwari Prasad Varma, afterwards known as Satyendranath Varma of Bihar, who was residing in one of the downstairs rooms of the Master's house, 41 Rue François Martin. So, I spent long hours with him in studies and meditation. He was straightforward and warmhearted, though a little quick tempered. Possessed of a keen intellect, he was a linguist and an ardent soul with critical faculties. He offered to accommodate me in his room and so I shifted to his room, and from then I began to live under the direct shadow of the Guru. My friends shifted to another small house rented by some Bengali visitors, as a portion of it was vacant. Later on, this house was rented by Sri Aurobindo, and was used by guests who visited him now and then. As cooking meals became inconvenient to us, it was arranged that we could take meals in the rented house along with others there after paying Rs. 10/- each per month. As Krishnarao could not pay even this, he was a free boarder. As I had some money still out of the amount given to me by my father-in-law, I consented to pay Rs. 10/- per month. The Master had given me free lodgings.

In those days, we used to sit around the Master in chairs during the evening meditation time which lasted for about half an hour from 4.30 p.m. after initial talks on varied topics and things and events, from 4 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. The disciples and visitors who were allowed for the talks discussed everything on all kinds of subjects and indulged in frank criticism and Sri Aurobindo freely cracked jokes with a hearty laugh. He was jubilant when he chatted with persons round him, having a delightful smoke which lasted till the commencement of meditation. Smoking was not considered to be offensive nor an obstacle to Yogic practices, as it was a physical habit. I was the only non-smoker in the group of disciples. As some persons contracted this habit after coming there and seeing the Master smoke, he later on gave it up to the dismay of all who were victims to it. It is easy to get into a habit

but-difficult to give it up and it is impertinent to imitate great souls who could give up anything at will. So, my friends who took to smoking left off the habit after some difficulty.

With regard to food also, no definite rules were laid down. Bengalis were generally fish-eaters, and nonvegetarians. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian food was served to suit the tastes of Bengalis, Tamilians and Andhras at that time. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother insisted on taking food that nourishes the body, observing moderation, and sattwic food was preferred. But there was a strong criticism regarding food and smoking in the Ashram, and so after the Ashram was regularised, cosmopolitan vegetarian food became the rule and smoking was completely banned, in the interests of all. Sri Aurobindo was tasting all kinds of food taking the rasa in it with equanimity (*samata*). For those who are engrossed in spiritual sadhana, the attachment to the palate becomes unimportant.

At this time, in the Master's house, there were in the downstairs rooms, Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, Amrita, V. P. Varma, Sureshchandra Chakravarty (Moni) and Bijoy Kumar Nag<sup>9</sup>. In the first floor rooms were the Mother and Miss Hodgson<sup>10</sup> (Datta), an English lady. Miss Hodgson was supervising the kitchen and serving tea in the morning and evening to the inmates. Sri Durgadas<sup>11</sup>, a Bengali devotee was coming from Bengal for short stays. There was no regular Ashram at the time and everyone was free to do what he liked. Though there were no outer restraints, everybody felt the Master's presence and force working in him and guiding them all whatever their outer activities. The Master insisted on the observance of Brahmacharya very strictly.

We used to spend our time in meditation in our rooms, and reading books on literature, philosophy and art and various journals, and contributing articles to journals. Nolini was a good football player and he used to go with Moni and Bijoy to play the game. I was going out for walks with Varma or other friends and sometimes alone. Mother was having meditation separately with Sri Aurobindo and it was said that she used to go into trance for long hours. Time did not hang heavy upon me and I felt as if transported into a higher world, always feeling happy, with an ever-present inner delight. I forgot completely everything about my friends and relatives in the outer world, and everything in the world appeared as play. For some months, I felt strongly about the illusory nature of the world, where human beings, animals and plants seemed to act like automatons moved by a Mysterious Power, and Sankara's dictum that the world is an illusion and Brahman alone is true (*brahma satyam, jaganmithya*) seemed to be valid. The soul felt as if it was unaffected by what passed on in the world and by the dualities that affected living creatures and landed them in pain and sorrow and death. I wished to be in this happy state for ever and I thought that I had reached the goal. But what an illusion!

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<sup>9</sup> *Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta... Sureshchandra Chakravarty ... Bijoy Kumar Nag.* These three men, all from Bengal, formed the nucleus of the community that formed around Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry after 1910. Nolini Kanta Gupta (1889-1984) and Bijoy Nag (1892-1935) were members of the revolutionary group led by Sri Aurobindo's brother Barindra Kumar (see below). Both were acquitted of the charges brought against them in the Alipore Bomb Trial (1908-1909). Sureshchandra Chakravarty (1891-1951), generally known as Moni, met Sri Aurobindo in 1909. When Sri Aurobindo decided to go to Pondicherry in February 1910, Moni went ahead to make contact with local revolutionaries, while Bijoy travelled with Sri Aurobindo on the French steamer *Dupleix*. Nolini joined them in October 1910. All three became original members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

<sup>10</sup> *Miss Hodgson.* Dorothy Mary Hodgson (1894 -1949) was a friend and companion of Mirra Richard (the Mother), who lived with her and Paul Richard in Japan, and in 1920 came with them to Pondicherry. She was an original member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

<sup>11</sup> *Sri Durgadas.* Durgadas Shett (1895-1958), a native of Chandernagore, was a frequent visitor to the Pondicherry community during the twenties and early thirties.

