



SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

GLIMPSES OF THEIR EXPERIMENTS, EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS



KIREET JOSHI



**SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER**

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**SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER**

To Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Preface

The more one studies Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, the more is one wonderstruck by the breathtaking sweep of their experimentation and their victorious achievements. It is impossible to present even a distant idea of the crucial significance of their realisations to the expanding horizons of knowledge and to the possibilities of evolution and mutation of the human species. What has been attempted in this book is to present only a few glimpses.

It would be useful to explain some of the important terms that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have used in describing their experiences and realisations. In doing so, it would be necessary to present a brief account of what may be called the yogic psychology of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This has been presented in Appendix IV.

I wish to place on record my gratitude to Sir C.P.N. Singh, formerly Governor of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, and to Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Chairman of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, for the encouragement they have given me to pursue my research work. Above all, I am deeply grateful to Satprem whose books on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have provided me valuable insights into the significance of their work.

Kireet Joshi

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo was born on the 15th August 1872 at Calcutta. At an early age of seven, he was taken along with his elder brothers to England for education, since his father wanted him to have no Indian influence in the shaping of his outlook and personality. And yet, even though Sri Aurobindo assimilated in himself richly the best of the European culture, he returned to India in 1893 with a burning aspiration to work for the liberation of India from foreign rule. While in England, Sri Aurobindo passed the I.C.S. Examination, and yet he felt no call for it; so he got himself disqualified by remaining absent from the riding test. The Gaekwar of Baroda happened to be there at that time, and Sri Aurobindo accepted the proposal to be his Personal Secretary, and returned to India.

Soon thereafter, however, Sri Aurobindo switched over to the Baroda College as Professor of French and then of English, and when in 1906, he left for Bengal, he was the acting Principal of the College. It was during the Baroda period that Sri Aurobindo assimilated in himself the spirit and culture of India and prepared himself for his future political and spiritual work. Indeed, his political work had already begun in Baroda, but it was behind the scenes, largely of the nature of a preparation for an armed revolution for the liberation of India.

Sri Aurobindo was the first among the Indian leaders to declare and work for the aim of complete Independence of India. In 1905, Bengal was divided, and Sri Aurobindo left Baroda and, invited by the nationalistic leaders, he joined at Calcutta the newly started National College as its first Principal. It was here that Sri Aurobindo, while working secretly for the revolution, chalked out also a plan of outer action. This plan consisted of the programme of passive Resistance, Boycott and Swadeshi, which was later adopted as the policy of the struggle for freedom. It was here again that Sri Aurobindo wrote

powerfully and boldly for *Bande Mataram*, and later for *Karma Yogin*; through his writings, he electrified the nation and surcharged the people with a new energy which ultimately led the nation to her freedom. It was, therefore, significant that when India attained her liberation in 1947, it was on the 15th August, the birthday of Sri Aurobindo.

The pioneering work that Sri Aurobindo did for the liberation of India was evidently a part of his larger work for the entire humanity and for the whole earth. For him, the liberation of India was an indispensable part of the new world-order. Moreover, the practice of Yoga, which he had started in 1902, led him, even while in the thick of intense political and literary activity, to major realisations of the Brahmic Silence, Nirvana, and also of the universal dynamic Presence of the Divine. And, in 1908, when he was in Alipore jail during his trial under the charge of sedition, he received through numerous experiences and realisations the assurance of the liberation of the country and also the knowledge of the initial lines on which his own future work was to proceed. For he saw that even in the field of Yoga something was still lacking, something radical that alone would help resolve the problems of the world and would lead mankind to its next evolutionary stage. And so, in 1910, soon after his acquittal from the jail, he withdrew to Pondicherry to concentrate upon this new research work, to hew a new path. It has been a most dynamic work with the entire earth as its central field. It was in the course of this work that Sri Aurobindo declared that the Supramental is the Truth and that its advent on the earth is inevitable. To bring down the supramental consciousness and power on the earth has been the central work of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo has explained the nature of this work, the nature of the Supermind, the necessity of its descent, the process of this descent and the dynamic consequences of this descent for the solutions of the problems of mankind, in his voluminous writings most of which were written serially in the philosophical monthly, *Arya*, which was started in 1914, immediately after the first arrival of The Mother from France to Pondicherry. Some of the most important of these and other writings are: *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *Essays on the Gita*, *On the Veda*, *The Upanishads*,

The Future Poetry, The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth, and the epic Savitri.