Sri Barindra Kumar Ghose, the younger brother of Sri Aurobindo, was a great revolutionary who was sentenced to transportation for life in the Alipore Bomb case in 1908 along with others and he went to serve his sentence in the Andamans. After the termination of the First World War, as a result of the royal amnesty, he was released in 1919 along with Upendranath Banerji, Hrishikesh Kanjilal<sup>12</sup> and others. So these three persons came to stay with Sri Aurobindo in 1921. Barindra lived in one of the ground floor rooms in the Master's house and Upen and Hrishikesh lived in the rented guest house. Both Barindra and Upendra were great humorists, talented journalists and story writers like Moni. Barindra was a tall person, fair in complexion, with a broad forehead and big moustache, and a little bent, evidently as a result of the physical and mental troubles he underwent in the stormy revolutionary days and after. He was calm in demeanour and did not appear to be the fiery revolutionary he was depicted to be. He and Upendra did not like the Gandhian methods of approach to Swaraj, and wanted Sri Aurobindo to come out and lead the country once again to attain freedom. After Tilak's death, Mahatma Gandhi sent his son Devadas Gandhi requesting Sri Aurobindo to lead the country, but the request was refused. Sri Aurobindo told Devadas and others that "the freedom of India is as sure as the rising of the sun tomorrow" and his future work would be on a different spiritual foundation and level.

Barindra was an active worker and so he wanted to organise spiritual centres like the "Prabartak Sangha" that was started by Motilal Roy<sup>13</sup> in Chandernagore. But the Prabartak Sangha though originally inspired by the Master strayed away from his ideals and was getting into troubled waters. Sri Aurobindo was of the view that the Deva Sanghas, divine centres, could not function without proper men and the men must first be built up and so he was not in a hurry about the work.

Barindra was of a sociable temper and used to talk to me and take me along with him for his morning walks, though I was by nature reserved. Nolini was reserved by temperament, but a deep thinker and scholar he was. Moni and Bijoy were good conversationalists, the latter being often boisterous also. Amrita was a devout soul who had utterly dedicated himself to the Master's work. Sri Aurobindo's way of knowing persons was done on an inner sign, and knowledge by identity was the rare method adopted by him to know everything. He never bothered himself to ask persons about their antecedents, parentage, qualifications and other such things. He saw the persons or their photos and knew everything about them. He could also will and get knowledge of persons and things and happenings. Such was the way of knowledge adopted by the seers of old. I respected the persons in the Master's house as they were all elders to me in age and experience and were in touch with the Guru for a very long time.

Barindra was narrating to me about the terrible ordeals he and others underwent during the revolutionary days in our morning walks. We used to gather flowers and Barindra kept them in a

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<sup>12</sup> *Sri Barindra Kumar Ghose... Upendranath Banerji, Hrishikesh Kanjilal.* Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880-1959) was Sri Aurobindo's younger brother. He became the head of a revolutionary group inspired by Sri Aurobindo that took part in several assassination attempts between 1906 and 1908. Arrested in 1908, Barin was sentenced to death the next year. This sentence was later changed to life-imprisonment in the Andamans. Released in 1920 as part of the post-war amnesty, Barin came to Pondicherry and six years later became one of the original members of the Ashram. Upendranath Banerji (1879-1950) and Hrishikesh Kanjilal (born 1879) were members of Barin's revolutionary group. Convicted in the Alipore case, they spent ten years in the Andamans. After their release, they visited Barin and Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry on several occasions.

<sup>13</sup> *Motilal Roy.* A Chandernagore native, Motilal Roy (1882-1959) met Sri Aurobindo when the latter took refuge in the French enclave in February 1910. The two stayed in touch after Sri Aurobindo went to Pondicherry. Motilal was the founder and head of the Prabartak Sangha, a social service group. Sri Aurobindo supported the activities of the Sangha till around 1922, when he broke off contact with Motilal.

flower vase on the Master's table. In those days the disciples did not observe the formality of saluting the Master or making pranams to him daily at the meditation time or in the mornings when they happened to see him. They sat in the chairs before the Master and even smoked. But Sri Aurobindo never took exception to this or any other failings and treated everyone as an equal and enjoyed the company of all kinds of persons. Unfortunately, we were blissfully ignorant of the heights and depths and width of his vast spiritual consciousness which could discern everything so calmly and coolly and remained unaffected like the vast unmoving ocean. Arjuna could not understand the might of the Avatar, till Sri Krishna showed his cosmic being to him in divine vision and so were we unable to comprehend the ways of the Master. He once remarked that we were like cats in his view. One can understand the state of supramental consciousness in which he was stationed, when he said so.

Upendranath Banerji had the highest regard for the Master, but he was a rationalist and political revolutionary and an unbeliever in supernatural or superconscious phenomena. He often joked and made fun of Supermind and its descent and was sceptical about the dawn of the Era as visioned by the Master. When once I told him of the visions seen by me with eyes open and closed, he pooh-poohed me and since then I ceased to talk to him about them. He attended the evening sittings before the Master only to talk about politics and somehow convert Sri Aurobindo to his views and lead him into the political arena. But the Master was too astute and elusive a personality to be hoodwinked by such persons. All the same, the Master had a soft corner in his heart for everyone, and condescended to come down to our level and be compassionate to all that came into contact with him. Such was his magnanimity.

As if to convince Upendranath and others of his way of thinking, there occurred in the Master's house the occult phenomena of stone-throwing, in the mid-winter of 1921, to which I and others living at the time in Sri Aurobindo's house were direct witnesses. Stones began to fall daily at the fall of dusk and continued for some days with increased violence. The duration and size of stones increased from day to day. The stones covered with moss began to fall in the verandah before our room, in the kitchen and everywhere, downstairs in the closed room where I and V. P. Varma were put up. The stones fell on our table also. The C.I.D. of Police in those days were watching the movements of the inmates and keeping watch over the Master's house as the British feared the Master though he had left off politics. The French police were sent for and along with them some C.I.D. also came and saw the occurrence and when one of the constables "got a stone whizzing unaccountably between his two legs," the police went away saying that it was not a man-made affair. The attack was mostly before and in Bijoy's room where the servant-boy was sheltered and it seemed that the boy was the medium and centre of attack. The servant, who was a semi-idiot boy, got hurt by the stone attacks. And Sri Aurobindo was called by Bijoy to his room. In the Master's presence, another stone fell before the boy who was in the room. Mother was a great occultist and she studied the process along with the Master and they concluded that it was black magic, and ordered the removal of the boy to the rented house where Hrishikesh and others were staying. Then the whole phenomenon stopped when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hurled back the force on the black magician. When the dismissed cook Vittal's wife came and prayed for the Master's mercy, as her husband was in a dangerous condition, on account of his black magic performance, Sri Aurobindo forgave him, and the cook recovered after that, his life spared by the generosity of the Master.