When Sri Aurobindo withdrew in 1926 into his room for concentrating in the required way on the 'Supramental Yoga', Mother organized and developed his Ashram. In 1943, a school for the education of children was founded, and after the passing of Sri Aurobindo in 1950, Mother developed that school into an International University Centre, where numerous original and bold experiments of education were carried out under her guidance. This educational work was a part of the Supramental Yoga, and we have rare insights into education and yoga in the volumes entitled *Questions and Answers*, which contain conversations of the Mother that took place in her classes. In 1958, Mother withdrew to her room in order to come to terms with the research in the problems related to the supramental transformation of the physical consciousness at the cellular level. In 1968, Mother founded Auroville, an International city as a collective field for the material and spiritual researches required for realising human unity as a part of the supramental action on the earth.

Mother's exploration into the body-consciousness and her discovery of a 'cellular mind' capable of restructuring the nature of the body is contained in a document of more than 6000 pages, published in 13 volumes. This is *L'Agenda de Mère (Mother's Agenda)*, an account of her extraordinary exploration narrated by the Mother to Satprem¹ covering a period of more than twenty years, during which Mother slowly uncovered the 'Great Passage' to the next species by the supramental transformation of the physical consciousness and fulfilled the work that Sri Aurobindo had given to her.

1. Satprem was born in Paris in 1923. After intense experiences in concentration camps and adventures in Guyana, Brazil and Africa, he came to India in 1953, became a Sanyasi and practised Tantrism. Then he left these paths to serve Mother and embarked upon the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. For 19 years, he lived near the Mother and became her confidant and her witness. He recorded innumerable personal conversations that form *Mother's Agenda*. He has written a biography of Sri Aurobindo under the title, *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*. He has also written a biography of the Mother in three volumes, under the titles: *Mother or the Divine Materialism; Mother or the New Species; and, Mother or the Mutation of Death*.

**SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER**

Sri Aurobindo

It is well known that Sri Aurobindo had a thorough Western education, and he had a period of agnostic denial. But from the moment he looked at yogic phenomena, he could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe. Abnormal, otherwise supraphysical experiences and powers, occult or yogic, always seemed to him something perfectly natural and credible.

It was after a long stay in India at Baroda that Sri Aurobindo turned decisively to Yoga in 1904. He had, however, a few spiritual experiences even in his pre-yogic period. The first was in London, in 1892, the year of his departure from England. The next experience was when Sri Aurobindo set foot on the Indian soil at Apollo Bunder, Bombay, on his return from England. A vast calm descended upon him and surrounded him and stayed with him for months afterwards. Then, in the first year of his stay in Baroda in 1893, an experience came to him at the moment when there threatened to be an accident to his carriage. He has described this experience later on in the poem, *The Godhead*,¹ which is reproduced below:

*I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
In me, enveloping me the body of Him.*

*Above my head a mighty head was seen,
A face with the calm of immortality
And an omnipotent gaze that held the scene
In the vast circle of its sovereignty.*

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, Centenary Library, Vol. 5, p.138.

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;
 The world was in His heart and He was I:
 I housed in me the Everlasting's peace,
 The strength of One whose substance cannot die.
 The moment passed and all was as before;
 Only that deathless memory I bore.

Here is a description of a vision that Sri Aurobindo had during his Baroda period:

Once when Sri Aurobindo was on a visit to Chandod he went to one of the temples of Kali on the bank of the Narmada. He went there because of the company. He never had felt attracted to image-worship—if anything, till then he was averse to it. Now when he went to the temple he found a presence in the image. He got a direct proof of the truth that can be behind image-worship.

Sri Aurobindo, in one of his letters written much later, seems to be referring to this experience in the following words:

Or, you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what?—a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother.¹

He has described this experience also in the poem, *The Stone Goddess*:²

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
 From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,—
 A living Presence deathless and divine,
 A form that harboured all Infinity.
 The great World-Mother and her mighty will
 Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
 Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
 Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

1. Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga II*, Tome I, p. 216.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, Centenary Library, Vol. 5, p.139.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
 Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
 Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
 The secret of her strange embodiment,
 One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
 A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

In 1901, Sri Aurobindo witnessed some occult phenomena during his younger brother Barin's experiments with the planchette. There were also some experiments of automatic writing. A direct proof of the power of Yoga came to him when a Naga sadhu cured Barin of mountain fever by mantra. The sadhu took a glass full of water and cut the water crosswise with a knife while repeating the mantra. He then told Barin to drink it saying he could not have the fever the next day. And the fever left him.

In April 1903, Sri Aurobindo was on a tour of Kashmir and visited the hill of Shankaracharya (also known as the Takht-i-Suleman—Seat of Solomon), and experienced the vacant Infinite in a very tangible way. He has described this experience in his poem, 'Adwaita':¹

*I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
 Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands
 Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
 On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.
 Around me was a formless solitude:
 All had become one strange Unnamable,
 An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
 Topless and fathomless, for ever still.
 A Silence that was Being's only word,
 The unknown beginning and the voiceless and
 Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
 On an incommunicable summit reigned,*

1. *Ibid.*, p.153.

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace

On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.

In 1904, Sri Aurobindo began practising Yoga on his own account, starting with *Pranayama*, as explained to him by a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda. The purpose of this Yoga practice was to find the spiritual strength which would support him and enlighten his way.

Explaining the results of this practice, Sri Aurobindo has written:

What I did was four or five hours a day *pranayama*.... The flow of poetry came down while I was doing *pranayama*, not some years afterwards. If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the *pranayama* for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed.¹

After four years of *pranayama* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and outflow of energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures, etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss.²

In another letter, Sri Aurobindo has explained an interesting aspect of the subtle sight experiences.

I remember when I first began to see inwardly (and outwardly also with the open eye), a scientific friend of mine began to talk of after-images—‘these are only after-images’! I asked him whether after-images remained before the eye for two minutes at a time—he said, ‘no’, to his knowledge only for a few seconds; I also asked him whether one could get after-images of things not around one or even not existing upon this earth, since they had other shapes, another character, other hues, contours and a very different dynamism, life-movements and values—he could not reply in the affirmative. That is how these so-called scientific explanations break down as soon as you pull them out of their cloudland of mental theory and face them with the actual phenomena they pretend to decipher.³

1. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, Centenary Library, Vol. 26, p. 77.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The first decisive turn and experience came to Sri Aurobindo in 1907 when he was groping for a way. At this juncture he was induced to meet a Maharashtrian Yogi, Lele, who showed him the way to silence the mind. And by meditation with him at Baroda, Sri Aurobindo attained to an entire silence of thought and feeling and of all the ordinary movements of consciousness within three days.

Describing this meditation and experience, Sri Aurobindo wrote in one of his letters:

It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. 'Sit in meditation', he said, 'but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts coming into it; before they can enter throw these away from your mind till your mind is capable of entire silence.' I had never heard before of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think either of questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw one thought and then another coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free Intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought as a labourer in a thought factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought-empire...¹

Elaborating upon the same experience in another letter, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movement of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movements of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone which was not felt as belonging to oneself. But the perception which remained saw all things as utterly unreal; this sense of unreality was overwhelming and universal. Only some undefinable Reality was perceived as true which was beyond space and time and unconnected with

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

any cosmic activity, but yet was met wherever one turned. This condition remained unimpaired for several months and even when the sense of unreality disappeared and there was a return to participation in the world-consciousness, the inner peace and freedom which resulted from this realisation remained permanently behind all surface movements and the essence of the realisation itself was not lost...¹

In his poem, 'Nirvana',² we have a vivid description of this experience.