I had no doubts about such phenomena as such things were practised by black magic experts in our Andhra districts in villages due to local feuds in order to destroy each other. I had also read about such phenomena in Tantrik works and in the books of Sir John Woodroffe. My belief in these phenomena was confirmed when I witnessed this occurrence. After this event, all of us began to

develop greater faith in the Divine and the sadhana became more intense. I was eager to advance quickly and thought that by fasting I could remove some of the defects in my nature and move rapidly. So, I undertook a fast without even taking the advice of the Master. After I fasted for seven days, Barindra came and asked me to stop the fast, as the Master wanted me to break it, saying that it was unnecessary and unhelpful in Integral Yoga. I obeyed the direction of the Guru, Barindra on the eighth morning served bread and tea to me kindly and I thanked him and gave up the fast. Later on, when I met the Master, he told me that moderation in food and sleep were essential in Yoga, and vital impulses have to be transformed by change of consciousness and fasting may not be helpful to cure such defects.

My friend Krishnarao, a philosophy graduate, was suffering from bronchitis when he first came to Pondicherry. On account of the Master's grace, he got well and he was managing the house where he was living with Upendranath and others. But as he had no grit, the servants were misbehaving and so he wanted to be relieved of his work of management. So, V. P. Varma took charge of the management and shifted to the other house. And I also followed him. I was given a separate apartment in the new house.

After the expiry of a year, I asked the Master whether it was necessary for me to stay longer with him, as I felt that I had gained a settled poise by his grace. He smiled and asked me to stay for another year. I bowed to him in reverential silence and decided to stay on for another year.

## 5

### Sadhana

Sri Aurobindo was a magnetic dynamo, radiating his light and force to the sadhakas who sat round him, if they were only calm and receptive. Every evening, as I sat before him, I felt the force and light coming from him, with redoubled vigour and energy and it was always on the increase. I felt as if I was being rewound every evening at the meditation time, the given force to last till the next evening, to be reinforced again then with fresh force and light. The force was illimitable and I felt that the Master was an inexhaustible storehouse of Divine Force and Light. The light that he gave us lightened up the corners of the whole being and began to show the dark spots and tendencies and defects to be worked upon by the Force for change. According to one's capacity, everyone received the divine blessings from the Master. Others also used to have similar experiences.

As the second year commenced, I wrote to my father-in-law, Sri N. Lakshminarayana Rao, that I wished to stay for another year and that he should console my wife and keep her cool-hearted. He was an orthodox Brahmin lawyer and emotional by nature. Induced by his friend and relations, he came to me along with my elder brother-in-law, Sri S. Narasimha Rao, to take me away from the Master. He saw me in heterodox surroundings, but he was blind to the radiating Light that was the Master. My efforts to convince him that *sannyasa* was not our ideal, and that Life Divine was the goal of our endeavour, were of no avail. My sparse living with bare clothing were misunderstood. The gist of the following aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo was explained to him: —

“Vivekananda, exalting Sannyasa, has said that in all Indian history, there is only one Janaka. Not so, for Janaka is not the name of a single individual, but a dynasty of self-ruling kings and the triumph-cry of an ideal.

“In all the lakhs of ochre-clad Sannyasins, how many are perfect? It is the few attainments and the many approximations that justify an ideal.

“There have been hundreds of perfect Sannyasins, because Sannyasa has been widely preached and numerously practised; let it be the same with the ideal freedom and we shall have hundreds of Janakas.

“Sannyasa has a formal garb and outer tokens; therefore men think they can easily recognise it; but the freedom of a Janaka does not proclaim itself and it wears the garb of the world; to its presence even Narada was blinded.

“Hard is it to be in the world, free, yet living the life of ordinary men; but because it is hard, therefore it must be attempted and accomplished.”<sup>14</sup>

Selfishness stood in the way of my father-in-law in understanding the truth of the above inspiring gems. He wanted to take me away somehow and wrote a strong letter accusing the Master for keeping me with him, and tried to preach Dharma to the Guru. I did not like to give the letter to the Master, but I was pressed to do so. I dared not give such a letter to the Guru, but sent it through my friend V. P. Varma. This letter spoiled the chances of an interview with the Master, sought for by my father-in-law and brother-in-law. There was no reply to the letter which must have gone into the wastepaper basket. Sick at heart, my relatives retraced their steps to their native places after finding that I was adamant

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<sup>14</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997), p. 435.

in my resolve to stay on with the Master. After the departure of my relatives, Sri Aurobindo asked me after evening meditation whether they had gone and I told him so. For the time being, the disturbance was removed.

After going home, my father-in-law became desperately sick with typhoid fever and became bed-ridden and was on the point of death. My wife wrote pitiable letters about her miserable life and how she was ill-treated by kith and kin and others for being the cause of her father's mental sickness. I prayed to the Master to spare his life and I learnt afterwards that my father-in-law turned the corner and was recovering from a relapse. After a couple of months, I got a letter from my wife that she would commit suicide if I did not go to her and pacify her father and other kith and kin. Seeing this alarming letter, even without taking the Master's permission I left Pondicherry to see my wife.

Till 1937 when the first Congress ministry was ushered in Madras, Sri Aurobindo's house was watched by the C.I.D. police and whoever came to see him was visited with troubles by the French and British police. So much so, Government servants were afraid of visiting the Ashram. Such was the fear of the British, even though Sri Aurobindo had left off politics long ago! He was considered by the British as the uncompromising enemy of the British Empire, even in his retirement. When I left Pondicherry for Madras, a secret policeman was dogging my footsteps and pointing me out to his relieving brother policeman at Railway junctions, and this continued till I reached Gooty, my destination, which is next to Guntakal, an important railway junction between Madras and Raichur, on the Bombay line. After I reached the place, the local Inspector of Police came to enquire with my father-in-law as to when I would leave the place and about my future plans etc. My people became alarmed at these enquiries. But I told them not to worry about the police, as I did not commit any political offence.

My coming was hailed by all persons and many gathered to see whether I was donning an ochre robe with a shaven head or growing matted hair and some heckled me with strange inquisitive questions about the Guru, his dress and aims and such things. I gave satisfactory answers. I was asked to seek some profession and live somewhere with my wife or take her along with me. I could not do either and told my people to wait for another year when I would oblige them with their wishes. I somehow pacified my wife and started to go after a couple of days' stay. But, I was threatened with serious consequences if I went, by official and non-official friends of my father-in-law, who was an influential and leading lawyer in the place. I was irresistible and I started for Cuddapah, to see my sisters and brother-in-law. They were glad that I arrived at last, but felt sorry when I told them about my intended departure, the next day, to Pondicherry. The police, as usual dogged my steps till I reached the Master. When I left Pondicherry, my fellow-sadhakas told the Master that I had gone for ever, but the Master seemed to have remarked that I would be back soon. Was it not his Grace that landed me safe at his feet once again!

I now pursued the Yoga wholeheartedly, as there was no trouble from the hostile forces for the time being. The Master now showered on me some of the experiences of the Gita and the Veda. I was constantly seeing visions of Vedic sacrifice, and the truths embodied in the hymns of Rig Veda. The interpretations of the Veda given by the Master in his *Secret of the Veda* dawned on me in their full light and I saw how the commentators before Sri Aurobindo ignored the psychological aspect, and gave agricultural, ritualistic and astronomical interpretations of the Rig Vedic texts. Similarly, the cosmic vision of the Divine in the eleventh chapter of the Gita was not an imaginary symbol, but an actual fact that could be visualised, felt in oneself and seen in deep vision. I had intensely prayed to the Divine Master to reveal to me the Viswarupa, the great cosmic spirit, and it was granted to me. At the

end of this experience, I saw Sri Aurobindo in his effulgence and blazing glory, in my vision, and I felt that he was a divine incarnation. When I narrated these experiences, he smiled and said that he had them long ago. After this, visions galore I used to have of all kinds of worlds and planes, in my meditation, as if in an endless cinema show. I felt as if possessing a cosmic body with an infinite consciousness and I was full of peace and Ananda.

It will not be out of place to state here a few more of my experiences I was having at the time. The Divine Shakti began to descend with greater force into the head centres and below and an arrangement of molecular structure began to take place in the brain and the navel region. A kind of electric drilling was taking place in the head and there was felt the breaking of cells and loosening of knots in the whole being. Channels for the flow of Light and Force were being hewed out and what seemed to be metaphorical phrases when the Master wrote about the pouring of light and force, were becoming concrete experiences. As I sat before the Master for meditation, the whole being used to become numb as his Force began to work in me and fill my nerves with light and force. I felt as if he was transmitting his divine Force and Light into me. In his presence, the Force was felt intensely and it began to work in the body day and night and was omnipresent. A supramental being is one in whose presence “we feel ourselves in presence of a light of consciousness, a potency, a sea of energy, can distinguish and describe its free waves of action and quality, but not fix itself; and yet there is an impression of personality, the presence of a powerful being, a strong, high or beautiful recognisable Someone, a Person, not a limited creature of Nature but a Self or Soul, a Purusha,” as per the description of a gnostic individual, given by the Master in his magnum opus, *Life Divine*.<sup>15</sup> The Master had become concretely that which he was describing above. We felt like pygmies in his divine presence. Full of oceanic energy, and not content with the heights he had reached, when questioned whether he had reached Supermind, he would say, “Not the highest level of Supermind.” The ordinary mind cannot conceive of the magnitude and nature of supramental status and consciousness, which had become his normal state then and he said that he had to come down to act on us, who were groping in darkness and half-light in the lower levels of consciousness. In one of his letters he says, “Even the little I have written, is not understood by the intellectuals.”

The Mother has said thus about the Master: “Sri Aurobindo incarnated in a human body the supramental consciousness and has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the method of following it so as to arrive at the goal, but has also by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us with the proof that the thing can be done and the time is now to do it.”<sup>16</sup>

What inspiring truths Sri Aurobindo has revealed and what wonderful experiments in the realms of the Spirit he has made, like the Scientists in the external fields of Nature, posterity will know by degrees. He was far in advance of his times. Here are a few words of his exhortation culled from his book, *The Secret of the Veda*: “To enter into the very heart of the mystic doctrine, we must ourselves have trod the ancient paths and renewed the lost discipline, the forgotten experience. And which of us can hope to do that with any depth or living power? Who in this Age of Iron, shall have the strength to recover the light of the Forefathers or soar above the two enclosing firmaments of mind and body into the luminous empyrean of the infinite Truth? The Rishis sought to conceal their knowledge from the unfit, believing perhaps that the corruption of the best might lead to the worst and fearing to give the potent wine of the Soma to the child and the weakling. But whether their spirits shall move among us

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<sup>15</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 995.