All is abolished but the mute Alone.
 The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
 Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
 There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
 The city, a shadow picture without tone,
 Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
 Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
 Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.
 Only the illimitable Permanent
 Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,
 Replaces all,—what once was I, in It
 A silent unnamed emptiness content
 Either to fade in the Unknowable
 Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

This experience and realisation of the utter reality of the Brahman and the unreality of the world is a recognised culmination of the classical path of Knowledge and Adwaitic Mayavada. For Sri Aurobindo, however, this turned out to be only one of the foundational experiences, and a series of spiritual experiences and realisations³ that followed led Sri Aurobindo to a new exploration and a new

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-6.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, Centenary Library, Vol. 5, p. 161.

3. Some of these experiences and realisations were described in his poems by Sri Aurobindo. A few of them have been reproduced in Appendix I.1 to I.7.

discovery. This is how he explained in one of his letters:

Now to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world—only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real.... I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusionary world gave place to one in which illusion¹ is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow. And this was no reimprisonment in the senses, no diminution or fall from supreme experience, it came rather as a constant heightening and widening of the Truth; it was the spirit that saw objects, not the senses, and the Peace, the Silence, the freedom in Infinity remained always with the world or all worlds only as a continuous incident in the timeless eternity of the Divine.

Now, that is the whole trouble in my approach to May avada. Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale...²

Of the next major realisation we learn from Sri Aurobindo's Uttara Speech in which he has given a soul-stirring description of the experiences he had in the Alipore jail in which he was detained in May 1908 under a charge of sedition until May 1909 when he

1. In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence. (Sri Aurobindo's note.)

2. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, Centenary Library, Vol. 26, pp. 101-2.

was acquitted. In the jail Sri Aurobindo spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. It was here that the realisation which had continually been increasing in magnitude and universality and assuming a large place took him up entirely and his work became a part and result of it and besides far exceeded the service and liberation of the country and fixed itself in the aim, previously only glimpsed, which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned the whole future of humanity.

The major realisation that he had here was that of the Universal Presence of the Divine. As he says:

I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies....

When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the Magistrate I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, 'when you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to me, where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel.' I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled.¹

The following two interesting experiences in the Alipore jail may

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, Uttarpara Speech, Centenary Library, Vol.2, pp. 4-5.

be noted:

I... knew something about sculpture, but [I was] blind to painting. Suddenly one day in the Alipore jail while meditating I saw some pictures on the walls of the cell and lo and behold! the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of the technique. I don't always know how to express though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper expressions, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation.¹

His other experience, that of levitation, he has described as follows:

I was... having a very intense sadhana on the vital plane and I was concentrated. And I had a questioning mind: Are such Siddhis as Utthapana (levitation) possible? I then suddenly found myself raised up in such a way that I could not have done it myself with muscular exertion. Only one part of the body was slightly in contact with the ground and the rest was raised up against the wall. I could not have held my body like that normally even if I had wanted to and I found that the body remained suspended like that without any exertion on my part.¹

While in the Alipore jail, Sri Aurobindo was also on his way in his meditations to two other realisations: that of the Supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects, and that of the higher planes of consciousness above the Mind leading up to the Supermind. It is a fact that Sri Aurobindo received help from Vivekananda in regard to a transition to some of the planes of consciousness above the Mind. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence.... The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it finished saying all that it had to say on the subject.²

It was again in the Alipore jail that Sri Aurobindo received the messages from Sri Krishna which opened up before him a passage to a new work. And it was in this direction that Sri Aurobindo was moving after his release from jail in May 1909 when he got the Di-

1. Reported by A.B. Purani in *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 1964, pp. 128-9.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

vine *adesh* in early 1910 to go to Chandernagore, and, later, another *adesh* to go to Pondicherry where he reached on 4th April 1910. What was the nature of the new work can be glimpsed from a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1911:

I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my Yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane....