<sup>16</sup> The Mother, *Words of the Mother* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980), p. 21.

looking for the rare Aryan soul in a mortality that is content to leave the radiant herds of the Sun for ever imprisoned in the darkling cave of the Lords of the sense-life or whether they await in their luminous world the hour when the Maruts shall again drive abroad and the Hound of Heaven shall once again speed down to us from beyond the rivers of Paradise and the seals of the heavenly waters shall be broken and the caverns shall be rent and the immortalising wine shall be pressed out in the body of man by the electric thunderstones, their secret remains safe to them. Small is the chance that in an age which blinds our eyes with the transient glories of the outward life and deafens our ears with the victorious trumpets of a material and mechanical knowledge many shall cast more than the eye of the intellectual and imaginative curiosity on the passwords of their ancient discipline or seek to penetrate into the heart of their radiant mysteries. The secret of the Veda, even when it has been unveiled, remains still a secret.”<sup>17</sup>

Without a solid settled peace and considerable purification of the being, change of nature cannot take place. When one is being raised to the heights, one feels quite happy and there is a tendency to remain merged in the higher consciousness always. But Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is not to be in a state of “Samadhi” always. When the churning of the Nature starts, all the dormant troubles arise, the weak spots are shown and the ugly tendencies sprout up and all the adverse forces which want to prolong their reign resist, and a grim battle starts. Alternations of bright and dark periods intervene, and pessimism and despondency take hold of the sadhaka. It is then that one sees that the path of Yoga is like the “edge of a razor” fraught with dangers and difficulties. It is then that the Master’s guidance, his soothing words of hope and his healing grace will become invaluable. This phase of sadhana began for me.

With the commencement of the French Legislative Assembly, some members came from Chandernagore and some stayed with the Master. It was a festive time for us then in the sense that they would bring with them delicious sweets including the famous Bengali “sandeshes”, and we would have good feasts with them and lively talks about the happenings in Bengal and other places. The Master’s sister, Srimati Sarojini Devi, Motilal Roy, an ardent disciple from Chandernagore and his wife and others came in 1922, and stayed for sometime and went away. Sarojini was like Sri Aurobindo in her physical features, and was fair, sweet-tempered and cool-headed. S. Duraiswami Aiyar, an eminent advocate of Madras was coming now and then and participating in the evening talks and meditation whenever he came. He was a lovable, pure and devoted soul, known to the Master from his Surat Congress days, and greatly attached to Sri Aurobindo.

In 1922, Sri Aurobindo left his residence, 41 Rue François Martin, and shifted to another house close by, 9 Rue de la Marine. The former residence henceforth came to be known as the “Guest House”. The Mother, Datta, Barindra, Nolini, Amrita, Bijoy, Moni and Satyen removed themselves with the Master to the new residence. I remained behind in the “Guest House” in one of the rooms. Unlike the old house, the new house had a narrow verandah, where we used to gather as usual in the evenings from 4 to 5.30 p.m. Guests were usually lodged in the “Guest House”.

During this period, I was faced with a big problem. My father-in-law wanted to bring my wife and leave her with me. I did not know what to do. I had no money to keep her separately with me. There were no woman sadhakas in the Ashram then, besides Mother and Datta, and the Master had no funds to feed me and my wife at that time. My father-in-law wrote again saying that he would finance me

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<sup>17</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1998), pp. 368-69.

and wanted me to have my wife with me. I put this matter to the Master who consented to the proposal and asked me to live separately. So, my father-in-law came with his daughter and sister-in-law, rented a house in the Indian quarter and went away. For about two months I did not stay with my wife and [her father's] sister-in-law, but was messing and residing in the Master's Guest House. At the end of two months, my mother-in-law's sister left Pondicherry leaving my wife alone. So, I had to go and live with her. As the house was far off from the Ashram, I rented another small house very near the Ashram for Rs. 10/- a month and began to live in that house with my wife. I tried to pull on with her in spite of economic difficulties. She began to learn English and to practise Yoga. For six months, Sri Aurobindo did not see her. But, I was telling him about her progress in sadhana now and then. After six months, she was permitted to have darshan of the Master. Thereafter she was allowed to see him once a week. She began to progress rapidly after she touched the Master's feet, and got His blessings.

In the beginning of January 1923, Purani, Champaklal, Pujalal and Punamchand<sup>18</sup> from Gujarat came and began to stay in the Guest House. Kanai Lai Ganguly<sup>19</sup>, also came about this time from Bengal. In April 1923 or so, W. W. Pearson<sup>20</sup> came from Santiniketan and saw the Master. On 5th June 1923, C. R. Das<sup>21</sup> had an interview with the Master, and we learnt that there was a talk about the Swarajya party which was started by him.

Motilal Nehru<sup>22</sup> joined this party and in Andhra Pradesh, Prakasam<sup>23</sup> started the daily paper, "Swarajya" and supported this party, which advocated Council-entry, as opposed to Gandhi's policy of boycott of Legislative councils, in his political programme.

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<sup>18</sup> *Purani, Champaklal, Pujalal and Punamchand.* These four men, all from Gujarat, were early visitors to the Pondicherry community and original members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Ambalal Balkrishna Purani (1894-1965) visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in 1918 and 1921 and joined the community in 1923. Ghampaklal Ghhotolal Purani (1903-1992) first visited in 1921 and came to stay in 1923. Punjalal Ranchhoddas Dalvadi (1901-1985), generally known as Pujalal, visited in 1923, 1924 and 1925 and settled down in 1926. Punamchand Mohanlal Shah (born 1898) came first in 1919, again in 1920 and 1921, and stayed for most of the eight years between 1923 and 1930.

<sup>19</sup> *Kanai Lai Ganguly.* A native of Howrah, Bengal, Kanai Lai Ganguly (1901-1973) joined the community in Pondicherry in 1923, and became an original member of the Ashram three years later.

<sup>20</sup> *W. W. Pearson.* William Winstanley Pearson (1881-1924) was a friend of Rabindranath Tagore and helped to translate some of the poet's works into English.

<sup>21</sup> *C. R. Das.* Chitta Ranjan Das (1870-1925) was an Indian lawyer and politician. He became famous after securing Sri Aurobindo's acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Trial in 1909. Entering politics during the Non-Cooperation Movement, he left the Indian National Congress in 1923 and founded the Swarajya Party along with Motilal Nehru.

<sup>22</sup> *Motilal Nehru.* A lawyer and politician, Motilal Nehru (1861-1931) was co-founder, with C. R. Das, of the Swarajya Party. He was the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister.

<sup>23</sup> *Prakasam.* Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu (1872-1957) was a lawyer, editor and politician from Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. During the Non-Cooperation Movement he gave up his law practice and launched the newspaper *Swarajya*, which was published simultaneously in English, Telugu and Tamil. Prakasam, widely known as Andhra Kesari, became the first Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in 1953.

## 6

### The Third Year

Though I was living in a separate house from the Master with my wife, Srimati Pullamma, we were considered as members of the Ashram. In 1923, there were only about a dozen permanent disciples in the Ashram. There were several persons coming and making short stays and going. Even of the permanent disciples, Nolini and Moni and Bijoy, were going now and then to Bengal and returning to Pondicherry.

Pondicherry was a free port and so no customs duties were collected for articles that arrived at the port from foreign countries. So articles like watches, fountain pens, diamonds, silks, scents, motor cars and all luxury goods were 30 to 50 per cent cheaper than they were at Madras and other places. So smuggling was the order of the day and it was very dextrously practised in spite of the British customs and secret Police service. As wines were cheap, Pondicherry abounded in all kinds of wines and liquors sold at low prices and so people from Madras were making week-end visits to consume liquor or smuggle it by some means or other. The customs department was collecting heavy duties on wines, but yet there was no end to smuggling and drinking. The lower nature in man does not yield to rules and regulations. Unless there is a change in one's consciousness, there is no progress in man for higher life.

Sri Aurobindo's ideal was that "All life is Yoga." And so, he lived in a crowded place like Pondicherry, with all its vices and attractions, but was simple and austere in his life. With the exception of the Mother, those residing with him or frequenting him, much less the Pondicherry public, knew what experiments he was making in Supramental Yoga. The great siddhi of the attainment of Nirvana, which was the life mission of Buddha, walked into Sri Aurobindo unasked for. He could silence all thought in three days, which was a miracle even according to his guide in this matter, Sri Lele, and realised silent Brahman. The identity with Lord Krishna and the vision of Krishna everywhere and the realisation of God in all, all in God and all as God, he got during his jail life at Alipore when he was an under-trial prisoner. In spite of all these great realisations, which gave him Mukti, liberation, what was he aiming at, in Pondicherry? That, he said, was to get into supermind, and act from the state of Truth-consciousness, stationing himself far above the mind, and bring down this Truth-consciousness into the mind, life, body and Earth and transform the whole of nature, including the subconscious and the inconscient. By the time he came to Pondicherry in 1910, he had all the siddhis including Jivanmukta state (complete liberation in body, mind, life) without much effort. But to reach supermind, above mind, is like climbing the Himalayas and reaching the highest peak, Mount Everest, and going beyond, through the intervening planes of illumined mind, intuition, and overmind. He said that it took ten years for him to reach supermind. And he was not content with reaching it, but said that there are higher levels in the supermind. In his birthday speech on 15th August 1923, he said that he had not reached the highest supermind. Beyond supermind there is still the Satchidananda level. In his Yoga, mere ascent to the supermind is not enough. The Truth-consciousness must be brought down to all the levels up to the material consciousness and hard Matter and one has to plunge into the depths of dark Inconscience and bring down the supramental light there also. Thus, matter and spirit have to be united. Mere descent is not enough. Transformation is also envisaged in this Yoga. First, psychic transformation; then, spiritual; and lastly, supramental transformation of the whole being from top to toe and below, have to be carried out. It is a mighty endeavour and only a great hero can attempt to do this vast sadhana, contend against the Dark forces, win the battles and secure the final

Victory. Such a mighty adventure was not clearly envisaged in the past by the ancient Vedic sages or others after them in India, or elsewhere, nor attempts made systematically to go through the fiery ordeal. Supermind must be brought down to the earth-consciousness at any cost. It is with this spirit, the Master began and continued the sadhana, along with the Mother to help him on the way.

When Sri Aurobindo was engrossed in such a mighty attempt to scale the heights of the being and dive deep into the abyss of Matter and bring the superconscious light into this troubled Earth in order to change it, all attempts by politicians like Mahatma Gandhi, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and others requesting him to leave Pondicherry and lead the country in the freedom struggle and preside over the Congress sessions, etc., proved abortive. Sri Aurobindo, the mighty spirit, would not swerve from his chosen aim till he attained his goal. When he was charged with trying to do a thing not attempted by even Krishna, he wrote in one of his letters to a disciple, “If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself — whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall on me if it will for my presumption, — I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others»<sup>24</sup>

Though the Master was absorbed in such a mighty and vast adventure into the Unknown, we had no clear perception of the magnitude of the undertaking, or the difficulties of the path. We had only vague notions of his writings and talks on Overmind and Supermind. By getting a little of the higher light from above or within, we become vain and begin to show off our learning. But as one treads the path, one feels like a pygmy before the mighty spiritual Giant.

Though the Master was in such high and superb altitudes, he condescended to come down to our level, and speak and joke with us compassionately. He gave advice on all matters, political or otherwise. To political leaders who approached him, he gave proper advice. To others like poets, philosophers, artists, social workers, planners, economists, nay, to one and all who sought his advice, he did not deny the same but put them on the right lines. Many Yogis, who came to test him and show off their superiority, became humbled. Aspiring souls were given a helping hand and his touch was dynamic, and magnetic.