What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.¹

Earlier, at Chandernagore, Sri Aurobindo lived in deep meditation. In his descending process of yoga, he had reached the last steps of the physical subconscious. At the same time, in his ascending movement of yoga, he had reached the extreme overmind border. Then one day as he descended downwards, he came across all the impurities one by one. The line of the subconscious seemed to be deepening further downwards towards the depth in an ever more solid concentration in the inverse image of the concentration above. Then, at one bound, without transition, at the bottom of this 'inconscient', and in the dark cells of the body, without falling into ecstatic trance, without the loss of the individual, without cosmic dissolution, and with eyes wide open, Sri Aurobindo found himself precipitated into the supreme Light. He had touched the Supermind. Later on, Sri Aurobindo was to discover that the Supermind was the lost Secret, that of the Veda and of many seekers after perfection. The Vedic Rishis had called their discovery of the Supermind the discovery of

1. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, Centenary Library, Vol. 26, pp. 423-4.

the 'great passage', *mahas panthah*, the world of the 'unbroken light', Swar, at the bottom of the rock of the Inconscient.

After coming to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo began the study of the Veda, and discovered therein the confirmation of many of his experiences. He found in the Rigveda many clues, based upon his own experiences and he found that the Vedic Rishis could open 'the great passage' at the individual level, and that this was a kind of a promise of a future realisation at a collective level. A new knowledge was still needed, a new experiment was required, and it was this adventure of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo undertook.

In explaining the nature of the Supermind, however, Sri Aurobindo has often referred to the cryptic verses of the Veda. As he says:

It is the cryptic verses of the Veda that help us here; for they contain, though concealed, the gospel of the divine and immortal Supermind and through the veil some illumining flashes come to us. We can see through these utterances the conception of this Supermind as a vastness beyond the ordinary firmaments of our consciousness in which truth of being is luminously one with all that expresses it and assures inevitably truth of vision, formulation, arrangement, word, act and movement and therefore truth also of result of movement, result of action and expression, infallible ordinance or law. Vast all-comprehensiveness; luminous truth and harmony of being in that vastness and not a vague chaos or self-lost obscurity; truth of law and act and knowledge expressive of that harmonious truth of being; these seem to be the essential terms of the Vedic description. The Gods, who in their highest secret entity are powers of this Supermind, born of it, seated in it as in their proper home, are in their knowledge 'truth-conscious' and in their action possessed of the 'seer-will'. Their conscious-force turned towards works and creation is possessed and guided by a perfect and direct knowledge of the thing to be done and its essence and its law,—a knowledge which determines a wholly effective willpower that does not deviate or falter in its process or in its result, but expresses and fulfils spontaneously and inevitably in the act that which has been seen in the vision. Light is here one with Force, the vibrations of knowledge with the rhythm of the will and both are one, perfectly and without seeking, groping or effort, with the assured result. The divine Nature has a dou-

ble power, a spontaneous self-formulation and self-arrangement which wells naturally out of the essence of the thing manifested and expresses its original truth, and a self-force of light inherent in the thing itself and the source of its spontaneous and inevitable self-arrangement.

There are subordinate, but important details. The Vedic seers seem to speak of two primary faculties of the 'truth-conscious' soul; they are Sight and Hearing, by which is intended direct operations of an inherent Knowledge describable as truth-vision and truth-audition and reflected from far-off in our human mentality by the faculties of revelation and inspiration. Besides, a distinction seems to be made in the operations of the Supermind between knowledge by a comprehending and pervading consciousness which is very near to subjective knowledge by identity and knowledge by a projecting, confronting, apprehending consciousness which is the beginning of objective cognition. These are the Vedic clues. And we may accept from this ancient experience the subsidiary term 'truth-consciousness' to delimit the connotation of the more elastic phrase, Supermind.¹

In his writings, Sri Aurobindo has written at length on the Supermind, but we may give here only one more statement from his book *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*:²

The Supermind is in its very essence a truth-consciousness, a consciousness always free from the Ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self-knowledge and world-knowledge and a right consciousness and the right use of our existence in the universe. The Supermind, because it is a truth-consciousness, has this knowledge inherent in it and this power of true existence; its course is straight and can go direct to its aim, its field is wide and can even be made illimitable. This is because its very nature is knowledge: it has not to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right; its steps are not from nescience or ignorance into some imperfect light, but from truth to greater truth, from right perception to deeper perception, from intuition to intuition, from

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Centenary Library, Vol. 18, pp. 124-5.