At that time, Mother’s greatness was not visible to all. My wife was seeing visions in meditation about the descent of great Shaktis into the Mother and when I narrated inadvertently some of these things to my fellow-sadhakas, they would not believe them. It was only after the Master retired into the background in November 1926, asking the disciples to look up to the Mother for guidance, that her hidden greatness was revealed to them. Of course, it was but natural for the sadhakas at that time to regard only the Master as their Guru, as the Mother had not revealed her status completely to all. There was also the racial prejudice among some about the Mother. This was natural among the half-baked sadhakas and others, as the political fight against the British was going on and there was hatred of all foreigners. But the Mother was a true Indian in an European body. She had occult training under Theon in Algeria and France, and was pursuing Yoga in Paris, on lines similar to that of Sri Aurobindo. The ways of the Divine are mysterious. Only persons of true knowledge, understanding and feelings can see things in their true light. The Mother was and is an enigma to many. Even after repeated writings and averments by the Master that the Mother is his collaborator, and a person of

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<sup>24</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), pp. 143-44.

equal status and attainments, with the same consciousness embodied in her as in himself, some are not able to so regard her. This is Maya.

In January 1924, some Congressmen came from Kakinada (A.P.) and wanted to see the Master which they could not. They were taken to the French Police station and there they picked up a row with the French Police while registering their names (which was the practice in those days when people came to see Sri Aurobindo). Sri Aurobindo said that it was an attempt of the outside forces to disturb the peace established by him in the Ashram. As no purpose was served in seeing the political agitators and non-cooperators who were frequenting the Cuddalore jail, near Pondicherry, in masses, the Master was avoiding them generally. This was of course misunderstood by many in their zeal to get a look at the Master, somehow.

In January, group meditation was stopped and evening sittings discontinued. Particular weekdays were given to each sadhaka to see or meditate before the Guru. There was disappointment at this development, but this step was taken on account of spiritual necessity by the Master. At about this time, Dilip Kumar Roy, a famous musician and writer came to have darshan of the Master. In February, Dhurandhar, from Maharashtra had darshan of the Master. At about this time, my old friend Tirupati came to stay in the Ashram, fresh from political jail, clad in a loincloth. He would not board a rickshaw drawn by human beings and he was very fastidious about dress, food and outer habits. Some time afterwards, he took up the true attitude regarding all these things, after the touch of the Master.

People from different parts of the country, with varied temperaments and tastes and habits flocked round the Master. The world is constituted by different elements and there is unity behind the wonderful diversity in creation. By Yoga, centuries of evolution are compressed into a few years or even a few months and perfection of one's being attained.

The atmosphere round the Master was surcharged with pure vibrations of peace, light, power and Ananda. One could smell the fragrance of lotuses from his transparent, lustrous body. He had an elevated broad forehead, with a broad chest, and smooth, soft and glowing hands and feet, visible to all. He had magnetic, shining eyes with an aquiline nose. Dressed in dhoti, part of which was used by him now and then to cover his upper part of the body, he used to walk majestically for long hours with dishevelled hair in his room or verandah, meditating on others and the world. There was light talk, jokes and criticism when the disciples and visitors assembled before him for talks and he heartily enjoyed the same, coming down to their level.

I came to the end of my financial resources by the end of May 1924. I painfully intimated this fact to the Master and he sympathised with me. He had himself no funds at the time to maintain us. He never appealed to anybody or the public for funds at any time, in any manner whatsoever. If any devotee obliged him with funds knowing his dire wants, he would consider the source and accept the same. The *Arya*, which was a source of a small income, stopped long ago. Under these circumstances I took leave of the Master, and left his august presence with my wife in June 1924 with great regret.

During the last six months of my stay, sadhana was very intense in the Ashram. The stage of experiences gave place to the lowering of consciousness into the vital and body where the churning of the being started. The difficulties of the lower being had to be faced and the ignorant nature subject to pain and suffering had to be transformed. Sri Aurobindo's ideal was "not a retreat from the difficulty of life in the world into the silence of the Ineffable, but the bringing down of the peace and light and power of a greater divine Truth and consciousness to transform life", and his endeavour was to pursue this ideal. The lower impulses in me which rose up with the churning of the being had to be offered up to the Light and after a process of purification, transformed. Life in the outside world had to be faced,

and Karma Yoga, according to one's swabhava, nature, and swadharma, law of the inner being, had to be performed. So my stay with the Master ended for the time being.

## Continuation

After coming home I was quite confident of securing a job, as graduates were rare in those days. But the doors of Government service were closed against me, as Sri Aurobindo was considered an enemy of the British Government, though he had left off politics. I tried to get at least a teacher's job in the local boards, but even there I was faced with the same disqualification of having been with the Divine Master, who was considered to be an enemy of the British Empire. As a last resort, I wanted to settle down in my deserted village and try my luck as an agriculturist. My father-in-law, who did not like this prospect, offered to finance me for a pleadership course for one year, as he did not want to risk his funds with me for a two years' law course, as I was considered to be an unpredictable person. I took the chance and joined the law college in July 1924. But, as usual, I had no love for my law studies. I plodded on till the end of the course and appeared for the examination. By the grace of the Divine, I secured a pass.

I joined the Bar in October 1925, and began to make headway slowly and steadily at the Bar. I did not and do not have attraction for the profession of law which I took up by force of circumstances. The ideals of the legal profession, like other professions, are very good and ennobling, but they are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Real "Karma Yoga" consists in upholding the ideals by sincerely following them in practice. Mahatma Gandhi has evolved and advocated an ethical code for the legal profession and he has followed his code. According to him, a lawyer has to take up only true cases and abandon the briefs whenever he comes to know of the falsity of the cause. According to the opposite view enunciated by other eminent lawyers, it is not the function of the lawyer to adjudge a case entrusted to him for advocacy, but only espouse the cause of the client as per the instructions given to him to the best of his ability, without regard to the truth of the facts of the case entrusted to him.