2. Written in 1949-

illumination to utter and boundless luminousness, from growing widenesses to the utter vasts and to very infinitude. On its summits it possesses the divine omniscience and omnipotence, but even in an evolutionary movement of its own graded self-manifestation by which it would eventually reveal its own highest heights it must be in its very nature essentially free from ignorance and error: it starts from truth and light and moves always in truth and light. As its knowledge is always true, so too its will is always true; it does not fumble in its handling of things or stumble in its paces. In the Supermind feeling and emotion do not depart from their truth, make no slips or mistakes, do not swerve from the right and the real, cannot misuse beauty and delight or twist away from a divine rectitude. In the Supermind sense cannot mislead or deviate into the grossnesses which are here its natural imperfections and the cause of reproach, distrust and misuse by our ignorance. Even an incomplete statement made by the Supermind is a truth leading to a further truth, its incomplete action a step towards completeness. All the life and action and leading of the Supermind is guarded in its very nature from the falsehoods and uncertainties that are our lot; it moves in safety towards its perfection. Once the truth-consciousness was established here on its own sure foundation, the evolution of divine life would be a progress in felicity, a march through light to Ananda.¹

Soon after his arrival in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo 'received' a programme of his own yoga in the form of Sanskrit mantras that constituted a system of 'Sapta Chatushthaya' (seven tetrads). This programme related to the work of the descent and manifestation of the Supermind in the physical life. We find reference to this system in his record of Yoga,² which is a meticulous and scientifically scrupulous record of fact and experience.

Each of the Chatushthayas laid down the summits³ of realisation

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, Centenary Library, Vol. 16, pp. 41-2.

2. Sri Aurobindo kept a record of his own practice of Yoga in a series of diaries. The earliest entries in these diaries began in 1909 and the latest ended in 1927. But there are dated entries for only twelve of those nineteen years. (See 'Record of Yoga' in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*, Vol. 10, Nos. 1 and 2, 1986).

3. These summits are: Shuddhi, Mukti, Bhukti, Siddhi—pertaining to Siddhi Chatushthaya; Sarvam Brahma, Anantam Brahma, Jnanam Brahma, Anandam

pertaining to one aspect of Sadhana. The intensity and rapidity with which Sri Aurobindo conquered these summits are evident even if we cast a cursory glance at his record of yoga. Let us take a few examples at random:

January 13th 1912, 10.15 a.m.

... Ananda has very fully established itself in the field of the indriyas. All sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, movements, actions, are now pleasurable or give pleasure; all carry with them the rasagrahana or appreciation of beauty of the gunas which they are in expression, the joy of the vijnana in them (the basis of chidghana ananda), the joy of the heart in them (the basis of premananda), the joy of the body in them (the basis of the kamananda), the joy of the mind as indriya in them (the basis of the ahaituka ananda).... Experiments made with the body show that below a certain intensity all pain now gives ananda of bhoga at the time of the feeling of pain, and pain beyond that degree brings it after the immediate acuteness has passed....

The forward movement of the ananda is now being left to itself and another Siddhi taken up, the relations of the Jiva (dasyam) with the Master of the Yoga and those whom he has chosen. All restraint by the mind or any other organ used by the Jiva is to be entirely abandoned.

Next day 10.20

... The most important siddhi was the perfection of the articulate thought, which resumed rapidly all the characteristics of perfect vijnanamaya thought,—prakasha, asu, nischaya, inevitability (adequate, effective and effective illuminative) of the vak, truth

Brahma—pertaining to Brahma Chatushthaya; Krishna, Kali, Karma, Kama—pertaining to Karma Chatushthaya; Samata, Shanti, Sukha, Hasya—pertaining to Shanti Chatushthaya; Virya,

Shakti, Chandibhava, Sraddha—pertaining to Shakti Chatushthaya; Jnana, Trikaladrishti, Ashtasiddhi, Samadhi—pertaining to Vijnana Chatushthaya; Arogya, Utthapana, Saundarya, Vividhananda—pertaining to Sharira Chatushthaya.

A brief explanation of these terms is given in Appendix II.

A detailed but incomplete explanation of Sapta Chatushthaya is to be found in the last part of Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*, Centenary Library, Vol. 21.

of substance, nihshabdata. All these were perfected and delivered from breach or restraint, except the nihshabdata which is still pursued with shabda by the annamaya devatas; but the thought can no longer be strongly impeded or suspended by annamaya interference, only hampered in its speed. Fluency has been acquired, rapidity prepared and declared due at 8.[0]2 a.m. on the morrow....

January 14th

... Now that the period of uninterrupted Siddhi has begun, there will be no relaxation of the karma and the siddhi, the karma only waiting for the effectiveness of the power, the Siddhi perfecting its force as the tapas increases in the body. Today, the typical perfection of the remaining elements of the jnanam throughout its whole range, the growth of lipi and drishti, the constant realisation of the Ishwara, the forward movement of the other Siddhis....

January 16th

... The Ishwara is now master of all thought perceptions or expressed thought in the system and is laying his hold upon all feelings and sensations....

... The power of aisvaryam has greatly increased in the matters of siddhi, producing a much more rapid and spontaneous effect even in things physical than ever formerly.... The mastery of the system by the Ishwara is now almost complete, though still of a moderate intensity and force. The second Chatushthaya & the nature & realisation of the Shakti Jiva, marked by the appearance of the lipi 11 (kali), are growing more rounded and permanently real to the consciousness....

Standing & walking, 6.35 to 7.35 and again from 9-20 to 11.20. Altogether 12 hours out of 16. Sleep from 3.10 to 6.40. Ananda in all outward things and the established sense of the one Personality in all. Certain defects in the thought perception appeared towards the close of the day. Safety was confirmed to the trikaladrishti, not by events.

January 27th

... Jnanam increases in force & exactness. The style of the vak

risers to the inspired illuminative and is effective at its lowest level. The thought perception is now almost rid of false vijñanam in its material, but not in the arrangement of its material. Nevertheless accuracy of time is growing, accuracy of place has begun, accuracy of circumstance, chiefly, is defective—all this in trikaladrishti. Prakamya & Vyapti are strong and more continuous, less chequered by error. The internal motions of animals & to a less extent of men, the forces working on them, the ananda & tapas from above, even the explicit thoughts are being more and more observed and are usually justified by the attendant or subsequent action. The Siddhis of power work well & perfectly, in harmony with the trikaladrishti, not so well when divorced from it. The physical tone of the system is recovering its elasticity & with it elementary utthapana and bhautasiddhi are reviving. Samadhi improves steadily, but is much hampered by sleep which has revived its force during these last three or four days....

July 1st, 1912

August, 1912, will complete the seventh year of my practice of Yoga. It has taken so long to complete a long record of wanderings, stumbles, gropings, experiments,—for Nature beginning in the dark to grope her way to the light—now an assured, but not yet a full lustre,—for the Master of the Yoga to quiet the restless individual will and the presumptuous individual intelligence so that the Truth might liberate itself from human possibilities & searchings and the Power emerge out of human weaknesses and limitations. The night of the thirtieth marked by a communication from the sahasradala, of the old type, sruti, but clear of the old confusions which used to rise around the higher Commands. It was clearly the Purushottama speaking and the Shakti receiving the command. Already the lipi had given warning of a new life beginning of the 1st July,—a new life, that is to say, a new type of action, starting with a temporarily complete realisation of novel Personality and the final inevitable seal on the dasyabhava. Not that anything was done abruptly. In this yoga at least nothing has been abrupt except the beginnings,—the consummations are always led up to by long preparation & development, continual ebb & flow, ceaseless struggling, falling & rising—a progress from imperfec-

tion through imperfections to imperfect and insecure perfections and only at last an absolute finality and security...