Unable to reconcile these two views and tossed between the high ideals preached and the malpractices indulged in by the members of the profession, I could not compose myself and wrote to the Master to extricate me from the dilemma and enlighten me as to the correct course of action. The words of advice given to me regarding the legal profession and other matters relating to my sadhana are to be found in the following letters of Sri Aurobindo: —

T. Kodandaram,

It is true the lawyer's profession as practised by many in India is full of things which are not what they should be but it is not a necessary character of the legal profession. Even here many carry on the profession with a scrupulous honesty in all respects like Duraiswami and succeed. A lawyer has to do his best for his client and make every point he legitimately can in his favour — to bring out the weak note of the case is the other party's function, not his; but it is his best to which he is bound, he is not bound to do what the client demands as the best. It is a question of establishing an honourable but practical and commonsense standard for the profession.

As to the other matters you mention it is the common experience in the transitional stage of the sadhana. You have to establish within you an unimpregnable basis of calm and consecration and openness to the higher consciousness and the Divine; from there you have to deal with the confused mass of the ignorant outer Nature by the light and with the force of the deeper and purer knowledge, will, aspiration which comes from within or descends from above.

24-5-33

Sri Aurobindo

T. Kodandaram,

There is nothing in all that you write which would legitimate the gloom and despondency of which you speak. These are the usual difficulties of the physical nature, enhanced by the support they get from the subconscious which sends up the same habitual movements always. All sadhakas in dealing with their outer and especially their physical nature have to face these difficulties. The alternations of “day” and “night”, luminous and obscure periods, are also usual. One has to remain calm and hold on to one’s path and courage in the dark periods; if one does so, it is easy to deal with the imperfections of the nature which are their cause.

To be watchful and reject the suggestions of the physical mind as much as possible is the best means of shortening their reign. If constantly detected and rejected, they begin to lose their power, although they do not cease till the light is fully there in the outer mind and the subconscious parts. Transformation of the physical and subconscious parts is a long, arduous and difficult task; but a calm and vigilant persistence succeeds in the end; depression and impatience only prolong their retardatory action.

As for the dreams, if no support is given to them by waking thoughts, impulses or imagination, they must be purely due to a persistence of all old impressions and habits in the subconscious though sometimes a purely physical cause (constipation, urine accumulation) produces them also. There is no need to be troubled about that; it will disappear when there is a clearing of the subconscious by the light. Some have succeeded in stopping the subconscious habit or holding it in check by putting a will on the sex centre before going to sleep, but this method does not succeed with everybody.

There is no harm in taking interest in your work as a lawyer, without that there can be no success. But both the work and the success should be inwardly offered to the Master of all works; so long as it has to continue.

20-5-38

Sri Aurobindo

In May 1928, I went to have a darshan of the Master after I left him in 1924, and learnt about his complete seclusion, leaving the guidance of the Ashram to the Mother, he himself working from behind. I saw Mother, who received me kindly, and had meditation with her. From that time onwards, I looked upon her as my second Guru.

Since that time, I began to spend my Christmas and summer holidays in the Ashram, and was attending the darshans of the Master and the Mother, every now and then. My wife and daughter were coming for darshans and sometimes spending some days along with me in the Ashram.

On account of a serious bronchial trouble, I could not attend the 24th November 1950 darshan. My disease worsened, and it struck me that I must see the Master, and so I started for Madras on the 2nd December 1950. I got myself X-rayed and consulted my physician friend. He advised me to go back home and not to proceed to Pondicherry in my bad condition then. I hesitated and at last wended my way homewards, on the 4th. I prayed to the Master for my recovery. That night I had a dream about the passing away of a great and effulgent being, taking into himself the poison of the earth, and devouring my illness also and a bright goddess appeared by his side shedding peace and Light on the world. Next morning the papers announced the passing away of the Mighty Master and I was free from

my ailment. How compassionate he was in protecting me from my illness! And His protection and grace are always with his devotees!!

## Hymn to Sri Aurobindo

Salutation to Sri Aurobindo

The Effulgent Sun that is lighting up my being,  
building it anew,

The Constant Friend that is ever counselling this  
wayward wanderer out of glamorous pitfalls,

The Supreme Healer that is soothing this  
trouble-stricken soul with gracious calm,

The Patient Goldsmith that is chiselling this  
rough ore into a pure ornament,

The Beloved Gardener that is clearing up this  
hideous forest into a divine paradise,

The Great Painter that is fashioning this  
smoke-hued picture into a bright living form,

The Wondrous Architect that is dexterously hewing  
this rough material into lovely shape,

The Powerful Dynamite that is blasting up this  
crude inconscient rock into vibrant life,

The Fiery Rocket that is piercing the subconscious  
gloom, flooding it with light,

The Rare Touch-stone that is transmuting this  
crawling clod into wondrous gold,

The Mighty Master, that has condescended to  
transform this erring mortal into an Immortal!

Salutation to Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme Master!

# Invocation to the Divine

OM

*yasmāt param nāparam asti kiñcidya-  
smānnāñīyo na jyāyo 'sti kaścit  
vrkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhatyeka-  
stenedaṁ pūrṇaṁ puruṣeṇa sarvam*

There is nothing higher than or different from Him; nothing greater or more minute than Him. Rooted in His own glory, He stands like a tree, one without a second and immovable. By that Being, the whole universe is filled.

*ya eko 'varṇo bahudhā saktiyogād  
varṇānanekān nihitārtho dadhāti,  
vicaiti cānte viśvamādau ca devaḥ  
sa no buddhyā śubhayā saṁyunaktu*

May that Divine Being, who, though Himself featureless, gives rise to various features in different ways, with the help of His own power, for His own inscrutable purpose, and who dissolves the whole world in Himself in the end, May He endow us with good thoughts!

(Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad).

*Amṛtasya paramasetave  
Aravindāya namo namaḥ*

Salutation to Sri Aurobindo,  
The Supreme Bridge of Immortality!

## SMRITI स्मृति

This is the second in a series of books issued under the imprint “SMRITI”. As the name suggest, “SMRITI” consist of memoirs and other first-hand accounts of the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.