...Formerly I realised the Impersonal God, Brahma or Sacchidan[an]dam separately from the Personal, Ishwara or Sacchidananda. Brahma has been thoroughly realised in its absolute infinity & as the material & informing presence of the world & each thing it contains, yat kincha jagatyam jagat. But the sense of the One has not been applicable utterly & constantly,—there have been lacunae in the Unitarian consciousness, partly because the Personality has not been realised with equal thoroughness or as one with the Impersonality. Hence while dwelling on the Paratman, the mind, whenever the Jivatman manifested itself in the sarvam Brahma, has been unable to assimilate it to the predominant realisation and an element of Dwaitabhava,—of Visishtadwaita has entered into its perception. Even when the assimilation is partly effected, the Jiva is felt as an individual & local manifestation of the impersonal Chaitanya and not as the individual manifestation of Chaitanya as universal Personality. On the other hand the universal Sri Krishna or Krishna-Kali in all things animate or inanimate has been realised entirely, but not with sufficient constancy & latterly with little frequency. The remedy is to unify the two realisations & towards this consummation I feel the Shakti to be now moving....

July 3rd

The barrier offered in the annamaya prakriti to all decisive fulfilment of the vijñāna—chatushtaya (the siddhis of knowledge & power incidental to the opening of the ideal faculty) (has) at last given way....

July 16th

Dasyam more strongly confirmed, by emphasis on all action being for Srikrishna's ananda & bhoga, not for the Shakti's and by passive acceptance of the truth of the vani as superior to the apparent experience of the moment. Knowledge by sruti has begun to be proved & accepted. The process of finally manifesting the trikaldrishti in things distant has begun, the automatic unsought knowledge proving always truer than the mental opinions, inferences etc. The increased strength of the kamachakra strongly tested

last night, has endured the test so far. Visrishti in the morning, but the bhautic symptoms were slight.

Programme.

Trikaldrishti confirmed & extended; trailokyadrishhti & rupa-drishhti.

1. Powers strengthened.
2. Samadhi largely developed.
3. Utthapana & health carried forward—
4. Ananda established in an intenser movement.
5. Madhurabhava of Kali Krishna.
6. Karma & Kama strengthened....

July 22nd

... The permanent realisation of the fourfold Brahman is final. The activity of shuddhi, mukti, bhukti is now final in all their parts, though not yet consummate; only the siddhi remains and this is being rapidly brought forward. It is still chiefly hampered in the karma proper to Mahakali & in the outward fulfilment of kama.

November 10th

... Samata siddhi, sraddha, virya, shakti, are perfect except for the defective spot in the Sraddha through which the asiddhi can still enter.

In a letter of 1913, Sri Aurobindo had explained what he was attempting to accomplish. He had written:

What I am attempting is to establish the normal working of the Siddhis [faculties or powers] in life, i.e. the perception of thoughts, feelings and happenings of other beings and in other places throughout the world without any use of information by speech or any other data; 2nd, the communication of the ideas and feelings I select to others (individuals, groups, nations) by mere transmission of will-power; 3rd, the silent compulsion on them to act according to these communicated ideas and feelings; 4th, the determining of events, actions and results of action through-



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SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

GLIMPSES OF THEIR EXPERIMENTS, EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS

If our search is free from preconceptions and dogmas, if our search is for knowledge that is comprehensive and authentic, if our search is for action that ensures the highest good of the entire world, then the study of Sri Aurobindo and Mother becomes inescapable. For such indeed was their search, and we have in their voluminous writings authentic descriptions of this search and its progressive achievements. In particular, we may refer to Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, and *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, and to the thirteen fabulous volumes of *Mother's Agenda*.

This book is not a summary of the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, but it is a brief account of the inner heart and core of the task that they placed before themselves and of the main stages of accomplishment of that task. This is not a biography of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, but it is a work of research that aims at bringing together in a brief compass some authentic statements that would enable the reader to have glimpses of a unique experiment that has a direct relevance to the course of events on the earth.

There are books on Sri Aurobindo and there are books on The Mother, but apart from the unusual biographies by Satprem, there is hardly any book, like the present one, that provides a study covering the entire thread of the work of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the reader will find in this book a scholarly and scrupulous handling of an overwhelming mass of material contained in the books that are listed in the bibliography.



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